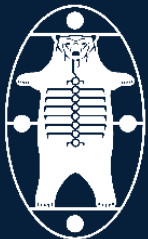
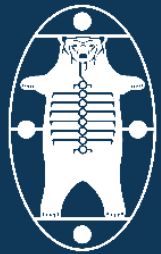


# NAN Housing Strategy



Nishnawbe Aski Nation  
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+ together  
design lab



Nishnawbe Aski Nation  
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*The NAN Housing Strategy's vision is to create positive change in the current housing systems to support health and wellness and to fulfill the human right of access to adequate housing.*

**Statement of Gratitude to NAN Community Members**

We acknowledge and thank NAN community members for the time and effort they contributed to the development of the NAN Housing Strategy.

This Strategy was developed from the lived experiences and knowledge shared by members of NAN First Nations on the state of housing and infrastructure in their communities, from youth to Elders. These shared experiences have provided a wholistic understanding of what is needed to change the current housing systems to support community health, well-being and self-determination.

Each theme included in the Strategy represents the voices of community members and the identified areas we need to act on together. Community-based understandings of need and solutions to the housing emergency within NAN territory are required in any pathway forward. The NAN Housing Strategy could not have come into being without the guidance and support of NAN First Nations members.

We acknowledge the guidance of the NAN Oshkaatisaak Council, Women’s Council and Elder’s Council have had in this process. We also acknowledge the guidance of the NAN Chief’s Committee on Housing and Infrastructure and the support we received from community leadership. We thank everyone involved for their commitment to creating a better future for all NAN community members.

Gitchi-miigwetch.





## Message from Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure

For far too long, Nishnawbe Aski Nation has experienced an on-going state of crisis, fed by the continuing legacy of colonialism and the lasting, negative impacts of government policy breaking apart our communities. This is unacceptable. This will no longer continue.

As the people of Nishnawbe Aski Nation, we are the rights holders and we honour our ancestors, signatories to Treaty #5 and Treaty #9, by finding solutions and pathways forward to achieving good health and wellness for all.

The Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure recognizes that housing is both a Treaty right and an inherent, human right of all Nishnawbe Aski Nation members. Honouring these rights means that we are obligated and responsible in ensuring every NAN member has adequate and safe shelter in our communities. Housing is a basic necessity for human dignity and fundamental to achieving good health and well-being. Our treaty partners, including all levels of the Canadian government, are required to partner with our nations in this sacred responsibility to provide this basic and inherent human right to housing. Commitment and action are needed now.

As leadership, we experience first-hand the challenges of our community members in seeking and securing housing. Our young people, Elders, families, and all of our relatives struggle to find housing on-reserve and off-reserve. We feel their anguish in their attempts to find safe spaces to rest and we acknowledge their strength and resilience in navigating a system that continues to leave the most vulnerable of our community members behind. We also acknowledge that this strength and resilience is tethered to a fine line that will fail even as the strongest hold on: the current housing system—a system

not designed by our First Nations—continues to fail our people and many are left without hope. As leaders, we must amplify the voices of our community members finding themselves with these struggles and we must also let our people know, there is hope.

The Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure fully supports the vision of the NAN Housing Strategy in creating hope for our people and its vision for creating positive change in the current housing systems to support health and wellness and to fulfill the human right of access to adequate housing. The NAN Housing Strategy is the path forward in achieving adequate housing for all NAN members. Safe and adequate housing provides security; is habitable; provides access to basic infrastructure; is located close to employment, services and amenities; is accessible for people of all abilities; and is culturally appropriate.

Centred around the knowledge and lived experience of our community members, the NAN Housing Strategy will support and advocate for First Nation self-determination in the planning, governance, and design of housing systems. This is the path forward. Action from Treaty partners is required, and we call on the governments of Canada to commit to the NAN Housing Strategy.

We would like to give our greatest thanks and acknowledge the many hours spent by NAN community members participating in and guiding the development of the NAN Housing Strategy. Gitchi-miigwetch.

We thank everyone involved for their commitment to creating a better future for all NAN members.

- NAN's Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure



# Nishnawbe Aski Nation ᑕᓂᓂᓂᓂ ᑕᓂᓂᓂᓂ ᑕᓂᓂᓂᓂ

QUEBEC



## Nishnawbe Aski Nation Overview of Housing\*

21,071

People

6,190

Total Private  
Dwellings

3.7

Average people per  
household - NAN

2.6

Average people per  
household - Ontario

40%

In need of major repair  
- NAN

5.7%

In need of major repair  
- Ontario



\*Based on Census 2021 data  
Data not available or incomplete for: McDowell Lake First Nation, Muskrat Dam First Nation, Pikangikum First Nation, Flying Post First Nation, Kashchewan First Nation, Chapleau Ojibwe First Nation, and Wawakapewin First Nation.

# NAN Housing Strategy Goals

The development of the NAN Housing Strategy was guided by the need to fulfill the human right of access to adequate housing and end the collective housing emergency in the Nishnawbe Aski Nation territory. Four main goals were identified at the beginning of the project.

- 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.

# Rationale

Chiefs-in-Assembly Resolution 18/18 provided a mandate for the development of the NAN Housing Strategy. The resolution was recognition of the failure of the existing housing system to provide adequate housing and its significant impact on the well-being of members throughout the territory. Housing Strategy development coincided with the release of both local and national investigations into the lack adequate housing in First Nations which demonstrated the interrelationships between housing and well-being. Systems change was required and in order to move beyond the colonial, top-down housing framework which had led to on-going emergency, the change was mandated to be rooted in community.

## On-going housing emergency

In 2014, the NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly collectively declared a NAN-wide Housing State of Emergency. As a result of decades of inappropriate intervention, NAN communities faced “deplorable housing conditions that lead to extensive health issues, short housing life, overcrowding and extreme mold”. Communities on-going experiences of housing insecurity led the NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly in 2018 to reassert the emergency adding, “the existing standard housing solutions have not met immediate need, have not addressed future need, and have not promoted or created wellness in the communities”.





### *Housing as a social determinant of health*

The role of housing extends beyond shelter. The house and home environment are directly connected to an individual's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellness. For housing to be successful in establishing community well-being the wider sphere of housing must be considered including access to clean water, roads, broadband internet connections, parks and recreational spaces, social services and emergency housing, cultural spaces, history and the land.

### *Community-driven solutions*

The problems that current programs seek to resolve— mould, need for major renovations, affordability— are issues identified, measured and reported on by governments. However, the housing crisis is understood on-reserve in a more wholistic way: prevalence of respiratory diseases, youth suicide, on-going inter-generational trauma, forced separation of families by Child Family Services, and poor educational outcomes are some of the lived outcomes and daily impacts on families perpetuated by the housing crisis. These two ways of understanding housing result in differing solutions to the on-reserve housing crisis. By continuing to define the issues through externally selected data points, policy, programming and solutions will not address community needs. When First Nations establish the priorities and values that are important to them, resulting community owned data will uncover priority issues and point to new solutions and policy recommendations. There is no one solution to the housing crisis; rather community-developed processes and priorities unique to each First Nation will create pathways forward.



### *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*

First Nations have the right, as stated in the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), to create, maintain and strengthen their own housing institutions with the ensured support of government partners — a right which is not currently being fulfilled.

#### Article 21

1. Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.

2. States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

#### Article 23

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.



*Response to Seven Youth Inquest*

The development of the NAN Housing Strategy recognizes recommendations from the Seven Youth Inquest. Lack of access to safe and adequate housing and other infrastructure is understood as part of a system that undermines the safety and well-being of First Nations in particular youth, girls, women and 2SLGBTQ+ people. In the final recommendations of the Seven Youth Inquest, recommendation 34 outlined Canada’s role in addressing and improving the social determinants of health. In particular, recommendation 34 called on Canada to provide sufficient funding:

- i. for the building and upgrading/repair of sufficient housing units suitable to the conditions in Northern communities that will address the critical housing shortage and overcrowding that exists in NAN First Nations; and
- ii. to develop a sustainable funding framework and plan to address housing needs into the future, based upon population growth expectations. This framework should include a budget for on-going housing maintenance.



*Response to National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*

In *Reclaiming Power and Place*, the final report from the National Inquiry into MMIWG, participants identified housing insecurity’s link with experiences of violence. In recommendation Theme 8 lack of safe housing options was recognized as a root cause of violence against Indigenous women and girls.

- Theme 8: The need for properly resourced initiatives and programming to address root causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls.
- 8d: The need to improve access to safe housing (along the housing spectrum, from emergency shelters to secure permanent housing).

*Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) recognized the significant challenges that sub-standard housing and infrastructure on-reserve posed for Indigenous people across Canada. Adequate housing is recognized as an important component of individual and community well-being. Further, the Commission recognized that the interference and imposition of southern suburban housing designs contributed to the loss of local design and the important role that culturally-relevant housing design plays in affirming and supporting ways of being. RCAP also recognized housing as a basic right to shelter, water, and sanitation services, and in order to support First Nation self-determination it was recommended that:

- 3.4.1.b Governments have a responsibility to restore an economic base to Aboriginal people that enables them to meet their needs.
- 3.4.1.d Governments must supplement the resources available to Aboriginal peoples that their housing needs are fully met.

## NAN ELDER'S COUNCIL STATEMENT ON HOUSING

Nishnawbe Aski Nation's Elder's Council recognizes housing is fundamental to the well-being and health of the people of Nishnawbe Aski Nation. Housing is a basic need that is a requirement to live well and we recognize that housing is both a Treaty Right and a Human Right that must be fulfilled to establish well-being for all.

Building our homes and our communities has long been a way of growing and passing on our way-of-life between generations. Inherent in this process is an understanding that our communities are inclusive and safe spaces, with homes that meet the needs of all members and families. Homes should be the foundation of the family; a place for sharing knowledge, caring for one another and living well.

Instead for our people, homes have become sites of displacement, segregation, and sickness. The lack of housing on-reserve and resulting crowding leaves many without a safe place. Elders are forced away from their families and communities into urban seniors' housing, young people starting their families have nowhere to call a home of their own, and individuals are forced into couch surfing and homelessness. Members are being disconnected from their family and their land, contributing to feelings of hopelessness, and having a detrimental effect on emotional and mental health.

