REPORT

Revisioning Coordinated Access:

Fostering Indigenous Best Practices Towards a Wholistic Systems Approach to Homelessness

Published by:

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and the
Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton

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March 2020

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Land Acknowledgment

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton recognize that the City of Hamilton is located on the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas. The land is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, which was an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek to share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. It is further acknowledged that this land is covered by the Between the Lakes Purchase, 1792, between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (Urban Indigenous Strategy, City of Hamilton, 2019).

Note

This report uses the W variant spelling of wholistic, to emphasize the inclusive meaning of the word, and reflecting the importance of the wholistic view, an Indigenous worldview that sees the whole person (physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual) as interconnected to land and in relationship to others (family, communities, nations). See also:
"'Wholistic': A Natural Evolution Of 'Holistic': The 'w' brings the meaning full circle" available at https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/wholistic-word-origin-and-use and Pidgeon, M. Indigenous Wholistic Framework in Cull, I., Hancock, R.L.A., McKeown, S., Pidgeon, M., and Vedan A. (2018). Pulling Together: A guide for Indigenization of post-secondary institutions. A professional learning series https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfrontlineworkers/chapter/indigenous-ways-of-knowing-and-being/

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge and give thanks to all the respondents and participants who shared their stories and expertise with us. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the Hamilton Aboriginal Community Advisory Board for directing the Social Planning Research Council of Hamilton to complete this work. Finally, we thank Aaron Segaert for his knowledge and consultation on this project.

Government of Canada
Gouvernement du Canada

This report was funded by the Community Capacity and Innovation Funds of the Reaching Home - Indigenous Stream, Employment and Social Development Canada.

Through our research and social planning services, the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton is committed to ensuring that Hamilton is the best community it can be for all that live here and that no one is left out of the benefits and opportunities Hamilton has to offer.

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Executive Summary

This report explores the national shift in addressing homelessness through a "coordinated access" approach and its impact on Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Launched April 1st, 2019, Reaching Home, Canada's national homelessness strategy, has required that all Designated Communities (i.e., urban centres in Canada) have a coordinated access system in place by March 31, 2022.

The focus of the report is largely on the Hamilton context, but also provides insights from Indigenous service providers across Canada. The goal of this research was to provide an overview of coordinated access and its impact on Indigenous communities. It does not represent a comprehensive review of coordinated access procedures and does not provide the complete national picture. In reading this report, it will be important for Indigenous community leaders to contextualize the findings to their own cultures, traditions, and knowledges.

This report takes an advocacy-focused, grassroots level approach. It recognizes that local community consultations need to happen prior to the implementation of coordinated access systems. Input from local community members needs to shape how policies are created, rather than local communities having to adapt to policy directives. It provides an example of how Designated Communities should collaborate with Indigenous community members in a way that is Indigenous led.

What is Coordinated Access?

Reaching Home defines coordinated access as a process by which individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness, or at-risk of homelessness, are directed to community-level access points where trained workers use a common assessment tool to evaluate the individual or family's depth of need, prioritize them for housing support services and then help them to match to available housing focused interventions (Reaching Home, Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019). There are four pillars: 1) Access; 2) Assessment; 3) Prioritization; and 4) Matching and Referral. A fifth component of coordinated access is the collection, storage and use of the data collected through the assessment process.

Who Manages the Data Collected Through Coordinated Access?

Missing from discussions on data and coordinated access is how Indigenous data is collected, stored, analysed and who has control or ownership of the data. These considerations are best understood through data sovereignty principles. Data sovereignty refers to the management of information in a manner that is legally consistent with the practices and policies in the nation and or state that it is located (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). It addresses the legal and ethical aspects of the storage, use, ownership, consent, practicality and intellectual property of Indigenous data (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016).

One perspective on achieving data sovereignty in research and academic settings in Canada is through the integration of the Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP)® principles. The OCAP® principles outline how data from First Nations should be collected, protected, used, or shared. Below, each of the principles is defined using direct quotations from the First Nations Information Governance Centre.

- **Ownership**
  Refers to the relationship of First Nations to their cultural knowledge, data, and information. A community or group owns information collectively in the same way that an individual owns his or her personal information.

- **Control**
  First Nations, their communities, and representative bodies are within their rights in seeking to control over all aspects of research and information management processes that impact them. First Nations control of research can include all stages of a research project – from start to finish. The principle extends to the control of resources and review processes, the planning process, management of the information and so on.

- **Access**
  First Nations must have access to information and data about themselves and their communities regardless of where it is held. The principle of access also refers to the right of First Nations communities and organizations to manage and make decisions regarding access to their collective information. This may be achieved, in practice, through standardized, formal protocols.

- **Possession**
  This refers to the physical control of data. Possession is the mechanism by which ownership can be asserted and protected.

Although the OCAP® principles are one way to engage with Indigenous data, specifically for First Nations communities, other Indigenous Peoples have utilized similar guidelines to protect their data. However, it should be acknowledged that some Indigenous peoples may find the term data sovereignty to be problematic due to its colonial roots and as a result, may prefer to see themselves as stewards of Indigenous data.

Why is There a Need for this Research Project?

In addition to requiring Designated Communities implement a coordinated access system, Designated Communities are also mandated to report on Indigenous homelessness. As recognized in the national definition of Indigenous homelessness, Indigenous experiences of homelessness are more than a loss of physical housing (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019). For many Indigenous people, a sense of home is developed through a connection to spirituality, land, community, and culture. The experience of Indigenous homelessness also involves the lack of a stable connection to Indigenous culture and community (Thistle, 2017; Christensen, 2016; Alaazi et al., 2015). A coordinated access system therefore needs to work with Indigenous individuals and families in a wholistic approach. The current dominant colonial narratives and processes to address homelessness work to create a system in which Indigenous peoples are over-represented in homeless populations and experience a form of homelessness that is experientially different when compared to non-Indigenous peoples (Christensen, 2016). Although Reaching Home provides communities with the flexibility to tailor their coordinated access system to meet local needs, it is not known how coordinated access systems will address the unique strengths and needs of Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Where Was the Data for this Report Collected?