Under the current housing emergency, homes are being built without the foundation needed to support family health and well-being. Community building must be a wholistic process. Solving the housing emergency and building wellness for all requires community expansion, infrastructure expansion and investment in the future of communities. Sustainably building water, power, and road infrastructure to simultaneously protect the land and create a basis for future housing development is a necessary first step to ending the housing emergency. Investment in community planning and infrastructure development is an investment in the future of NAN communities and people.

The people of Nishnawbe Aski Nation have always been stewards of the land, we are responsible for protecting all land, water and animals. In accordance with this responsibility and our traditions, all housing and infrastructure must be built in a good way and designed by our people.

Together, the NAN Elder's Council endorses the NAN Housing Strategy and recognizes the contributions of NAN members in establishing a vision for appropriate and adequate housing in NAN territory. As Elders, we are disappointed by how governments continue to fail our communities by not providing adequate or safe housing. We demand that the Government of Canada honour our Treaty Rights and the Human Right of all NAN members to housing.

Action is required, we need our Treaty partners to work with our First Nations in ending the housing emergency. By working together and creating homes for all members, we believe that we will continue the journey towards self-determination and wellness for all in NAN territory.

***"Housing is a basic need that is a requirement to live well and we recognize that housing is both a Treaty Right and a Human Right that must be fulfilled to establish well-being for all."***

***- NAN Elder's Council***



# NAN WOMEN'S COUNCIL STATEMENT ON HOUSING

We have known for a very long time that Nishnawbe Aski Nation communities are facing serious housing shortages, meaning that homes are overcrowded. In some homes people take turns sleeping in shifts because there is not enough space. We know that this way of living hurts the physical and mental health of our people. We also know that living this way forces some people into situations of having to deal with violence, addictions, and mental health issues, whether it be their own struggles or someone else's. These circumstances cause undue suffering not only for those living in overcrowded houses, but in the entire community.

Housing challenges are further exacerbated by the current combination of inflation and the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. Overcrowded housing makes isolating from COVID-19 difficult, if not impossible, and contributes to community spread. The current housing shortage throughout NAN communities is putting people's health and well-being at risk. The rising costs of everyday household goods including food, clothes, and gas resulting from the pandemic leaves very little left for families and communities to improve their housing situations.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation's Women's Council recognizes that the needs of people with special needs, the elderly, youth, men and women are unique but must be addressed together.

When we care for our loved ones who experience special needs, and our elderly, we look to our traditional ways of honouring those who come with unique gifts and those who have cared for us. We need accessible housing in our communities so we may be able to care for our loved ones in our homes. Our elderly community members also wish to live independently in their homes. Simple things like entry way ramps and wheelchair accessible bathrooms will help our grandparents enjoy their homes for as long as possible. We need to create alternative housing for the elderly and people with special needs who require more support in their day to day lives and want to remain in their communities.

New housing builds would provide an important opportunity for youth to grow and become independent. As more houses are built, opportunities for youth involvement in all stages of planning, construction, maintenance, and management could support skills and career development. Additionally, housing for youth should come with support options so that youth have a chance to succeed as they transition into a new stage in their lives.

We recognize that our men and boys will benefit from improved and new housing builds. All of our young children are impressionable in their home environments and learn from their relations as they grow, so it is imperative that better housing supports healthy growth and development. Boys must learn good ways from their fathers, uncles, grandfathers, and other role models in order to become healthier men, which will support the development of healthy relationships.

We have particular concern for our women and girls who are remaining in unstable or violent homes and abusive relationships for the simple fact that there are not enough homes, and there are not enough affordable housing options. In Nishnawbe Aski Nation communities, there are few or no safe spaces like shelters or transitional housing for women and girls who are trying to escape unsafe living situations. Because of this, our women and girls are at greater risk to experience sexual violence and exploitation, and at times are pressured to exchange sexual acts for a place to lay their head at night.

## As a Council we are calling for:

- Increased safety for women and girls by creating housing options that include emergency and transitional housing in communities, though we acknowledge that options to pursue safer accommodation outside of the community should also be supported;
- Adequate housing is created for Nishnawbe Aski Nation communities, that as one measure, provides enough bedrooms for the size of the household; and
- More accessible housing infrastructure is created for our community members who experience special needs or are elderly so that they may remain in their homes and communities.



**OSHKAATISAK COUNCIL - NAN ALL YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
COUNCIL - STATEMENT ON HOUSING**

The Oshkaatisak Council have reflected on their experiences of housing to share their priorities and goals for the future of housing in NAN First Nations. The Council recognizes that physical and mental health and child and family well-being are all interconnected with housing. Many families experience intergenerational trauma owing to the effects of colonialism and the residential school system.

People, especially youth, do not always feel safe in their homes but housing options are limited and inadequate. This leaves them with few if any options to seek safe accommodation. Available houses are crowded and often in poor condition, which exacerbates feelings of unsafety, but if you want to leave, there is nowhere to go without any emergency housing or shelters on-reserve.

The prevalence of suicide is tragic and impacts many families. Returning to a home where a loved one has taken their life makes day to day life a recurring nightmare. Without emergency housing the only option is adding families to already crowded homes, which may negatively impact the physical, social and spiritual health of everyone in the house.

Inclusive and alternative models of housing are required. An example of a population unable or struggling to obtain housing are those youth who age out of the child welfare system. Whether they are looking for a house of their own in their home community or are looking to return to their community after having been removed, they face high risks of homelessness and further marginalization.

Oshkaatisak Council believes that housing should be of a higher quality and better suited to the changing climate. Training and capacity development programs which support the development of a skilled labour force within communities would help create better homes and improve the economic status of community members.

*“The Council recognizes that physical and mental health and child and family well-being are all interconnected with housing.”*

*- Oshkaatisak Council*

Reliance on diesel fuel and wood stoves is unsustainable and adds to fire risks. Additionally, materials, designs, and infrastructure which meet the specific needs of the north are required. Climate change will shorten the winter road season and make the transportation of housing materials more costly. In order to not pass the existing housing crisis onto the next generation of youth new solutions are needed which create better trained workers, use higher quality materials, reduce the risk of fire and recognize the challenges of a changing climate.

In order to create this change, First Nations should not be forced to compete against one another. There is often a limited amount of funding and opportunities available through housing programs. Programs tend to favour First Nations with stronger administrative capacity or who are “shovel ready” which can lead to those communities with the greatest need being skipped over. In addition, programs which require matching funds can further marginalize certain First Nations. Funding and governance mechanisms should seek to create equity rather than dividing First Nations against each other.

**Solutions**

- Invest in better quality materials for construction and renovations
- Train young people to build and maintain housing and infrastructure
- Increase investments in maintenance and renovation of existing housing
- Review funding mechanisms, create equity between First Nations
- Increase housing and include funding for more emergency housing and shelters
- Improve basic infrastructure such as waterlines and sewage as well as hydro and eliminate reliance on diesel and generator power



## Development of the Strategy

The development of the NAN Housing Strategy officially began in September 2018 with the release of *Nishnawbe Aski Nation Response to the First Nations National Housing and Infrastructure Strategy*. The position paper outlined recommendations for the creation of a national strategy and key areas that should be addressed. The position paper is structured into six issue areas— Governance and Planning, Funding Structures, Inclusive Housing Systems, Design and Materials, Capacity Development and Training, and Infrastructure— exploring the related housing issues, potential solutions with recommendations and a case study to demonstrate how the ideas presented are possible in action. Supporting the paper are statements from the NAN Women’s Council, Oshkaatisak Council, NAN Health Transformation and Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority on the importance of addressing housing and its impacts on physical and mental health, safety and well-being. The recommendations illustrated a potential alternative system in which local values and goals determine objectives, control spending, innovate design and create community solutions developed through appropriate governance. In May 2019, the position paper was submitted to the United Nations’ call for contributions on the right to adequate housing for Indigenous Peoples.

Building from the principles outlined in the position paper, an engagement strategy was developed which would ensure that NAN members throughout the region would have the opportunity to participate. Critical to the success of strategy development was recording a diversity of priorities and goals, representative of the diversity of members across the territory. For this to be possible, workshop materials needed to be inclusive, welcoming all voices regardless of their technical expertise or familiarity with housing systems. By placing a focus on lived experience and individual understandings of home, the housing strategy could be built on visions of all members for providing appropriate housing across the territory. Described below are the activities held across the Strategy’s development phase, with and in communities who volunteered to take part and help to build the NAN Housing Strategy.



Beginning in winter 2019, workshops and engagements began to learn directly from community members in NAN and other professionals working in NAN. The first NAN Housing Strategy workshops were hosted at NAN Health Transformation Summit and NAN Youth Gathering in winter 2019 to begin work on identifying metrics and design standards. In spring 2019 the NAN Environment, Climate Change and Housing Symposium was hosted over two days, engaging housing professionals on metrics and hosting a design charrette. A follow-up meeting was held with Tribal Council representatives to share and confirm learnings and project next steps.

Workshop activities and learnings from these events were adapted for seven community visits in summer and fall 2019. Community Housing Workshops were hosted in Brunswick House First Nation, Fort Severn First Nation, Kasabonika Lake First Nation, Mattagami First Nation, Marten Falls First Nation, Cat Lake First Nation and Slate Falls Nation. During each three day visit, sessions were held with youth, Elders, community members, leaders, housing managers, construction crews, trainees and community health workers. In total more than 175 people contributed directly to metric development, design knowledge, identification of training needs and policy assessments. Five key themes emerged through these conversations: the need for unique housing designs which address the needs of those populations in greatest need including youth, Elders and singles; the need for greater environmental considerations in the housing system; the need for community-based trainings for trades management and housing maintenance; the lack of access to services and its impact on community well-being; and the need for integrated community growth planning and a focus on infrastructure.





Clockwise from top left: Workshops hosted in Brunswick House First Nation, Fort Severn First Nation, Mattagami First Nation and Marten Falls First Nation.

Opposite: Workshops hosted in Fort Severn First Nation and at the NAN Environment, Climate Change and Housing Symposium.

In Fall 2019, the NAN Housing Strategy team hosted an Advisory Lab, inviting architects, planners and health professionals from NAN and across Canada and the United States to examine the current housing process and to begin to identify the systems shifts that would be needed to improve housing outcomes. Identified themes from the Advisory Lab focused on building capacity, changes to the procurement process, re-evaluating funding mechanisms and the need for a region-specific housing policy. The Advisory Lab was originally planned to generate ideas and refine workshop activities for a 2020 Housing Symposium that was tentatively scheduled for early spring 2020.

Housing Strategy workshops continued in February 2020 at the Women's Gathering and Youth Gathering. Workshops provided an opportunity to give an update on project activities and learnings from the past year to NAN Women's Council and Oshkaatisak Council as well as host discussions and design charrettes with workshop participants. It is recognized that while there are common issues within housing shared by NAN community members, women and youth have unique experiences of housing and visions for its future. Workshops held at these gathering allowed for more focused conversations and the development of unique solutions.

In early winter 2020 preparations for another 8 community visits and piloting of the NAN Housing Strategy Survey was underway. Further funding was also secured for a youth focused project, *Creating a Home for Our Youth*, with work planned to begin in summer 2020 and fall 2020. However, in March 2020 many of these plans were postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic.





Workshops hosted at the NAN Environment, Climate Change and Housing Symposium and in Fort Severn First Nation.

## ENGAGEMENTS

- Hosted a housing workshop at Health Transformation Summit (January 2019)
- Hosted a housing workshop at NAN Youth Gathering (February 2019)
- NAN Environment, Climate and Housing Symposium (March 2019)
- Visited and hosted workshops in Brunswick House First Nation, Fort Severn First Nation, Mattagami First Nation, Marten Falls First Nation, Kasabonika Lake First Nation, Cat Lake First Nation, Slate Falls Nation, and Lac Seul First Nation between June 2019 and December 2019
- Hosted a one-and-a-half day workshop with housing and health experts to explore issues with the current housing system and develop recommendations for further Strategy development
- Hosted a housing workshop at NAN Women's Gathering (January 2020)
- Hosted a housing design workshop at NAN Youth Gathering (February 2020)
- Hosted a virtual Youth Housing Workshop (April 2021)
- Hosted a virtual housing workshop at NAN Youth Gathering (March 2022)

## COVID-19 shift

In March 2020, with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic an alternative plan was developed for completing the NAN Housing Strategy Survey. Public health guidelines, including lockdowns and stay-at-home orders, required that a plan for remote surveying be developed. A Facilitators Guide was developed and two communities that had previously hosted Housing Strategy workshops volunteered to test the remote surveying process. All required materials were sent to two pilot communities and local facilitators completed training virtually. While one community partially completed surveying, the other was forced to put surveying on hold as lockdown measures and safety protocols were adjusted. Support for surveying will resume in the future when it is safe to complete.

COVID-19 and its related public health measures demonstrated once again the well-being impacts of the on-going housing crisis. Quarantine and isolation measures were difficult to adhere to in contexts where overcrowding and housing shortages are pervasive. In addition, it quickly became clear that the impacts of new regulations further exacerbated existing inequalities with particular gender and age-based outcomes. The NAN Housing Strategy team shifted focus to supporting local COVID-19 relief measures and demonstrating to the federal and provincial governments the need for various forms of emergency housing and safe housing.

As part of the shift in project focus caused by COVID-19 two smaller projects were identified for immediate action from earlier project learnings. The first project, *NAN Immediate Needs Technical Report*, looked to build integrated models for estimating immediate housing and infrastructure needs using existing data at the NAN level. Estimates were developed using data sources and looked to the scale of the on-going housing emergency and its interrelationship with infrastructure and community development planning processes. The second project reviewed the current *NAN Housing Procurement Project Management Toolkit* (NAN HPPMT) in light of workshop learnings. The review process identified potential improvements to the toolkit to better meet the needs of NAN First Nations.

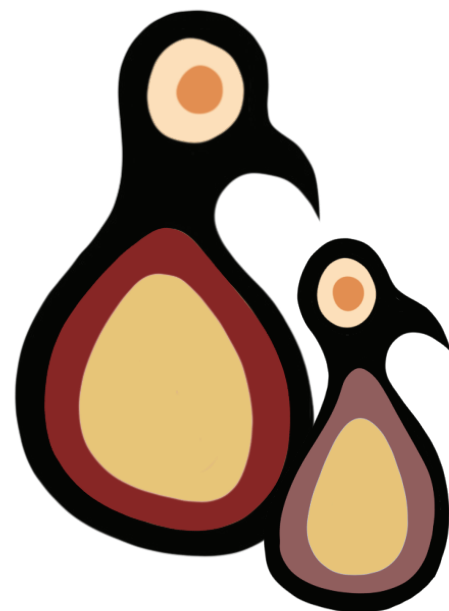
# Roadmap

The Roadmap is organized into seven thematic areas:

- Advocating for Inclusive Housing Systems
- Addressing Health Impacts of Housing
- Appropriate and Sustainable Design and Materials
- Integrated Infrastructure Planning
- Improving Funding Structures
- Governance and Policy Reform
- Capacity Development and Training

## Project Partners

Together Design Lab (TDL) at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University) provides technical, training and community engagement support. A team of students, staff and faculty with training in planning and architecture, TDL has extensive experience partnering with NAN First Nations supporting the self-determination and development of their housing systems. Relying on a collaborative and immersive approach the team believes that each community member brings valuable knowledge and experience to housing and infrastructure discussions. This approach asserts that innovative solutions to housing and housing related issues will arrive through self-determination, centring the values, goals and aspirations of communities. In addition, TDL looks to train a new generation of architects, designers and planners in working responsibly with First Nations, expanding disciplinary paradigms in an effort to work towards closing existing outcome gaps.

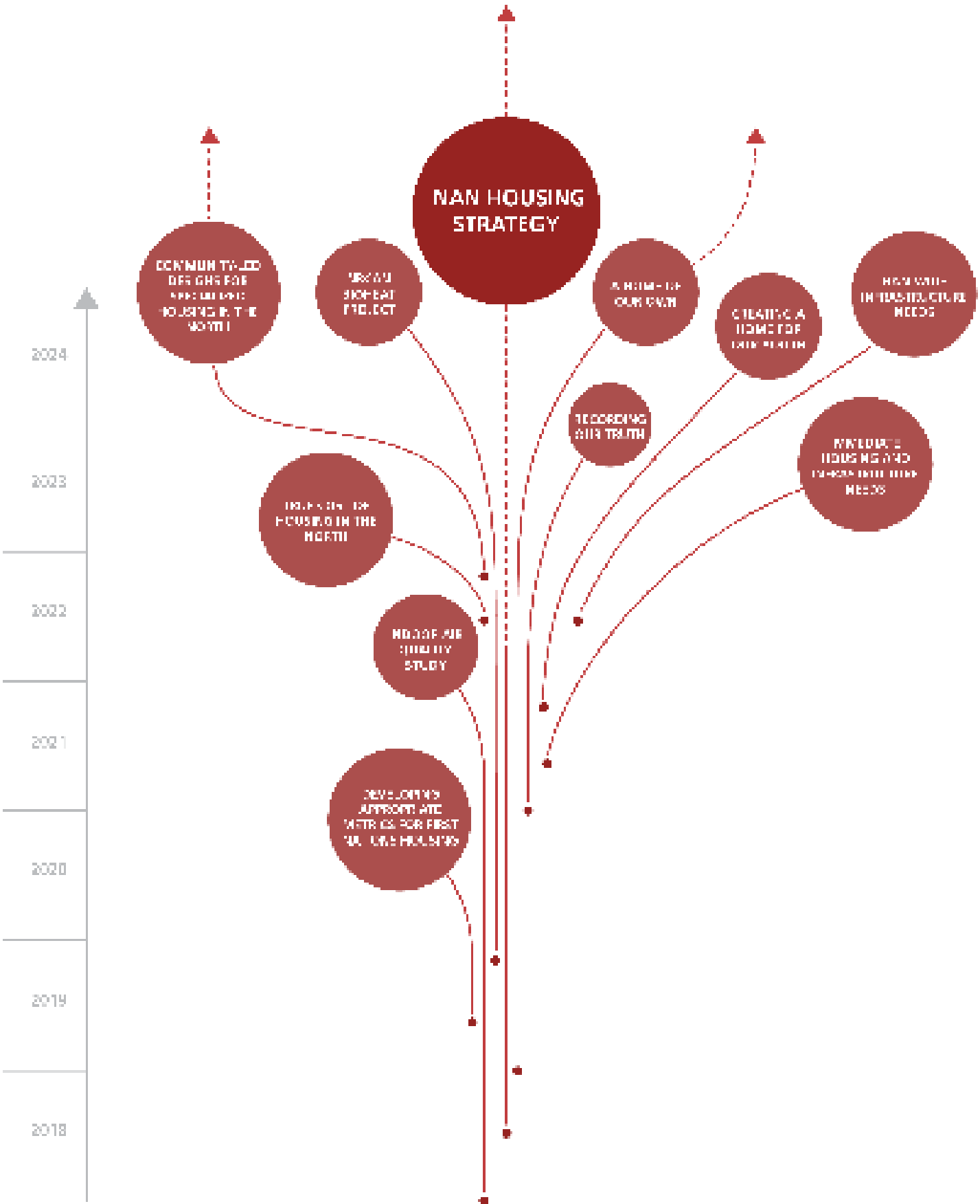


*Roadmap for the NAN Housing Strategy*

Over the last 3 years more than 400 community members have shared their experiences and knowledge on housing and infrastructure. During these discussions common themes emerged that were reviewed and refined into the seven main thematic areas of the Strategy: advocating for inclusive housing systems, addressing health impacts of housing, appropriate and sustainable design and materials, integrated infrastructure planning, improving funding structures, governance and policy reform, and capacity development and training. These areas present a wholistic understanding of the systems change required within housing and infrastructure that intersects with health and well-being, education, governance and climate change.

Given the Strategy’s focus on creating change, objectives, current actions, short- and long-term goals were identified within each of the seven themes. Each of the objectives and goals were developed from workshops and research undertaken during the development of the Strategy. Current actions identify projects already underway as a result of the Strategy, while objectives will need further development in order to meet short- and long-term goals. Discussions revealed how deeply entrenched housing inequity is for NAN First Nations. Ending the housing emergency requires the participation and support of both provincial and federal governments. This includes reforming federal policies, programs and funding mechanisms to create appropriate and stable funding for First Nations that addresses the outcomes caused by decades of failed colonial interventions.