Several sources of data were used: 1) A survey of Reaching Home – Indigenous Community Entities and Indigenous Community Advisory Boards; 2) Key informant interviews with three individuals in senior leadership positions at Indigenous agencies in Hamilton who work with Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness; 3) One focus group with front-line service providers from Hamilton; 4) Five focus groups with community groups who had experienced homelessness and/or housing insecurity in Hamilton (Elders/Seniors; Youth; Men; Families; and 2SLGBTQ); 5) Two community consultations with members of Hamilton's Indigenous community; and 6) Eight key informant interviews with Indigenous jurisdictions across Canada.

Indigenous team members led the data analysis. The data was analyzed using an iterative, thematic approach. Each team member reviewed the transcripts and community consultation notes and made comments and reflections based upon their interpretation of the data. These comments and reflections were then shared with the larger research team. The codes were refined during group discussions, and themes were created.

What Did We Find?

Below we present a summary of the key findings from our interviews and focus groups. The main finding is **Indigenous service providers offer a wholistic approach to service delivery and coordinated access that is based upon trust and relationship building**. A wholistic approach addresses the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual parts of an individual and family. A key informant respondent shared:

> **But when you're talking wholistic in an Indigenous point of view, it's like, it's making that person whole again so that they can move forward in life. Because if you're beat down spiritually, you don't know who you are, how can you accomplish success in life?**

In building a coordinated access system, it is essential that it is **designed** by Indigenous communities, **implemented** by Indigenous communities, and **owned** by Indigenous communities. A front-line staff member stated:

> **Everything that we do has to be designed for the seven generations that follows us. All those young people. We're setting up a blueprint of systems for them that we may only design but, that they have to implement. How do we implement our ways of life into these systems? We have to do this work with our own people.**

The remaining sections are grouped upon the pillars of coordinated access.

Access Points

Indigenous agencies are the preferred access point for Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Indigenous agencies were points of access that Indigenous individuals and families trusted and provided a sense of community. A community focus group respondent shared:

> **I haven't been coming here lately, but before I was homeless, I sat in the parking lot because I felt safe here because it's like a Native ground type of thing here, people aren't going to screw with you. People know what this place is.**

In person access allows for trust building, but choice in access points is important. Most community focus group respondents preferred to access services in person, as they felt that there was more trust building in this approach. Other respondents shared that they would be comfortable using other mediums, including telephone, texting, online chat, and video. Again, trust was an important part of these methods. Other factors to consider include accessibility by transit, appropriate services for women, and applying intersectional approaches.

There is racism and a lack of safety in the current mainstream system. Key informants and community focus group respondents noted that some Indigenous individuals in need of services will choose to be out on the street because of the racism and safety concerns encountered within the emergency shelter system.

It is important to ensure that support is available to those unfamiliar with the local context. A smaller number of community focus group respondents talked about being unfamiliar with the services available in Hamilton. These participants often came from other communities across Ontario. One respondent shared their experience:

> **When I first moved here, the first thing I did, I went to Notre Dame to stay for the night or for a while. On the first day, I asked about HRIC [Hamilton Regional Indian Centre]. I went over there and tried to ask if I could meet anyone to help me. … If I'm thinking about a friend who is coming to Hamilton, the first place I would take them is HRIC.**

Cultural competency training is needed for mainstream agencies. Community focus group respondents felt that mainstream agencies should all receive Indigenous cultural competency training. It was thought that some staff at mainstream agencies did not know how to work with Indigenous clients in a culturally respectful manner. A respondent shared:

> **You can't be sure if they have culturally training or not. Their social skills that involve us as a people are very minimal, so they actually are going by only what they have read and what they've written. It's not on real life.**

Assessment Procedures

Relationship building and trust are vital when determining an individual's or family's need. In determining the housing and service needs of Indigenous individuals and families, the approach should be conversational, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed, and not rushed. A key informant respondent shared:

> **What's necessary is it's building those relationships and trust. Walking into an organization and seeing a lot of brown faces. A culturally safe space where you're accepted for who you are and not judged when you walk in the door.**

Intakes and assessments should be conversational. The key informant respondents stressed that rigid intakes and assessment tools are not appropriate for the Indigenous community. A key informant respondent said:

> **We don't bring somebody in take them through an assessment ask them all sorts of questions and give them a piece of paper and number and say here go call it...We don't assess people in the Western view of assessment.**

It is important to not have to repeat one's story. Community focus group respondents shared that they did not want to repeat their story multiple times to multiple people. A respondent stated:

> **Or asking questions repetitively. I hate that. You go to the hospital and you have to answer every single nurse and doctor and you see it, 50 questions, all the same thing.**

Assessments need to be completed using a trauma-informed approach. Jurisdictional scan respondents believed that the use of assessment tools that focused on deficits forces Indigenous people to relive their pain in order to 'deserve' services. In this way, deficit-based assessment scores shift the blame towards Indigenous people who then may go on to believe that they are only deserving of support after retelling their story. Assessments that are conducted within a trauma-informed lens should focus on the individual, not on the score.

Prioritization

Allocating resources based on Indigenous values and traditions and prioritizing. In an underfunded system, key informant and community focus group respondents shared that children/youth, families, women, and Elders/Seniors should be given priority access to housing and supports. These groups were identified based upon Indigenous knowledge, values, and traditions. Respondents felt that it was important that households, particularly children/youth and young families, do not become entrenched into homelessness. The Seventh Generation Principle, a philosophy common to many Indigenous nations, was described as a guiding principle so that the decisions made today result in a sustainable world seven generations into the future. Focusing on the prospective impact of coordinated access, this means that children/youth should be prioritized since they are the future. A front-line staff respondent stated:

> **We'd have to follow our traditional guidelines too. And our traditional guidelines tell us what? In every Indigenous community, what's the first sign you're going to see? 'Children are our future.' In every community.**

Some respondents felt that individuals who are working through mental health and addiction challenges, and those experiencing domestic violence should also be prioritized for services. This could also include children/youth, families, women, Elders/Seniors and men.

Matching & Referrals

Not enough affordable, quality housing is available. Although an Indigenous-led coordinated access system is important, the process is only useful if there is affordable and quality housing available for individuals and families to move into. All respondents shared that there is not enough affordable housing available in Hamilton and that the few affordable options that exist are often of poor quality.