The process of ending the housing emergency is complex and requires broad partnerships, on-going iteration, evaluation and advocacy. The need for sovereignty and self-determination in the housing system has been a priority for decades and was reiterated by community members throughout the Strategy’s development. Below, we describe the solutions outlined by members through the Strategy development. In May 2022, a draft of the Housing Strategy was presented at the NAN Spring Chiefs’ Assembly. Feedback on Strategy objectives and areas of priority were identified by Chiefs and have been integrated into the Strategy. In August 2022 an updated and final draft was presented and accepted by NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly at the annual Keewaywin Conference as Resolution 22/12: Acceptance and Implementation of NAN Housing Strategy Roadmap.



Several projects have contributed to the development of the NAN Housing Strategy and have been developed through Strategy engagements. Many of these projects are currently underway and will support the implementation of the NAN Housing Strategy objectives.



# Advocating for Inclusive Housing Systems

Across communities, members identified specific demographic groups experiencing unique challenges in accessing housing. Youth, single adults, Elders and those in need of emergency housing were most commonly identified as populations facing the greatest barriers to housing. Housing solutions for those in need go beyond providing physical shelter but also understanding the supports needed to succeed in homes. In order to advocate for appropriate housing and supports for all NAN members, understanding the unique housing journeys experienced by different members is key to advocating for change.

## OBJECTIVES

- Understand youth journeys to access housing on- and off-reserve
- Document how the concept of home can be an important tool in building community wellness moving forward
- Support the development of community-based models for a continuum of care
- Support the development of models for emergency housing continuum

## Understand youth journeys to access housing on- and off-reserve

Many youth described the difficulty in obtaining housing in their community. The predominance of three or more bedrooms units across NAN means that youth and single adults needing their own space are often met with no immediate solution. Workshop participants spoke about the desire for a space of their own related to a need for privacy and feelings of safety, hope and independence. With limited housing options on-reserve youth are forced to live in overcrowded housing, couch surf or off-reserve into urban environments. Education, child welfare, health, justice and other governmental systems also remove NAN youth from their communities, displacing them and creating new housing challenges in urban centres.

Overcrowding was one of the most commonly identified issues with participants sharing that the creation of smaller units would begin to address the issue. Many youth are forced into overcrowded situations where they feel both unhappy and unsafe, but also with nowhere else to go. Participants shared that having their own space would directly impact mental health and well-being. Having a private room provides space to be alone, relax, study and pursue hobbies and interests. Private space was also mentioned as being an important for self-care and having space needed for healing.

Learnings from youth support the recommendations of the Seven Youth Inquest. The inquest described the need to, “address the critical housing shortage” on reserve and ensure “a well-coordinated suite of housing (...) supports and services” in urban centres as a critical social determinant of health.

## CURRENT ACTIONS



### Creating a Home for Our Youth

*Funded, on-going*

**Creating a Home for Our Youth** looks to approach housing for First Nations youth in the NAN territory holistically, understanding current experiences, mapping and evaluating systems and programs and visioning alternative housing solutions. Through this series of interviews it is expected that a number of disjunctures will be revealed where the existing housing system fails in providing or improving housing situations. The findings from this project will be used to advocate for program and policy changes both on- and off-reserve creating clearer pathways towards housing for all youth.



Youth workshop in Kasabonika Lake First Nation.

### SHORT-TERM GOALS *By August 2024*

- Identify housing needs and supports for a diversity of youth including youth transitioning out of care, youth returning to their communities and youth seeking their own homes or independent living in-community.
- Develop policy recommendations for youth housing on and off-reserve that informs all levels of government
- Support the work of Choose Life, Family Well-Being Program and other child welfare services in improving access to youth housing and related supportive services

### LONG-TERM GOALS *By August 2027*

- Support policy and program reform for youth housing service provision on and off-reserve at all levels of government

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- First Nations youth have improved access to housing both on and off-reserve

Document how the concept of home can be an important tool in building community wellness moving forward

The concept of home needs to be understood through the perspectives of community members from childhood to old age. For too long the colonial policies of the Government of Canada have disrupted family connections to self, community and land and created obstacles for individuals in communities to achieving health and wellness in their traditional territories. To understand the roots of home within the NAN territory, passed on through ancestors despite policies of assimilation, the collective housing journeys of community members must be documented and shared to influence wholistic understanding of housing and home.

**SHORT-TERM GOALS** *By August 2024*

- Complete interviews with Elders from NAN territory
- Chronicle the housing journey of NAN First Nations over the past 100 years
- Begin to identify culturally relevant housing performance indicators through *Recording Our Truth* learnings

**LONG-TERM GOALS** *By August 2027*

- Co-develop culturally relevant indicators measuring community wellness related to housing and infrastructure
- Inform housing policy development through an evaluation framework that monitors community wellness in relation to housing and infrastructure

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- First Nation housing policies establish a wholistic understanding of housing in NAN territory that builds community wellness and improves home and connection to land

CURRENT ACTIONS



Recording Our Truth

Funded, on-going

**Recording Our Truth** looks to trace how understandings of home have changed in NAN territory and document how the concept of home can be an important tool in building community wellness moving forward. Through a series of interviews with Nishnawbe Aski Nation Elders, knowledge holders and other members with special lived experience we will record changes to the concept of home and its impact on the built environment over the last century.



Support the development of community-based models for a continuum of care

Providing housing to meet all community members’ needs requires exploring community-based models for a continuum of care. A continuum of care creates alignment between the physical or mental health needs of an occupant, the design of housing or care spaces and the complementary programs and services that provide the supports to remain in-community. Currently, few supportive housing options are available on-reserve and existing home and community care programs are limited by the constraints of the First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care program. While additional public options are available in urban centres, they often have long waitlists, force members to leave their families and do not provide the connection to culture, language and community desired by most.

In meetings and workshops hosted with Elders, housing was discussed at the community scale and Elders’ specific needs. Many Elders shared the changes they had seen in housing over time and the impacts of housing they witness and experience today. A priority for housing for older adults is to age in place and receive required levels of care; ensuring also that they can continue to play a vital role in their communities. Elders shared different ideas including being able to stay in their own homes and receive care and seniors complexes or lodges that provide independent and supportive living options. Conversations with Elders about housing were often focused on social inclusion, maintaining supportive relationships with family and continuing their cultural role while having a safe place to live either independently or with regular care.

SHORT-TERM GOALS *By August 2024*

- Identify and review existing supportive housing program supports provincially and federally
- Advocate for home care programs and policies which allow for residents to stay in their homes longer with Health Transformation
- Develop a NAN-focused continuum of housing to support members who are currently unhoused (on- and off-reserve) using a systems approach

LONG-TERM GOALS *By August 2027*

- Support the implementation of supportive on-reserve housing models – housing toolkit or community building designs
- Identify and implement improved homecare and respite programs to allow NAN members to live in their homes and home communities with Health Transformation

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Align with Health Transformation’s policy reform on supportive housing as part of on-going transfer of care and control of housing to First Nations

CURRENT ACTIONS

- Supporting Health Transformation team in the identification of appropriate typologies of continuum of care models for NAN communities.
- The Housing Supply Challenge project **Community Led Designs for Specialized Housing in the North** (CLDSHN) received full funding from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s (CMHC) in order to develop shovel ready design for greatest need populations: housing for single adults, emergency housing and housing with supports.

Support the development of models for emergency housing continuum

Very few NAN communities have any emergency housing units. Individuals or families experiencing crises or in need of housing with additional supports have been forced into precarious situations in their community as well as urban centres and often are forced to seek suitable housing away from their homes. Participants made clear the need for emergency and transitional units to be made available in each community to ensure that those individuals and families experiencing crisis could continue to have the connection and support of their family and community. A variety of emergency housing models may be required to meet the needs of each community based on size, remoteness or supports or capacity available.

In addition to the limited number of emergency units available, community members spoke to unique challenges faced in NAN territory that can create the need for emergency housing. This finding supports Chiefs-in-Assembly Resolution 17/37: NAN-wide Homelessness Strategy and Prevention which describes how the “vastly different realities in the delivery of services” on-reserve can, “contribute to poverty and homelessness among NAN members”. It was identified that in order to improve homelessness prevention mechanisms, it was important to better identify the pathways into being unhoused for NAN members.

CURRENT ACTIONS

The Housing Supply Challenge project **Community Led Designs for Specialized Housing in the North** (CLDSHN) received full funding from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s (CMHC) in order to develop shovel ready design for greatest need populations: housing for single adults, emergency housing and housing with supports.

“ 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.”

- NAN Women’s Council

SHORT-TERM GOALS By August 2024

- Identify emergency and transitional housing models and complementary supports required for members experiencing intimate partner or family violence as well as for members exiting incarceration or justice system
- Increased partnership between First Nations, District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSAB) and Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to support improved access to emergency housing with supportive health and social services

LONG-TERM GOALS By August 2027

- Support the development of emergency housing on reserve that is connected to required associated services/supports
- Integrate social services case management approach which aligns housing supports with health and social services

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Culturally appropriate and adequate transitional and emergency housing in NAN First Nations

# Addressing Health Impacts of Housing

An impact of inadequate housing and related infrastructure within NAN territory is poorer health outcomes for community members, including the most vulnerable. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the issues of overcrowding, poor indoor air quality and greater spread of communicable disease. The true impacts of inadequate housing and infrastructure must be properly understood to improve the physical and mental health of community members.

## OBJECTIVES

- Address on-going health impacts of inadequate housing and infrastructure

## Address on-going health impacts of inadequate housing and infrastructure

Through partnerships, the on-going health impacts of housing in First Nations need to be well understood to ensure community health and well-being. Negative housing outcomes from poor material, construction quality, overcrowding or limited funding for repairs and maintenance impacts the physical and mental well-being of community members. Developing partnerships with health researchers to identify and understand the full impacts of inadequate housing is key to identifying and advocating for effective solutions.

### CURRENT ACTIONS

#### Indoor Air Quality Study with Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority

*Completed*

The **Clean Air Project** was mandated by NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly through Resolution 17/30: NAN Clean Air Project to improve the indoor air quality of First Nations housing on-reserve through the proper installation and operation of Heat Recovery Ventilation (HRV) systems. The project recognized poor indoor air quality was linked to substandard and inadequate housing and permitted NAN to participate in an indoor air quality study with Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority for children ages 0 to 4.

Projected findings were published in the article: *Indoor Environmental Quality and the Respiratory Health of First Nations Children in The Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority Region*. <https://www.cmaj.ca/content/194/3/E80>



SHORT-TERM GOALS <i>By August 2024</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review or participate in health studies related to adverse health outcomes (such as skin conditions) and inadequate housing on-reserve</li> <li>• Support child welfare services in identifying and meeting immediate housing and infrastructure needs to improve health outcomes</li> </ul>
LONG-TERM GOALS <i>By August 2027</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-develop an evaluation framework that includes culturally relevant indicators measuring community wellness related to housing and infrastructure, tracking poor health outcomes linked to inadequate housing and infrastructure and improved health outcomes linked to upgraded housing and infrastructure</li> <li>• Advocate for policy change to improve health and well-being of community members through implementation of evaluation framework in NAN First Nations</li> </ul>
EXPECTED OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved physical and mental health of community members through measurement of community health and well-being indicators related to housing and infrastructure as co-developed by NAN and other First Nation-led organizations</li> </ul>



*“ Every home is like a puzzle piece,  
everyone is connected.”*

*- Workshop participant,  
Brunswick House First Nation*

# Appropriate & Sustainable Design & Materials

The ubiquity of 3- and 4-bedroom detached housing, designed to replicate models common across southern, suburban Ontario were identified as a contributing factor to the inadequacy and inappropriateness of housing. However, housing professionals identified that current funding mechanisms, program timelines and existing capacity levels did not allow for investment in the pre-construction process that could generate locally-appropriate designs. The co-creation of alternative housing designs which align with the specific needs and priorities of those community members experiencing the greatest housing need would allow for First Nations to build and develop housing directly addressing the housing emergency. Designs and implementation plans, will then be distributed to all First Nations allowing for the widespread adoption of new housing designs.

Housing will be designed with consideration to climates and geographies of NAN territory. This also includes understanding the growing impacts of climate change, limits of current infrastructure and the need for sustainable, energy efficient and resilient design solutions.

## OBJECTIVES

- Co-create housing solutions for youth
- Develop shovel-ready housing plans and community building designs for those in greatest need

## Co-create housing solutions for youth

On-reserve, persistent housing shortages and limited 1- or 2-bedroom options means youth cannot obtain housing of their own, forced instead to share or couch surf, often in crowded situations. Understanding the unique challenges youth face in accessing and maintaining housing as well as their own visions for home will begin to identify gaps and opportunities for change.

### SHORT-TERM GOALS *By August 2024*

- Completed youth housing designs through a co-design process to respond to youth specific needs while being appropriate for local climate and geography
- Build *A Home of Our Own* prototype on NAN territory as a pilot project to test and refine design

### LONG-TERM GOALS *By August 2027*

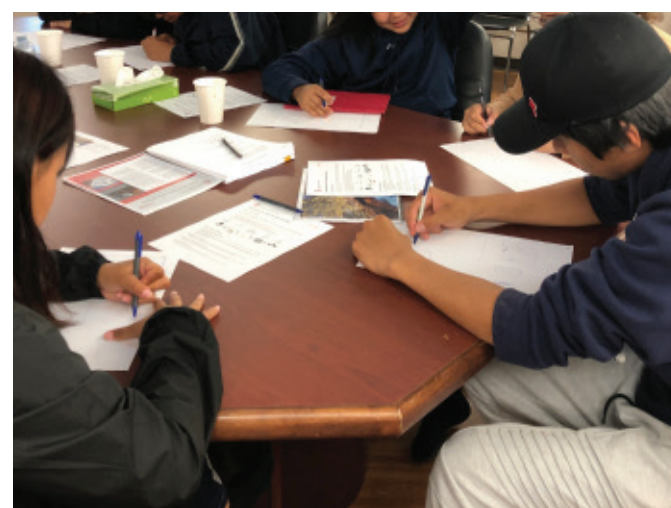
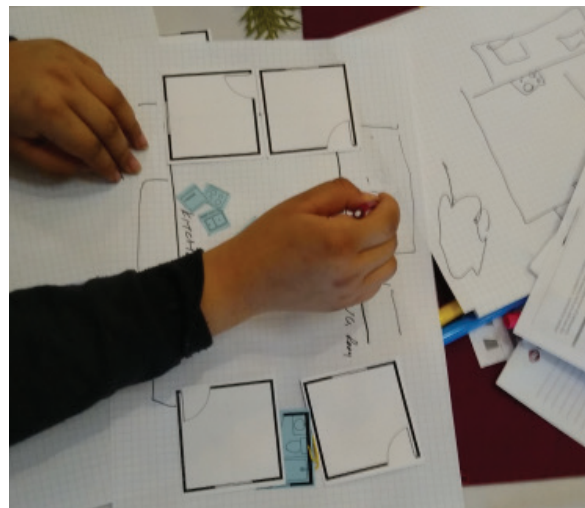
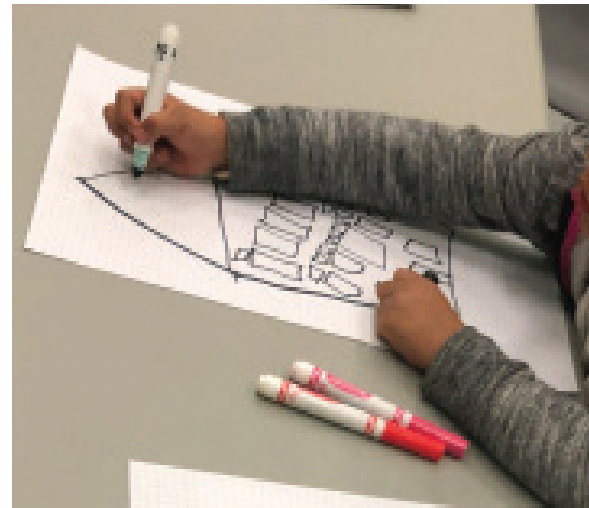
- Share refined youth housing designs with NAN First Nations and support the development of hub model subdivisions

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Housing or housing subdivisions for young people in NAN First Nations

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

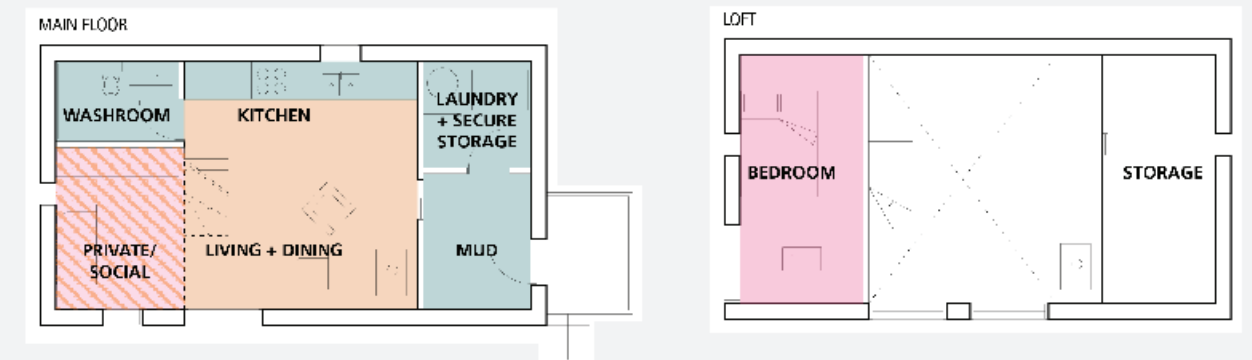
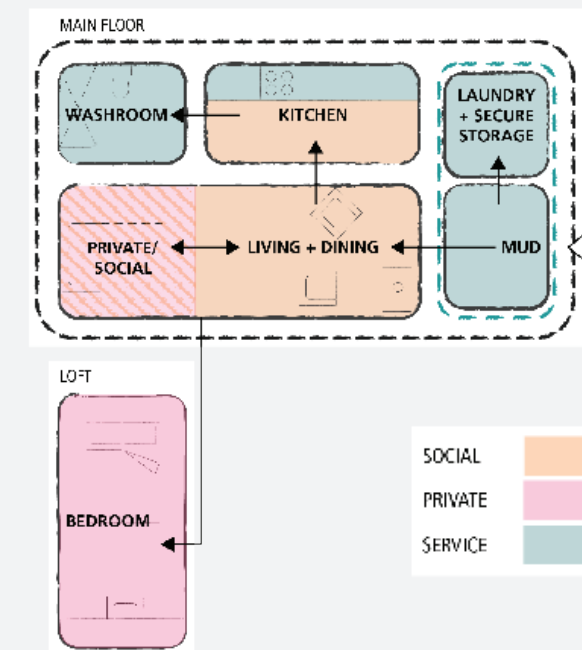
- NAN Oshkaatisak Council



Clockwise from top left: NAN Youth Gathering 2020, community workshop in Slate Falls Nation, youth workshop in Cat Lake First Nation, and NAN Youth Gathering 2020.

Engagements with youth were hosted in-community and at NAN Youth Gathering events in-person and virtually. Many youth shared their ideas for housing and sketches from these events were analyzed for key features and spatial arrangements, contributing to the development of *A Home of Our Own*.

## CURRENT ACTIONS



### A Home of Our Own

*Partial funding, on-going*

**A Home of Our Own** looks to pilot a design and build process for youth-specific housing in NAN First Nations. Youth will be engaged throughout the building process with the pilot acting as a learning-lab to develop skills and understanding in construction systems, energy efficiency and building science. Multiple partners will be engaged in the construction of this small home to ensure maximum benefit for the community while developing the framework for other small home builds in NAN territory.



## Develop shovel-ready housing plans and community building designs for those in greatest need

Countering the ubiquity of 3- and 4-bedroom detached houses on-reserve that are not appropriate for all populations, a process of co-creation will be undertaken to provide communities with shovel-ready housing plans that address current inequitable outcomes. The co-creation process will also support the development of community building designs geared towards individuals and families experiencing greatest need. Co-creating housing plans with NAN community members will reduce barriers to accessing design alternatives and will ensure housing plans are designed for the geographies and climates of NAN territory.