Racism limits access to housing. Respondents shared the racism and discrimination Indigenous people encounter from landlords. One key informant stated:

> **Racism, discrimination happens to Indigenous people trying to secure housing. You hear stories of people opening the door and seeing an Indigenous person standing there and slamming the door on their face and not even consider them or renting their property – and that's a reality. I've talked to workers who have experienced that.**

Housing for Indigenous people, by Indigenous people. Because of the racism encountered within the housing market, respondents recommended that housing specific to the Indigenous community be created. A front-line staff respondent shared:

> **I would love to see something that's Indigenous specific. Just for Indigenous people. That way we don't have to put up with non-Indigenous people complaining about us when we're smudging or doing other kinds of ceremony. We're not constantly having to explain what we're doing.**

Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Collecting the right data. Key informant respondents felt that standardized data collection procedures, grounded in Western-based methods, do not accurately capture the work that happens with Indigenous communities. The importance of qualitative data was highlighted by one key informant respondent. The respondent said:

> **Yeah, I think qualitative is huge. It's huge for recognizing what a success is. In mainstream – in data, you have your target, you have your actuals. Did you have success? Did you meet your target? Right? Did you hit every point along the way? In the Indigenous community, again, it goes back to that individual. What might seem as huge success for us, is not seen that way in mainstream...But to us, it's a process...Every little step a person takes is their success.**

Legacy of data being used to harm Indigenous people. The community focus group respondents recalled how governments have used data to control Indigenous peoples throughout history. As stated by one respondent:

> **History recalls that [the government] will keep doing that to us forever.**

Client confidentiality is key. Client confidentiality and access to data was raised as a concern by respondents. Participants felt a sense of safety if they knew their data was managed by an Indigenous organization, rather than a government organization.

> **I don't know if that data gets put to the government for them to see. I don't know, but I guess I feel safer knowing that my data is being processed through them [an Indigenous agency] rather than looked at by western society, western organizations.**

A key informant respondent thought client confidentiality was particularly important for women fleeing domestic violence. The respondent said:

> **I wonder about the individuals and their autonomy. Do they really want to have everyone access their information? I struggle with that. I know they [women fleeing domestic violence] need the support and if they want to be on a list, but I don't know if they want a number of different persons having access to their personal information.**

Indigenous agencies should host the data, when possible. The respondents all agreed that Indigenous people have the right to determine who has access to their data, how their data is stored, and how their data is used. Some community members thought that this was already happening, as one respondent said, "Oh, isn't that already being done?" Without data sovereignty, it would reinforce the history of data being used as a weapon against Indigenous people. For example, a key informant said:

> **The history of controlled data for Indigenous people has done nothing but reinforce colonization.**

Indigenous communities need to be adequately resourced to develop their own data collection, analysis, and storage policies. A key informant respondent and a jurisdictional scan respondent spoke about the lack of capacity some Indigenous communities had to analyze and report on their data. This lack of capacity was particularly harmful for Indigenous communities, as it did not allow them to draw conclusions on the issues of Indigenous homelessness in their community and turn the conclusions into meaningful policies across different levels of government. One respondent noted:

> **You can look at all this data that you have but we need to go back to Indigenous ways.**

For Indigenous communities, having the capacity to own, control, and analyze Indigenous data would allow for opportunities to provide meaningful input into actionable policies related to Indigenous homelessness within mainstream federal, provincial, and municipal policies. As one respondent explained:

> **I think that's important. If we really are looking forward to the future, how much of our way of life are we going to employ in the construction of these systems**

This process would be by Indigenous people for Indigenous people. Without being able to meaningfully analyze the data, Indigenous communities are unable to tell their own stories and interpret the data using an Indigenous worldview.

Systems-Based Approach

Trust needs to be developed with Designated Communities when developing data collection and storage policies. When considering the protection of Indigenous data, there was a large need for trust and relationship building with Designated Community Entities to be established first. Some jurisdictions discussed how their relationship with Designated Communities was built by respecting Indigenous practices and traditions through the incorporation of local Indigenous ceremony and traditional protocols. Other jurisdictions stated that it was important for transparency on data policies when working with Designated Communities.

Building ceremony into coordinated access systems. By incorporating Indigenous ceremony into coordinated access processes, it can tie mandates and service agreements to spiritual commitments. One jurisdiction explained that ceremony allowed mainstream communities to understand the significance and complexity of the work that is being done. A jurisdictional scan respondent said:

> **How do you bring those two worldviews together? And I think that's where the pre-work needs to be done…Really starting off in ceremony. Starting off with the Indigenous people. And doing what they do in order to develop something in their community. And in doing it with the experts and doing it right…**

Working with other systems. The key informant respondents discussed the importance of working with other systems outside of the housing and homelessness sector. Specific sectors identified included the child welfare system, the mental health system, the criminal justice system and the hospital system.

Clear guidelines need to be developed for engagement between Indigenous Community Entities and Designated Community Entities. A major challenge for Indigenous Community Entities was their relationship with Designated Community Entities and how program directives from Reaching Home could impact them. A lack of clarity from the federal government meant that it was not clear on what the differentiating roles between Indigenous Community Entities and Designated Community Entities were and that, as a result, collaboration between the two organizations could be negatively impacted.

What do These Results Mean?

The results from the key informant interviews, community focus groups, and the jurisdictional scan interviews all showed that coordinated access processes are not fully aligned with Indigenous values, knowledge, and traditions. Rather than "Indigenizing" coordinated access, where Indigenous values, knowledges, and traditions are used to infuse culture into coordinated access procedures, current coordinated access procedures should be modified to align with Indigenous values, knowledges, and traditions. The only way for this to happen is through meaningful engagement, trust building, ceremony and partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders.

We group the recommendation using three lenses. The first lens is focused on engagement with the federal government and designated communities. The second lens is focused on the implementation of coordinated access. The third lens is focused on data sovereignty.

Engaging with the Federal Government and Designated Community Entities

Recommendation 1.
Reaching Home should create clear guidelines on cross-stream engagement between Community Entities and Indigenous Community Entities. With the overarching aim of enhancing Indigenous decision-making and leadership, these guidelines must be developed in a manner that allow local Indigenous leaders to align with local community traditions, cultures and needs at the grassroots level. These guidelines should also be completed in collaboration with national Indigenous homelessness experts, such as the new national gathering of members from Indigenous Community Entities and Indigenous Community Advisory Boards.

Recommendation 2.
Enact the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada when developing coordinated access systems.

Recommendation 3.
As advised by local Indigenous community leaders, engage in ceremony when developing coordinated access systems.

Recommendation 4.
Engage with local Indigenous experts to contextualize local issues impacting the Indigenous community.

Recommendation 5.
Acknowledge and address the racism Indigenous people face in the community.