### CURRENT ACTIONS

#### Community Led Designs for Specialized Housing in the North

*Funded, on-going*

The Housing Supply Challenge project **Community Led Designs for Specialized Housing in the North** (CLDSHN) received full funding from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s (CMHC) Housing Supply Challenge in order to develop shovel ready design for greatest need populations: housing for single adults, emergency housing and housing with supports.

The co-creation of alternative housing designs which align with the specific needs and priorities of those community members experiencing the greatest housing need would allow for First Nations to build and develop housing directly addressing the housing emergency. Designs, and implementations plans, will then be distributed to all First Nations allowing for the widespread adoption of new housing designs.

### SHORT-TERM GOALS *By August 2024*

- Co-design a variety of housing options that meet diverse needs of NAN community members
- Develop a housing design implementation guide which demonstrates how alternative housing forms can be integrated appropriately into various contexts (includes: material options, foundation options, infrastructure connection possibilities and other adaptations)
- Work with relevant NAN departments, First Nations and Tribal Councils to support the design of culturally appropriate community buildings, such as daycares, youth centres and recreation spaces

### LONG-TERM GOALS *By August 2027*

- Review and expand co-design housing options, specification packages and material lists
- Provide on-going support to First Nations and First Nations opting to build/develop units from the NAN-developed guide

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Every NAN community has the option to use housing designs developed through co-creation using available funding programs

# Integrated Infrastructure Planning

Housing and infrastructure planning and development should be part of an integrated process. The current distinction between housing and infrastructure funding programs often offered by the federal government conflicts with understandings of home. All housing and infrastructure policies, programs and funding mechanisms should be designed to directly support community-identified needs using an integrated approach. Until housing and infrastructure plans are integrated the housing emergency will not end.

## OBJECTIVES

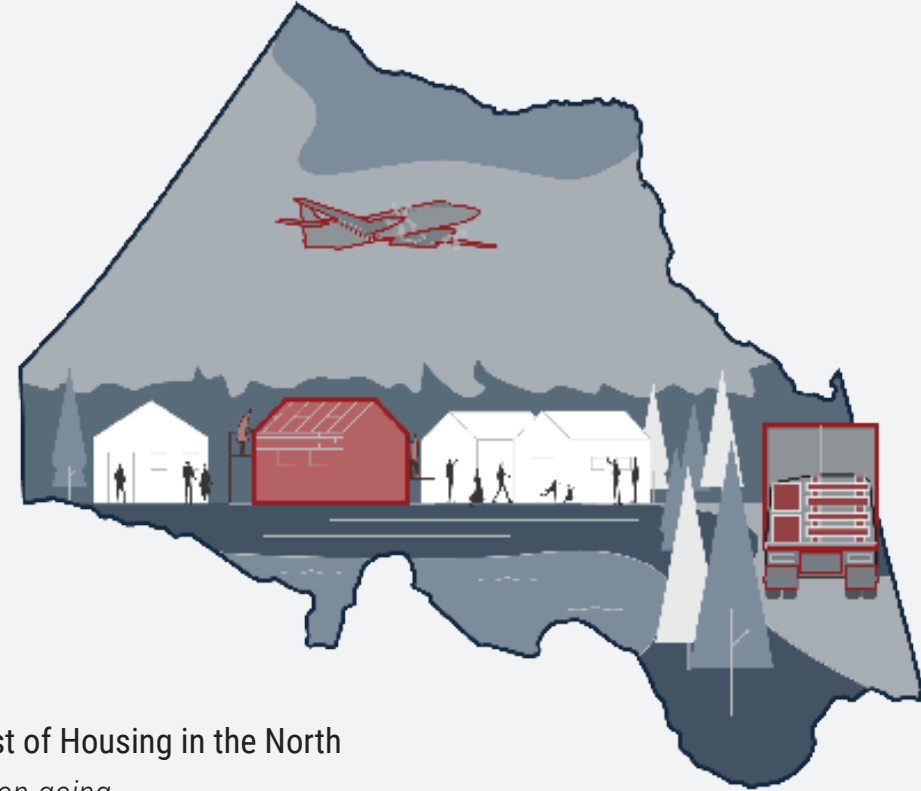
- Support the development of integrated community housing and infrastructure strategies
- Advocate for governments to address NAN's immediate housing and infrastructure needs

## Support the development of long-term community housing and infrastructure strategies

Community leaders and housing professionals across the territory described how housing development in their communities is being limited by existing infrastructure and availability of land suitable for development. The housing emergency can be understood as a symptom of a broader, historical lack of investment in on-reserve community infrastructure systems. Without serviced lots, water and wastewater capacity and electrical grid capacity amongst others, it will not be possible to develop additional homes. Only through an integrated process of planning and investment can First Nations appropriately develop the housing required to address the current emergency.

Beyond the need for infrastructure systems that directly support housing development, community members shared the need to develop complete communities that consider wholistic well-being. Discussions focused on the limited access and availability of public spaces, recreation spaces and community spaces on-reserve and how these distinctions compared with nearby municipalities. Community members emphasized the relationship between well-being and these community assets, describing that their communities needed to be environments that supported individuals throughout their lives and promoted cohesion. Community-focused infrastructure should be included in the integrated planning process described above, aligning the development of community assets with housing and infrastructure to support long-term wellness and community growth.

## CURRENT ACTIONS



### True Cost of Housing in the North

*Funded, on-going*

The **True Cost of Housing in the North** project which seeks to identify the true cost of building and completing housing projects across NAN territory using community information on completed housing and infrastructure projects. Information will be used to create a model which accurately demonstrates cost considerations such as average costs by distance or remoteness and will be compared to current funding programs.

### NAN-wide Infrastructure Needs Assessment

*On-going*

The Government of Canada has committed to closing the infrastructure gap in First Nations by 2030. NAN must determine its current infrastructure needs and support the development of asset management plans for all community assets to ensure intended design life is met through adequate operation and maintenance. NAN communities will need to review their current infrastructure assets to determine the gap that exists within the infrastructure servicing the current population on-reserve, as well as estimate population growth and its impacts on determining infrastructure needs to and beyond 2030. In this review communities must consider both funded and non-funded capital assets when reviewing their infrastructure needs.

### SHORT-TERM GOALS *By August 2024*

- Complete an infrastructure needs assessment to understand current infrastructure gap on-reserve
- Support community readiness by advocating for training of housing professionals in asset managing planning
- Review updated Cost Reference Manual and its current policy implications for housing and infrastructure on-reserve

### LONG-TERM GOALS *By August 2027*

- Advocate for expanded community assets and infrastructure as needed
- Support communities in the development of asset management plans for all capital assets on-reserve
- Compare and determine actual O&M needs of all capital project costs against updated Cost Reference Manual
- Advocate for 100% funding of actual operation and maintenance costs of all capital assets

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- All First Nations have asset management plans for all capital assets in place to ensure every asset meets its intended design life



## Advocate for governments to address NAN's immediate housing and infrastructure needs

While many of the actions outlined in this Roadmap provide a pathway towards the systemic changes required for the long-term provision of appropriate housing to all NAN members, immediate action must be taken to address the current housing and infrastructure emergency. In order to develop the required number of houses and related infrastructure substantial short-term investment in housing and infrastructure must be made. This short-term investment would address the historical and on-going marginalization of NAN members through the built environment and ensure that other Roadmap activities could be undertaken outside of the context of immediate crisis or emergency. NAN will continue to advocate to both levels of government to address the identified immediate housing and infrastructure needs.

### CURRENT ACTIONS

#### Immediate Housing & Infrastructure Needs Technical Report

*Funded, on-going*

In order to understand current housing and infrastructure needs existing data was reviewed to generate an aggregated estimate for NAN Territory. A model developed using publicly available and NAN internal documents demonstrated that up to 7,588 new houses are needed in NAN territory to meet current housing and infrastructure needs. NAN Immediate Housing Needs Short Survey was shared in Spring 2022 to collect additional community information which can provide greater detail on: current housing waitlists; types of future housing planned; number of existing or serviceable lots; and future growth plans.

### SHORT-TERM GOALS *By August 2024*

- Advocate for significant short-term investment in housing and required infrastructure to address current housing need to end the on-going housing emergency
- Develop an evaluation framework of how government housing and infrastructure investments are meeting immediate housing needs of NAN First Nations

### LONG-TERM GOALS *By August 2027*

- Long-term funding investments for housing and related infrastructure such as lot development, water and wastewater, roads, hydro, etc. as determined by First Nations
- Increase in subdivision development with decentralized infrastructure
- Reduce water and sewer truck delivery on-reserve

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- All immediate needs for housing and related infrastructure on-reserve are met by 2030

# Improving Funding Structures

Stable, predictable funding and programming is needed to support robust local housing systems. Within NAN the number of homes built annually is losing pace to existing housing need and replacement need forcing members to live in overcrowded homes or forcing members away from their communities into urban centres. Additionally, for decades the cost of housing in northern, rural and remote communities has been substantially higher and this gap continues to increase with changes to the costs of construction materials and freight.

## OBJECTIVES

- Advocate for change to create long-term sustainable funding streams which meet community needs and align funding cycles with building seasons

## **Advocate for change to create long-term sustainable funding streams which meet community needs and align funding cycles with building seasons**

Government support, offered through both Indigenous Services Canada (ISC and predecessor agencies) as well as CMHC, relies primarily on annual or one-off funding applications. Often, these programs are tied to government fiscal years which are misaligned with northern building cycles. This system creates instability and does not account for the needed long-term community and infrastructure planning. Moving towards multi-year community planning-based funding models can create predictability and efficiency. Eliminating the constant cycle of program identification, application writing, follow-ups and reporting to multiple agencies would reduce the burden on already overworked Band staff. Additionally, allowing First Nation to create long-term housing development goals, rather than responding to specific criteria of funding programs would support self-determination and the development of a more appropriate housing stock.

Federal funding programs, new or existing, should reduce or eliminate application barriers. General funding programs or thematic funding programs must recognize the different building conditions and construction timelines in northern communities. Proposal requirements should also recognize the differing material or construction standards of northern communities and limitations of existing infrastructure. Applications should have clear and transparent evaluation criteria. Government programs, policies and funding mechanisms have the ability to support local self-determination and the development of better housing by supporting the plans and goals of First Nations.

**SHORT-TERM GOALS** *By August 2024*

- Advocate for First Nation-led multi-year, predictable funding programs sufficient to meet diverse community needs

**LONG-TERM GOALS** *By August 2027*

- Regularly review and evaluate funding programs and advocate for increased support as needed

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- Long-term sustainable funding for housing on-reserve



Cat Lake First Nation



# Governance & Policy Reform

First Nations self-determination of local housing systems— from community planning and housing design, to governance— is essential to achieving lasting change. First Nations have the right, as stated in the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), to create, maintain and strengthen their own housing institutions with the ensured support of government partners — a right which is not currently being fulfilled. Current process and policies need to be reviewed and updated in order to fully realize First Nations control of housing.

## OBJECTIVES

- Develop NAN appropriate tendering and procurement protocols
- Identify and develop best practices for data stewardship and management
- Identify best practices for building standards in the north
- Support the transfer of care and control of housing to First Nations

## Develop NAN appropriate tendering and procurement protocols

The pre-development phase was identified as a critical phase of the construction process that can impact the quality of housing built. In discussions participants identified a range of challenges including: accessing high quality and climatic appropriate materials; lack of familiarity and support in tendering and procurement processes; short timelines that do not reflect the unique seasonality of building in NAN territory; and budgets which do not support the full cost of materials for northern conditions. An updated NAN Procurement and Tendering guide can identify common barriers and potential solutions and resources.

### CURRENT ACTIONS

#### Reviewing tendering and procurement processes

*Funded, on-going*

Improving tendering and procurement processes for NAN First Nations, identifying best practices and developing resources to support Chiefs and Councils and housing managers

**SHORT-TERM GOALS** *By August 2024*

- Develop a NAN-relevant guide outlining tendering and procurement processes, best practices and resources with Tribal Councils and First Nation-led organizations
- Create a resource list of individuals or companies with experience working in NAN or similar geographies and/or with cultural competency training and practice
- Investigate the development of a code of ethics for external professionals/companies to follow while working with NAN communities
- Facilitate purchasing partnerships between NAN First Nation-led organizations

**LONG-TERM GOALS** *By August 2027*

- Review and update resources as needed with feedback from First Nations and Tribal Councils

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- NAN-specific guide for tendering and procurement of housing on-reserve



*“ The construction process should try to maintain as much of the natural landscape as possible and restore it afterwards. Removing plants and topsoil and replacing with gravel and sand can lead to erosion and washout and also contributes to large amounts of dust. This can impact health, especially for the young and old.”*

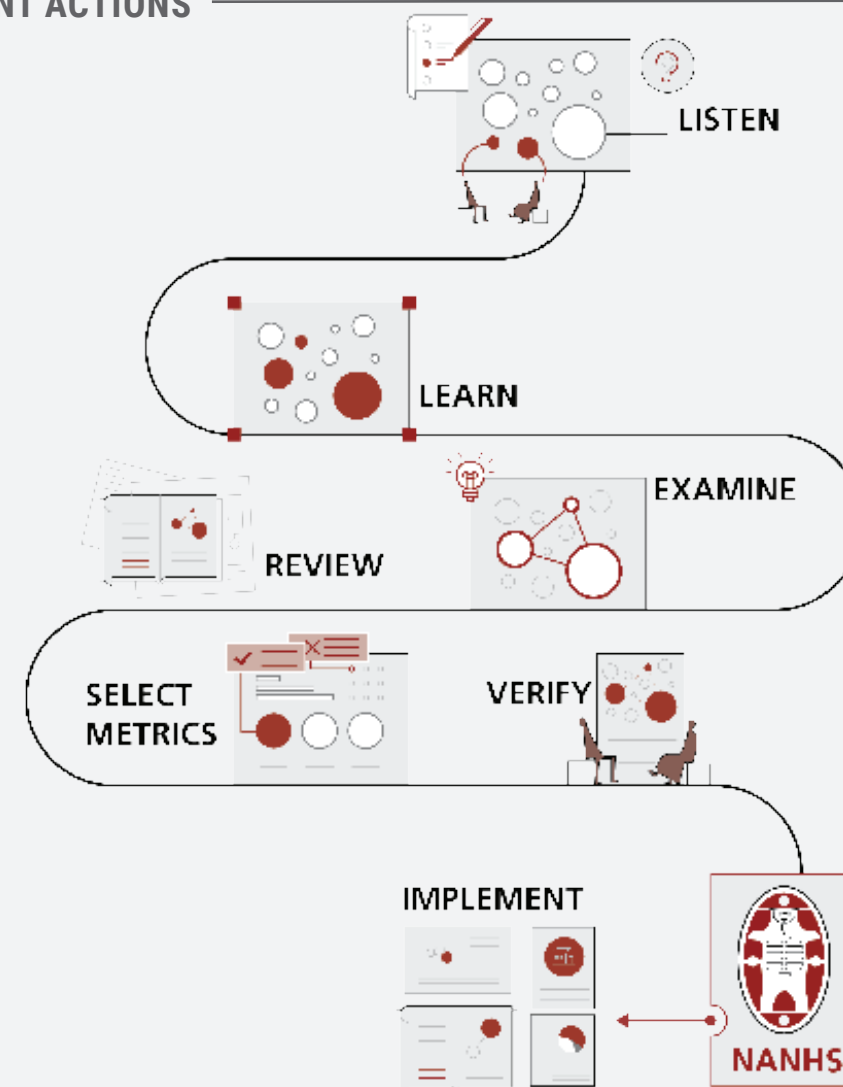
*- Elder,  
Cat Lake First Nation*

## Identify and develop best practices for data stewardship and management

A focus on community-defined need represents a significant shift away from universal understandings of housing need, which have dominated federal public policy responses. Measuring community-defined need requires the creation of a new framework for housing evaluation. By changing the framework and evaluation standards, communities can collect high quality, relevant data that can better inform housing and infrastructure solutions for short-term and long-term planning. Data sovereignty represents an important step towards self-determination in housing systems; wherein communities define their priorities, create plans based on their findings and evaluate success through on-going measurement.

The housing survey developed from workshops with NAN community members provides an alternative to the status quo. Throughout discussions NAN members spoke to the interconnectedness of housing, community development and well-being. This wholistic understanding of housing guided the development of the NAN Housing Survey.

Ownership and control over collected data is important aspect of housing self-determination. Whether communities are undertaking their own housing survey or contracting out the job, all data management and data use should be decided by the First Nation. It is important for NAN and First Nations who are collecting data to have the tools or supports to ensure their data is collected, analyzed and used appropriately.



## Developing Appropriate First Nations Housing Metrics: Nishnawbe Aski Nation

*Funded, completed*

This project was funded by CMHC's National Housing Strategy Solutions Lab program. Through engagements with 8 First Nations and over 400 community members, NAN and its partner Together Design Lab developed metrics relevant to individual and community experiences of housing on-reserve. As a result, two surveys were created, one for road access communities and one for fly-in communities. The Covid-19 pandemic prevented the survey from being piloted in-person to refine its utility in establishing local housing needs assessments, plans and goals. However, piloting will continue as part of Strategy goals.



**SHORT-TERM GOALS** *By August 2024*

- Pilot housing survey in NAN First Nations to determine local housing needs and demonstrate utility of local housing needs assessment process
- Collect housing and infrastructure data available at Indigenous Services Canada data through infrastructure needs assessment
- Determine how data collected by infrastructure needs assessment will be stored and accessed using OCAP™ principles

**LONG-TERM GOALS** *By August 2027*

- Local housing needs assessments are undertaken at regular intervals to track housing outcomes and priorities
- Project funding responds to community identified needs based on local housing needs assessments
- Metrics development process supports First Nations in developing their own metrics/ survey questions to add or amend to the base surveys
- Survey guide to conduct local housing needs assessment is revised with further feedback to meet different community needs

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- Database of NAN housing and infrastructure needs to advocate for long-term investments

**Identify best practices for building standards in the north**

Building in the north requires identifying, understanding and sharing best practices that support appropriate and safe housing construction and maintenance over the long-term. As well, understanding and developing appropriate building standards requires input beyond strictly technical experience. Elders within NAN territory have expressed the need to integrate traditional knowledge of home and housing into the built forms of communities moving forward.

Housing and infrastructure must be constructed appropriately for the changing climate and geographies across NAN territory. Discussions in community supported existing data which demonstrated that housing on-reserve, and particular in the north and fly-in communities has a much shorter lifecycle. Housing professionals shared that the quality of housing and infrastructure materials impacts individual and community well-being. Appropriate materials aid in the construction of safe homes, ensuring that homes will be lasting, warm, dry and free of mould. It was identified that increasing minimum building standards, to reflect the regional context would support an increase in the lifecycle– or longevity– of housing. However, mechanisms would need to be put in place to support the enforcement of building standards throughout the construction process.

Locally-relevant building standards will also assist in the mitigation of on-going climate-related environmental changes. Recognizing the impact of changing conditions on the built environment, and ensuring that new development incorporates a higher standard of resiliency and more sustainable practices will reduce long-term housing costs and the burden on emergency units.



## Support the transfer of care and control of housing to First Nations

Currently the 1996 On-Reserve Housing Policy of the federal government maintains it “allows First Nations to play a key role in how, where and when housing funds are invested” and is guided by principles of “First Nations control, First Nations expertise, shared responsibilities and increased access to private sector financing.” While the 1996 On-Reserve Housing Policy mandated the creation of community housing plans, mechanisms were not created to allow for a complete planning process or long-term support. Housing is an important part of an integrated planning process– along with economic development, land use and community infrastructure– which should represent the values, goals and aspirations of community members and support individual and community wellness. Any transfer of care and control of housing to First Nations must recognize the historical factors that led to failure of the 1996 On-Reserve Housing Policy and must fully support all aspects of First Nation-led housing systems.

SHORT-TERM GOALS <i>By August 2024</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support First Nation-led housing policy development and implementation</li><li>• Review existing housing authorities or governance models in First Nations and relevance for NAN First Nation communities</li></ul>
LONG-TERM GOALS <i>By August 2027</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advocate for policy reform with Indigenous Services Canada regarding the 1996 On-Reserve Housing Policy</li><li>• Support on-going transfers of care and control of housing to First Nations within NAN territory</li></ul>
EXPECTED OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revision or change of the 1996 On-Reserve Housing Policy</li><li>• Transition to First Nation care and control of housing</li></ul>





# Capacity Development & Training

A reliance on external labour for housing development creates economic leakage and misses an opportunity to create jobs and local economic development. Housing professionals shared that a significant skills training gap exists and that interested community members face significant barriers to obtaining accreditations of credentials for working in the housing system. To support long-term sustainability of housing systems, it was identified that pathways towards skills training must be created and local labour forces supported.