Recommendation 6.
Indigenous agencies need to be adequately and sustainably funded to provide wholistic services. Designated Communities should be responsible for finding creative funding solutions in order to ensure long-term sustainability of Indigenous agencies.

Recommendation 7.
Any service hub where multiple services can be accessed under one roof should facilitate an Indigenous wholistic system of care and should be created/sustained in communities.

Recommendation 8.
In order to ensure that no Indigenous person or family falls through cracks created by the lack of systems integration and system failures, representation from the child welfare sector, the correctional system, the mental health system, the hospital system, and other systems unique to each community should be convened with Indigenous housing and homelessness tables, particularly those related to coordinated access.

Recommendation 9.
Indigenous communities need to be equitably funded to rollout a coordinated access system, which includes increased funding for Indigenous housing stock.

Recommendation 10.
In order to support capacity for Indigenous communities to co-create and lead coordinated access, governance models and framework documents centered on enhancing Indigenous leadership within a coordinated access system must be co-developed by Indigenous homelessness experts and the federal government. These framework documents should cover areas such as policy and practice, technical standards, roles and responsibilities and accountability.

Implementation of Coordinated Access

Recommendation 11.
An effective communications strategy, including in-person outreach, posters in travel hubs, and electronic posts on social media, is necessary to ensure that coordinated access systems are accessible by all.

Recommendation 12.
In mainstream coordinated access systems, an Indigenous agency or agencies should be included as an access point for coordinated access.

Recommendation 13.
Indigenous representation among staff of mainstream agencies needs to be increased so that Indigenous individuals and families who access these agencies can speak with an Indigenous service provider.

Recommendation 14.
Indigenous outreach workers should be hired to collaborate with mainstream services to ensure that coordinated access systems are accessible by Indigenous individuals and families.

Recommendation 15.
Provide free transportation, such as monthly bus passes, so that Indigenous community members can enter access points in person.

Recommendation 16.
Coordinated access systems should include multiple modes of access, including telephone, video calls, and online platforms.

Recommendation 17.
Coordinated access systems need to take an intersectional, culturally safe, and trauma-informed lens in implementation.

Recommendation 18.
Strict time frames for the completion of intakes should not apply to Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Recommendation 19.
A strength-based assessment tool created specifically for Indigenous individuals and families should be developed.

Recommendation 20.
As part of an intake procedure, clear information on the confidentiality of the data that a client can take for their records should be made available.

Recommendation 21.
For communities that have a separate prioritization list for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, the Indigenous Community Entity, in collaboration with the Indigenous Community Advisory Board, must be given authority to determine prioritization procedures. For communities that choose to maintain a single priority list, Indigenous individuals and families should be prioritized and the Indigenous community must be given authority to determine their own prioritization procedures.

Recommendation 22.
Housing options should meet the needs of each prioritized group.

Recommendation 23.
Housing for Indigenous people needs to be created and federal, provincial, and municipal funding needs to be provided. From the federal perspective, this includes the release of the National Urban, Rural, and Remote Indigenous Housing Strategy.

Recommendation 24.
Designated Community Entities must dedicate a proportion of their funding to receive cultural competency training from local agencies and experts, and work with local experts to determine how to meaningfully incorporate Indigenous representations within their spaces.

Data Collection and Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Recommendation 25.
Federally mandated benchmarks and data requirements should be co-created with national Indigenous homelessness experts (for example, the new national gathering of members from Indigenous Community Entities and Indigenous Community Advisory Boards).

Recommendation 26.
In collaboration with national Indigenous homelessness experts (for example, new national gathering of members from Indigenous Community Entities and Indigenous Community Advisory Boards), Reaching Home should co-create opportunities for the collection of qualitative data.

Recommendation 27.
Include accessible feedback mechanisms for clients, front-line service providers, and program managers on regular intervals.

Recommendation 28.
In collaboration with national Indigenous homelessness experts (for example, new national gathering of members from Indigenous Community Entities and Indigenous Community Advisory Boards), the federal government must co-develop informational materials related to Indigenous data sovereignty.

Recommendation 29.
The inclusion of Indigenous agencies in data governance committees in Designated Communities should be a requirement in Reaching Home directives.

Recommendation 30.

Indigenous Community Entities should be given the autonomy to choose the data management system that fits their needs and provided adequate, sustainable funding to develop and manage their coordinated access system and analyse their data.

From the Indigenous Reaching Home Team - A Gift To All Readers!

We take this time to re-iterate our main finding that Indigenous service providers offer a wholistic approach to service delivery and coordinated access that is based upon trust and relationship building. A wholistic approach addresses the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual parts of an individual and family. In the spirit of this finding, and with an Indigenous worldview of always giving thanks and acknowledgement of what the great universe offers us each and every day, we present "A Prayer to the Creator" (shared by the author Yvonne Maracle - a member of our IRH Team).

Prayer to the Creator

I would like to Thank the Creator for Everything that I have,

For the Food I Eat,
the Water that I Drink,
the Air I Breathe
and the Land that I walk upon

Creator, I thank you for the gifts that you have bestowed upon me,
these gifts of nourishment, substances and of life.

But most of all Creator, I thank you for the gift of Family
For it is the Gift of Family that keeps me Strong
It is the gift of family that shapes into who I am to Become
And it is the gift of family that supports me when I am down
For this, I am truly Blessed and Grateful Creator for Everything that I have and hold precious and dear to my Heart

I give Thanks for Brother Sun, who rises each morning and gives us Light and Warmth
I give Thanks for the North, South, East and West Winds as you Blow away the pollutions and bring the clear air and rains this way to replenish Mother Earth
I give Thanks for Grandmother Moon and the Stars above, as you look after us Women and Mother Earth herself.
I give Thanks for Father Sky as you wrap yourself around Mother Earth and protect Her
I give Thanks for all the Plant Life, from the smallest of seeds to the tallest of Trees as you provide us Nourishment, medicines and shelter.
I give Thanks for the two leg gets, the four leg gets, the six leg gets, and eight leg gets, the swimmers, the flyers and the crawlers, for you have created such beautiful creatures that you have placed before us.

I give Thanks for Our Ancestor and Loved Ones who have passed on before us, for they are in Our Hearts, Our Minds and Our Souls and still walk amongst us.
For this Too, I give Thanks.
With everything said and done, I Pray and give Thanks, Ney way!