## OBJECTIVES

- Support training programs and pathways for developing housing capacity within community

## Support training programs and pathways for developing housing capacity within community

Training provided in community settings allows for local skills and knowledge development in housing projects within First Nation communities rather than community members travelling to urban centres and facing the challenges associated with being away from home. Mentorship opportunities and hands-on training within the local context of northern climates, geographies and cultures in housing and infrastructure projects will allow for greater local capacity to address the housing emergency in First Nations.

### CURRENT ACTIONS

#### NRCAN Bioheat Project: Growing Bioheat in Nishnawbe Aski Nation

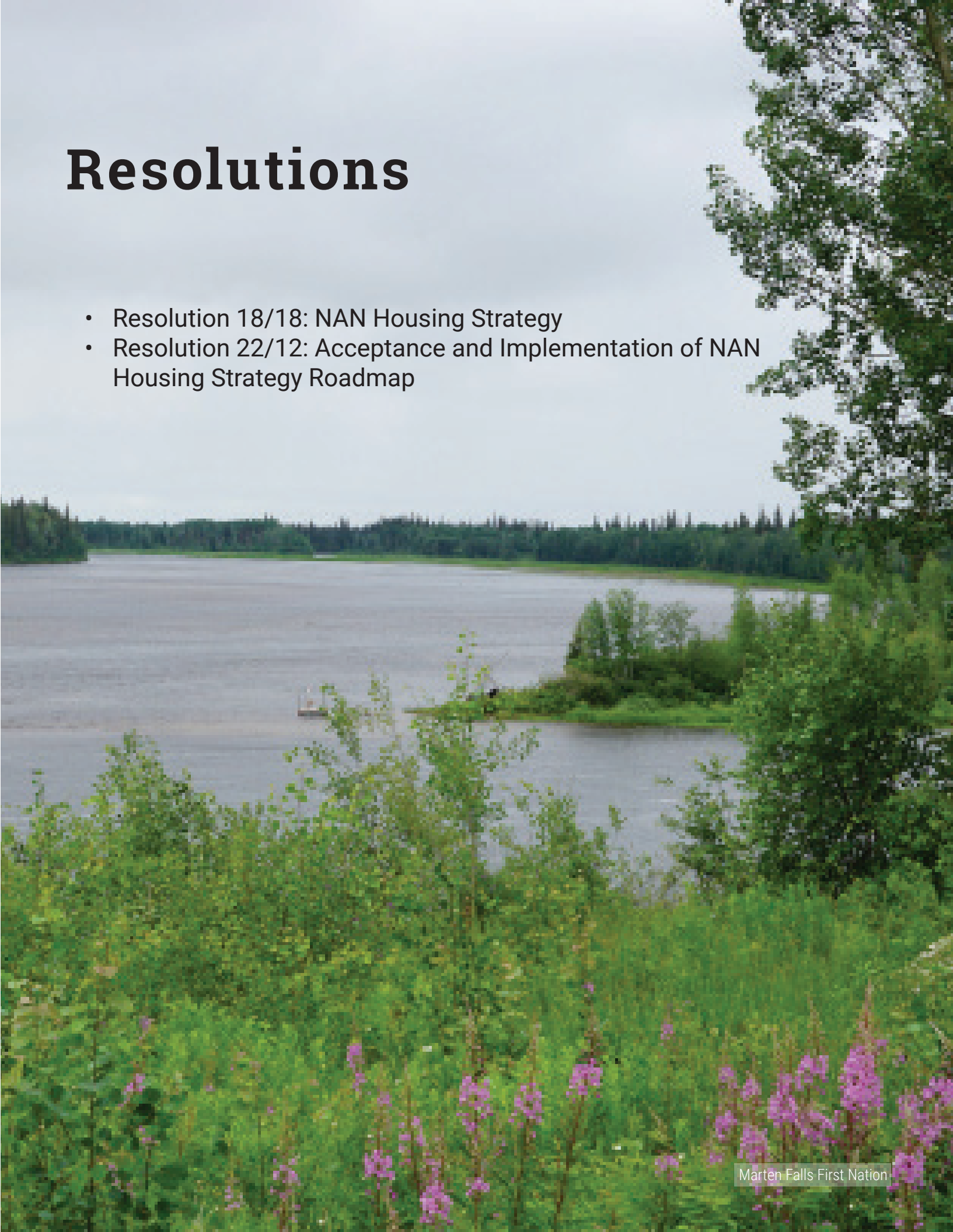
*Funded, on-going*

Funded by Natural Resources Canada and as mandated by NAN Chiefs through Amber’s Fire Safety Campaign, NAN has partnered with 11 First Nations to switch out old, unsafe woodstoves with new high efficiency woodstoves. Community members are taught to properly install and inspect these new woodstove systems using standards created by Wood Energy Technology Transfer (WETT) Inc. As well, they are given chainsaw safety and first aid training. This project builds local housing capacity by training community members to safely install, inspect and maintain wood heating systems on-reserve.

SHORT-TERM GOALS <i>By August 2024</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with First Nations organizations to increase opportunities for in-community training programs to support local skills development in housing</li> <li>• Identify and support opportunities for involvement and mentorship of youth in all parts of the building process (planning, consultation, design, construction)</li> <li>• Create opportunities for youth and Elders to work together on NAN housing projects</li> </ul>
LONG-TERM GOALS <i>By August 2027</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate to include trades and related skills/knowledge into education jurisdiction of NAN First Nations from K-12</li> <li>• Continue to advocate for training and skills development and mentoring in construction, trades, project management, civil architecture and engineering, environmental engineering, planning and other housing related fields</li> </ul>
EXPECTED OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater access to education and training programs in-community that develop housing capacity</li> </ul>

*“ I would like to see more training opportunities to specialize and more mentoring and internship opportunities to help build confidence of younger workers.”*

*- Workshop participant,  
Lac Seul First Nation*



# Resolutions

- Resolution 18/18: NAN Housing Strategy
- Resolution 22/12: Acceptance and Implementation of NAN Housing Strategy Roadmap



**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that the Executive will report on progress from time-to-time, and any Strategy will be subject to ratification at a future Chiefs Assembly;



# RESOLUTION

## Nishnawbe Aski Nation

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[FAX] 807-623-7730

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100 Back Street, Unit 200  
Thunder Bay, ON P7J 1L2



## 22/12

### ACCEPTANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NAN HOUSING STRATEGY ROADMAP

**WHEREAS** access to safe, appropriate, and adequate housing is of the highest priority for Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) First Nations, integral to the health, safety and well-being of all community members, and a requirement to address the on-going health and infrastructure crises facing NAN;

**WHEREAS** the right to housing is a Treaty right under Treaty No. 5 and Treaty No. 9;

**WHEREAS** the Government of Canada has denied NAN First Nations their Treaty right to housing and consistently denies this universal human right to housing, as recognized by the *United Nations International Bill of Rights*, and declared by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights for Indigenous People* (UNDRIP) in Article 21;

**WHEREAS** NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly passed Resolution 14/40: *NAN Collective Housing Emergency* declaring a collective housing state of emergency that continues today and has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects, significantly increasing the costs in the construction, labour, and transportation of housing and related infrastructure projects in NAN First Nations;

**WHEREAS** Chiefs-in-Assembly passed Resolution 18/18: *NAN Housing Strategy* and mandated the creation of a Housing Strategy that outlines the specific and unique needs of NAN First Nations and uses community values and priorities to generate a path forward to creating better, more appropriate, and adequate housing solutions for NAN communities;

**WHEREAS** the development of the NAN Housing Strategy is complete and requires a coordinated response by NAN, NAN First Nations, Tribal Councils, and government partners to implement the seven priorities determined by NAN communities;

**WHEREAS** in addition to a Housing Strategy, NAN First Nations require significant investment into housing and infrastructure projects on-reserve to address immediate needs, estimated to be a requirement of 7,588 housing units (according to NAN's Immediate Needs Housing & Infrastructure Technical Report 1.0 based on 2019 data);

**WHEREAS** the Government of Canada has committed to closing the infrastructure gap on-reserve by 2030, investing approximately \$2.4 billion in First Nations housing on-reserve over five years in Budget 2022, but falling well below the immediate need for housing in First Nations across Canada, currently estimated to be \$44 billion (according to a fiscal study completed by Assembly of First Nations in 2021);

## RESOLUTION 22/12: ACCEPTANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NAN HOUSING STRATEGY ROADMAP

**WHEREAS** the NAN Housing Strategy seeks to bridge gaps in current housing systems to improve individual and community health and well-being, and will require significant investments beyond federal Budget 2022 and beyond current funding programs for housing and infrastructure projects on-reserve from all levels of government to NAN First Nations;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that NAN Chiefs-in-Assembly support and adopt the Roadmap implementing the NAN Housing Strategy as a means to immediately address the on-going collective housing emergency, and to support the work of NAN First Nations in the self-determination of their housing systems;

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that the NAN Executive Council is mandated to advocate with the provincial and federal governments, as well as develop partnerships, for the resources required to implement the Housing Strategy;

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that Chiefs-in-Assembly call on Government of Canada to further commit to fund the diverse housing and infrastructure needs of NAN First Nations according to their unique needs, and support community growth over the long-term;

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED** that the Executive Council will report on progress on the implementation of the NAN Housing Strategy at future Chiefs Assemblies;

**FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED** that the implementation of this Resolution is without prejudice to similar existing or future projects at the First Nation or Tribal Council levels.

**DATED AT TIMMINS, THIS 9<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF AUGUST 2022.**

**MOVED BY:** Chief Alex Batise, Matachewan First Nation  
**SECONDED BY:** Chief Bruce Achneepineskum, Marten Falls First Nation  
**DECISION:** **CARRIED**

Grand Chief Derek Fox

Deputy Grand Chief



Nishnawbe Aski Nation  
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Nishnawbe Aski Nation

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