Written by Yvonne Maracle,
Bear Clan of the Mohawk Nation

1. Introduction

This report explores the shift in addressing homelessness through a "coordinated access" systems approach and its impact on Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Reaching Home, Canada's Homelessness Strategy, is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness across Canada. Reaching Home provides funding to urban, Indigenous, rural and remote communities to help them address their local homelessness needs.

Reaching Home has required that all Designated Communities (i.e., urban centres in Canada) have a coordinated access system in place by March 31, 2022. Coordinated access is designed to ensure that individuals and families experiencing homelessness do not, "fall through the cracks." Although Reaching Home provides communities with the flexibility to tailor their coordinated access system to meet local needs, it is not known how coordinated access systems will address the unique strengths and needs of Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

It is important to examine the application of western-based policies on Indigenous people since dominant colonial narratives and processes work to create a system in which Indigenous peoples are over-represented in homeless populations and experience a form of homelessness that is experientially different when compared to non-Indigenous peoples (Christensen, 2016). Thus, this report fills an important knowledge gap.

The focus of the report is largely on the Hamilton context, but also provides insights from Indigenous homelessness experts across Canada. Therefore, this report has several audiences:

1. **Reaching Home Indigenous Stream Community Entities** to enhance their capacity to lead the development and implementation of coordinated access in their communities.
2. **Indigenous community leaders across Canada** so that the learnings can be used as a tool on how to design and implement a coordinated system delivery approach that is based on local Indigenous cultures, traditions, and knowledges.
3. **Non-Indigenous homelessness service providers and policy makers in Canada** so that the learnings can be an educational tool on the impact of coordinated access on Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness. This report can be used as a starting point when engaging in meaningful collaboration with Indigenous community leaders and service providers on the implementation of coordinated access.

The goal of this report is to provide an overview of coordinated access and how it can work for Indigenous communities. Although the report includes Indigenous voices from across Canada, it does not represent a comprehensive review of coordinated access procedures and does not provide the complete national picture. In reading this report, it will be important for Indigenous community leaders to contextualize the findings to their own cultures, traditions, and knowledges. Non-Indigenous homelessness service providers and policy makers are reminded to use this report as a starting point and to heed the advice of local Indigenous leaders as to what parts of the report works for their community.

This report takes an advocacy-focused, grassroots level approach. It recognizes that local community consultations need to happen prior to the implementation of coordinated access systems. Input from local community members needs to shape how policies are created, rather than local communities having to adapt to policy directives. It also provides an example of how Designated Communities should collaborate with Indigenous community members in a way that is Indigenous led.

The report is structured so that the reader can examine the components of a coordinated access system (i.e., access, assessment, prioritization, matching, and data) individually or as a whole. Similarly, the recommendations are grouped using three lenses. The first lens is focused on engagement with the federal government and designated communities. The second lens is focused on the implementation of coordinated access. The third lens is focused on data sovereignty.

The report begins with a brief overview of the Hamilton context, followed by an overview of Indigenous homelessness in Canada, coordinated access, and data sovereignty. The data collection methods are then presented, followed by the results. The report concludes with an interpretation of the results and recommendations.

1. Hamilton Context

The city of Hamilton has a population of 536,917 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Hamilton experienced a 6 percent overall population growth between 2006 and 2016, and a 61 percent growth among Indigenous residents in the city in the same period. Based upon 2016 census data, approximately 15,230 individuals or 3.3 percent of Hamilton's total population have Indigenous ancestry (Statistics Canada, 2016). Hamilton's Indigenous population is younger than the overall city population. Twenty-five percent of Hamilton's Indigenous residents are under age 15, compared to 17 percent for Hamilton's non-Indigenous population (Mayo, 2016).

In providing population-based statistics, it is important to acknowledge that the numbers might not be reflective of the actual number of Indigenous individuals in Hamilton. Population data for Indigenous communities in Hamilton have not been as reliable as for other

communities (Mayo, 2011). Historically, many Indigenous communities, including Six Nations (Canada's largest reserve by population and 10 kilometers from Hamilton's border), have refused to participate in government-led data gathering due to mistrust created by harmful federal and provincial laws and policies.

Hamilton's rental housing landscape is changing. Since 2015, rents have risen much faster than inflation and income (Bown-Kai, Lee, & Mayo, 2019). In fact, Hamilton's rents are increasing faster than the provincial average. Eviction notices for reasons other than non-payment of rent (L2 eviction notices) have doubled in Hamilton, with the highest rates of eviction in some of Hamilton's most affordable neighbourhoods. Hamilton's rental stock may require significant repairs, as many of the buildings were built from 1946 to 1980. Encouragingly, private primary rental units in Hamilton have increased since 2016, but these units are often not affordable.

It is estimated that among individuals in Hamilton with incomes of less than $20,000 per year, approximately 16,400 spend more than 50 percent of their incomes on rent (City of Hamilton, 2019). Since 2015, an average of 2,850 unique individuals annually access one of Hamilton's emergency shelters (City of Hamilton, 2019). Shelter occupancy has remained high, except for a decrease in the youth sector. In the 2016 and 2018 Point-in-Time Counts, approximately 22-28 percent of individuals experiencing homelessness identified as Indigenous (City of Hamilton, 2016 and 2018). As approximately three percent of Hamilton's overall population are Indigenous, this demonstrates the large overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness in Hamilton.

While the Indigenous communities in Hamilton have faced high rates of homelessness, local Indigenous agencies have created their own networks of support and services to community members experiencing homelessness. This continues a long-standing tradition of Indigenous communities extending help to family and friends who are experiencing homelessness (Maracle, Mayo & Montana McCormack, 2015).

In addition to networks and community-based supports, the Indigenous community of Hamilton created institutions and funding mechanisms to address homelessness in a variety of ways.

In the 1990s, In the 1990s, the urban Indigenous community of Hamilton was the first in Canada to create a leadership table of Indigenous-led agencies. This coalition was named HEDAC (Hamilton Executive Directors' Aboriginal Coalition), which was then incorporated in 2011. In 2019, HEDAC was renamed to CHIL (Coalition of Hamilton's Indigenous Leadership). HEDAC members were also members of the Aboriginal Community Advisory Board (AB-CAB) which was recognized by the federal government as the leadership table to govern Hamilton's Indigenous Stream of federal homelessness funding. In 2007, the AB-CAB partnered with the non-Indigenous organization, the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton

(SPRC), who became the recognized "Indigenous Community Entity" authorized by the federal government and directed by the AB-CAB for the administration and implementation of funding related to Indigenous homelessness in Hamilton. The AB-CAB's long-term vision to transition administration of Indigenous homelessness funding to an Indigenous organization was realized in 2019 when CHIL was accepted by the federal government to replace the SPRC as Hamilton's Indigenous Community Entity, starting in April 2020.

One of the AB-CAB's most important accomplishments was advocating, negotiating and securing an agreement with the City of Hamilton for proportional homelessness funding and to give autonomy and self-determination to Indigenous organizations of Hamilton to decide how funds should be spent. This agreement was developed in 2004 (City of Hamilton, 2020). As a result, 20 percent of federal funding dedicated to addressing homelessness in Hamilton was allocated for Indigenous-led interventions.

This "made in Hamilton" funding model has been partially adopted by the province of Ontario as well for some streams of housing/homelessness funding (Hope, Mayo & Montana McCormack, 2017). While it is not official policy at the City level, so could be subject to political whims, the importance of this funding is recognized in city documents:

> **The City of Hamilton allocated 20% of the CFA (Call for Applications) funding amount to Indigenous-specific interventions. The CFA process continues to promote Indigenous-led solutions to address the over-representation of Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Hamilton. Dedicating 20% of Federal homelessness program dollars is an arrangement that was developed in 2004 to acknowledge the disproportionate rates of homelessness among Indigenous people (City of Hamilton, 2020).**

The defining features of this funding model are not just the 20% allocation, but also the autonomy and self-determination that the Indigenous community exercises in how that funding is allocated to Indigenous services and organizations. Organizations are financially accountable to the City of Hamilton for the 20% funding, but the City has no role in how the money is allocated, that remains the authority of AB-CAB, which uses a consensus-based model in its allocation process.

In 2016, the City of Hamilton, among other municipalities across Canada, developed an *Urban Indigenous Strategy* that sought to promote a better understanding of local Indigenous histories, cultures, challenges and contributions (City of Hamilton, 2016). Hamilton's *Urban Indigenous Strategy* included a new leadership position with staff support within the City, with these positions responsible for making the strategy come to fruition. The objective of the Strategy is to act as a formal commitment to the Indigenous community and identify actions that allow for stronger relationship with the Indigenous community in Hamilton.

The Strategy identified several key activities:

1. Identify actions from the 2015 *Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada's Final Report*.
2. Celebrate and honour Indigenous peoples, cultures and traditions.
3. Promote greater understanding of the histories and contributions of Indigenous peoples; and
4. Create opportunities for collaboration to strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities and service providers.

The Strategy included the guiding principles of commitment, accountability, consultation, reciprocity, inclusion, recognition, commemoration and allyship.

In 2017, a *Poverty Reduction Investment Plan* was introduced in Hamilton. The Plan includes an investment of $50 million over 10 years to repair current affordable housing units, build new affordable residential units and address Indigenous poverty in Hamilton. Like the proportional model for homelessness funding, the City of Hamilton dedicated 20% of this funding ($10 million over 10 years) to addressing Indigenous poverty needs. This funding agreement was secured by CHIL and included an administration portion[1], with similar autonomy and self-determination principles as the agreements for the federal homelessness funding.

The City of Hamilton has begun the process to understand the importance of self-governance in the Indigenous community as key to ending the legacy of colonialism and an important step in the fight against homelessness. The City of Hamilton's 2019 *Coming Together to End Homelessness* report highlighted Indigenous homelessness as a colonial legacy:

> **Indigenous peoples experience homelessness, as well as other forms of social exclusion, at a higher rate than the general population. Specific policy interventions are therefore needed to account for these circumstances. Homelessness amongst Indigenous peoples is a colonial legacy. The interconnectedness of post-colonialism, residential schools, intergenerational trauma, and ongoing systematic social and economic marginalization of Indigenous peoples shape our understanding of Indigenous homelessness in Canada. Hamilton's homeless-serving system must account for systemic over-representation of Indigenous persons experiencing homelessness. Acknowledging our Indigenous partners' autonomy and self-determination, we must work together to develop**

1. The 2004 funding allocation of 20% mainstream city of Hamilton federal homelessness funding did not include administration costs, which limited the resources for planning and capacity building within Hamilton's Indigenous community. In 2017, the city contracted with CHIL directly for the Indigenous portion of the Poverty Reduction Investment Plan which then included an administration portion to better support oversight and planning capacity.

> **connection to housing and supports that are culturally appropriate, rooted in the spirit and actions of reconciliation. Building upon strong relationships between the City of Hamilton and local Indigenous leadership, we aim to design a system that not only responds to Indigenous homelessness, but also respects, honours and promotes the strength and resiliency of Indigenous peoples (p. 8-9).**

2. Indigenous Homelessness: Literature Summary

This section provides a brief overview of Indigenous homelessness in Canada. It is important to ground this report on the impact of colonization and the oppressive, discriminatory, and racist practices that have been created by settlers and are still in place today. A more comprehensive literature review can be found in Appendix A.

A. Defining Indigenous Homelessness

More than just a lack of a physical space to call home Indigenous experiences of homelessness and home are concerned with a lack of a stable connection to Indigenous culture and community (Thistle, 2017; Christensen, 2016; Alaazi et al., 2015). For many Indigenous cultures and individuals, a sense of home is developed through a connection to spirituality, land, community, and culture. For Indigenous individuals who are experiencing homelessness this sense of home can be even more negatively affected because they may no longer have opportunities to access culture and spirituality. This means that for Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness it is possible for there to be additive stressors to well-being to be present, more than the health issues directly related to homelessness. Making their experience of homelessness experientially different than non-Indigenous homeless individuals (Christensen, 2016).

A helpful framework to better understanding Indigenous experiences of homelessness is *The 12 Dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness* (Thistle, 2017). This framework describes the many interacting ways that homelessness can be experienced by Indigenous peoples. By better understanding the complexities of homelessness as experienced by Indigenous peoples, community leaders can better identify solutions and supports that undo oppressive colonial ideologies, policies and institutional practices. The 12 Dimensions outline historical, structural, as well as social and personal causes and experiences of Indigenous homelessness and how each dimension interacts with the others (Thistle, 2017). Importantly, the 12 dimensions help to identify the many complex ways in which Indigenous peoples can experience homelessness and make clear the many causes of Indigenous homelessness and how they are a result of oppressive colonial ideologies, policies, and institutional practices.

B. Historical Roots of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada

When considering how Indigenous peoples experience homelessness today, it is necessary to understand that colonial processes of control and oppression have been at work for hundreds of years through policy, institutions, and in social environments. Throughout Canada, Indigenous peoples are dramatically overrepresented among individuals and families experiencing homelessness. In 2016, Indigenous people in Canada accounted for 4.9 percent of the population (Statistics Canada, 2017). Approximately 79.7 percent of Indigenous people in Canada live in urban, rural and remote communities (Statistics Canada, 2018). It is estimated that approximately 30 percent of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Canada are Indigenous (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018). Further, data on the housing conditions of Indigenous peoples in Canada reveals that both Indigenous individuals living on and off-reserve experience a greater amount of housing issues, and significantly higher levels of absolute homelessness than non-Indigenous people in Canada (Donnan, 2016). Urban Indigenous peoples have also been shown to experience housing strain and housing precarity at an overrepresented level and are more likely to move between homes at a greater frequency than the non-Indigenous population (Smylie et al., 2011; Peters, 2006).

Indigenous communities in Canada have experienced many pressures from ongoing governmental interventions, which, among many other detrimental factors, have caused a disruption of the home, and displacement from traditional lands. Such processes worked to reinforce colonial narratives of superiority and control, as well as negatively affect the connection to culture, spirituality, and land for Indigenous communities (Belanger, Head & Awasoga, 2012). The *Indian Act*, 1876, was purposefully designed to assimilate all Indigenous peoples into the dominant settler society (De Leeuw, Greenwood & Cameron, 2010). This policy outlined, among many other oppressive procedures, how and when Indigenous peoples could leave their home reserves, prohibited the gathering of more than three Indigenous individuals in one space while off reserve, prohibited the practice of cultural ceremonies, and introduced mandatory attendance to residential schools (De Leeuw & Greenwood, 2015). Residential schools were government-sponsored religious schools that were established to assimilate Indigenous children into Canadian culture. In 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples made clear that mandatory attendance into residential schools has created the most influential negative impact on the well-being of Indigenous peoples in Canada, which still produces harmful intergenerational effects today (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). When considering how Indigenous peoples experience homelessness today, it is important to understand that colonial processes of control and oppression have been at work for hundreds of years through policy, institutions, and in social environments.

C. Methods to Address Indigenous Homelessness

As briefly outlined above, because the Indigenous definition of homelessness is different than the dominant settler state definition, it is important that the approaches to addressing Indigenous homelessness are culturally specific to the health, lifestyle and spiritual preferences of Indigenous communities. For example, in a multi-institutional study of a Housing First program in Winnipeg, where the Indigenous population comprise about 70% of the total homeless population, researchers found that although Indigenous individuals involved with the study were relatively satisfied with the methods of the program, their feeling of belonging in the city was not connected to their housing experiences (Alaazi, Masuda, Evans, & Distasio, 2015). Further, it was found that structural factors, especially the lack of affordable housing and the active systemic erasure of Indigeneity from the city's sociocultural and political world has impacted Indigenous peoples' ability to feel a sense of home (Alaazi et al., 2015). The Housing First program is largely based in a western understanding of privacy, and individualistic ideologies that reflect western lifestyle and culture. This does not reflect the Indigenous therapeutic home experience which is a healthy blend of domestic spiritual and ceremonial spaces that encourage a sense of belonging and one-ness with culture and community (Alaazi et al., 2015).

D. Suggestions for Future Approaches to Addressing Indigenous Homelessness

A systems-based approach will not be effective if these institutions continue to be harmful, inequitable, and inaccessible to Indigenous peoples. As stated above the presence of institutional racism and differential treatment (Smylie & Allen, 2015) can cause resentment and avoidance of these services, making responses to homelessness more difficult. To effectively address issues of Indigenous homelessness these important institutions will require a more equitable and respectful relationship with Indigenous communities, one that is reflected in policy. In responding to issues of Indigenous homelessness Canadian policy will need to outline how institutions will undergo systemic changes and articulate how institutions can be held accountable for causing harm. To effectively address issues of Indigenous homelessness these important institutions will require a more equitable and respectful relationship with Indigenous communities, one that is reflected in policy. Using the health care system as an example; *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission* describes many ways in which steps can be taken towards addressing institutional change, including an increase in the amount of Indigenous students and workers in health related fields, making cultural safety training mandatory for all healthcare workers, and increasing the amount of traditional healing centres (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Recommendations such as these not only advocate for an increased access to resources and services, but also a fundamental change in how services are delivered. Canadian policy needs to be put into place to make such changes possible if issues of Indigenous homelessness are to be addressed.

3. Coordinated Access: Literature Summary

This section provides an overview of coordinated access. It is largely taken from western-based research and does not represent Indigenous culture, knowledge, and tradition. A more comprehensive literature review can be found in Appendix B.

A. Defining Coordinated Access

As part of the directives of Reaching Home, Canada's Homelessness Strategy, coordinated access must be implemented in all designated communities across Canada by March 31, 2022. Reaching Home defines a "coordinated access system" as a:

> **process by which individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness are directed to community-level access points where trained workers use a common assessment tool to evaluate the individual or family's depth of need, prioritize them for housing support services and then help them to match to available housing focused interventions (Reaching Home, Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019).**

B. Processes Involved in Coordinated Access – Reaching Home

Coordinated access systems have several features (Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy Directives, Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019), which are outlined below:

1. A centralized database that collects and displays real-time data;
2. A clear access point(s) of entry;
3. Common assessment tools and standardized protocols;
4. A prioritization process;
5. A matching and referral process; and
6. Adequate resources.

Reaching Home Directives on Coordinated Access and Indigenous Homelessness Stream

For communities that receive funding from both the Designated Communities[2] and Indigenous Homelessness[3] streams, Reaching Home policy directives indicate there must be collaboration between the two streams on the design and use of coordinated access. They are also mandated to use a common assessment tool for all population groups (e.g., youth, women fleeing violence, Indigenous peoples) so that there is a shared approach to understanding people's need. However, assessments can be adjusted to be more a conversational, rather than an interview-like approach, which may be more appropriate for Indigenous service users. Depending on the priorities established for different population groups, communities have the option to maintain a single priority list or have separate lists by sub-population (e.g., youth, Indigenous Peoples, families) and from there, referrals to appropriate services can be made. Finally, Community Entities must also develop a set of local agreements in compliance to municipal, provincial, and federal laws. However, data sovereignty is not discussed within the Reaching Home directives.

C. Facilitators and Outcomes of Coordinated Access

According to LeMoine (2016), there are 10 activities that facilitate effective service coordination between multiple service providers. These are:

1. seamless pathways to referrals;
2. working together regularly;
3. regular communication;
4. case meetings;
5. outreach activities;
6. establishing mutual goals and values;
7. communication outside of clients;
8. sharing resources;
9. participation in networks;
10. communities of practice and educational events; and
11. management support.

2. Communities that have significant homelessness challenges that are selected by ESDC to receive ongoing support to address the issue.

3. Provides funding to organizations that provide supports to meet the unique needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The intent is that the funding be provided to Indigenous organizations located in urban centres. The program promotes social inclusion and cultural connections within communities and aims to ensure that culturally appropriate supports are available for Indigenous Peoples who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness in urban centres. Indigenous Peoples are not limited to accessing only the services that are funded by the Indigenous homelessness stream; they may also access services and supports from organizations that are funded by the program's other regional streams

There are few studies on the effectiveness of coordinated access systems. One study found that individuals and families experiencing homelessness had significantly higher rates of success in maintaining their housing and self-sufficiency when they were connected to a "service home" (i.e., a one-stop community hub with coordinated services) as opposed to those who had to access resources from multiple agencies with different physical locations and points of contact (Streim, 2017). Rosenheck et al. (1998) found that higher service integration was significantly related to improved access to housing services and, that it led to attaining independent housing 12 months after entry into the program.

D. Strengths of Coordinated Access

Coordinated access encourages agencies to work alongside each other with mutual language, processes, assessment tools and policies. Integrating services is ideal so that service users can utilize them as a "one-stop shop", without having to engage with several agencies (Backer, Howard & Moran, 2007). Creating a more consistent and harmonious cross-sectoral process, regardless of the context of the individual's system of care entry, eases clients' access to services (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013; Cocozza et al., 2000). Coordinated access also necessitates increased communication between different organizations, leading to a more transparent system. When services are coordinated across different systems, boundaries come down and increased inter-agency communication is promoted (Backer, Howard & Moran, 2007).

E. Challenges of Coordinated Access

A major challenge to coordinated access is that it does not address the environmental factors that contribute to homelessness. For example, high population growth, high rental expenses, and low housing vacancy are not addressed through coordinated access (Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2010). While it was highlighted that a key success to coordinated access is increased collaboration amongst different service providers, this success depends on partnerships already being in place which may be time consuming and difficult to initiate and maintain (Backer, Howard & Moran, 2007). Differing philosophies and mandates may have a large impact on how positive relationships and linkages between different services are made. For example, if one service provider does not fully grasp the guiding philosophy of another agency, disagreements may occur on the limitations of services provided (Erickson, Chong, Anderson & Stevens, 1995). In addition to this, when service providers are unaware of all the supports available by other service providers in their coordinated system, disagreements may occur.

4. Data Sovereignty: Literature Summary

An important component of coordinated access is collecting data on the profiles and needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. This data is often stored in Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) or Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Missing from discussions on data and coordinated access is how data is stored and who has control or ownership of the data. A more comprehensive literature review can be found in Appendix C.

A. Data Sovereignty Background

Data sovereignty refers to the management of information in a manner that is legally consistent with the practices and policies in the nation and or state that it is located (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). It addresses the legal and ethical aspects of the storage, use, ownership, consent, practicality and intellectual property of Indigenous data. (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). For Indigenous communities, all data that is produced is understood to be controlled by the Indigenous communities involved, even if outside researchers have gathered and compiled the data (Carroll, Rodriguez-Lonebear & Martinez, 2019).

B. Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Data sovereignty has a critical role in informing how Indigenous peoples' make decisions for self-governance and self-determination. One perspective on achieving data sovereignty in research and academic settings in Canada is through the integration of the Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP)® principles. While OCAP® is just one prominent example of data sovereignty principles, it must be acknowledged that it is not the benchmark for all matters related to Indigenous data sovereignty. The OCAP® principles outline how data from First Nations should be collected, protected, used, or shared. Below, each of the principles is defined using direct quotations from the First Nations Information Governance Centre.

- **Ownership**
  Refers to the relationship of First Nations to their cultural knowledge, data, and information. A community or group owns information collectively in the same way that an individual owns his or her personal information.

- **Control**
  First Nations, their communities, and representative bodies are within their rights in seeking to control over all aspects of research and information management processes that impact them. First Nations control of research can include all stages of a research project – from start to finish. The principle extends to the control of resources and review processes, the planning process, management of the information and so on.

- **Access**
  First Nations must have access to information and data about themselves and their communities regardless of where it is held. The principle of access also refers to the right of First Nations communities and organizations to manage and make decisions regarding access to their collective information. This may be achieved, in practice, through standardized, formal protocols.
- **Possession**
  This refers to the physical control of data. Possession is the mechanism by which ownership can be asserted and protected.

Although the OCAP® principles are specific to First Nations, other Indigenous Peoples have utilized similar guidelines to protect their data. However, it should be acknowledged that some Indigenous peoples may find the term data sovereignty to be problematic due to its colonial roots and as a result, may prefer to see themselves as stewards of Indigenous data.

C. Data Governance Structure

Developing systems to organize the data that is collected is another important consideration. Data governance is defined as the "processes, policies, standards, organization, and technologies required to manage and ensure the availability, quality, consistency, auditability, and security of data in an organization" (Panian, 2010, p. 939). A data governance framework has four considerations (Panian, 2010):

1. Developing and implementing standards, such as definitions, technical standards, and data models;
2. Creating policies and processes around the monitoring and management of data;
3. Setting out the roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities of organizations involved;
4. Putting in place a suitable technological infrastructure to work with the data that is collected.

In cases where multiple agencies are involved in the collection of data, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) are important to create. The MOU should state the ownership of the data resides with the Indigenous community it was retrieved from, and that researchers cannot share, analyse, or release the data without the community's leadership's consent (Carroll, Rodriguez-Lonebear & Martinez, 2019). It should be clearly stated how researchers intend to store, share, and return the data (NCAI, 2012). It can also be beneficial to state that the community involved with the project will be named as co-authors (Carroll, Rodriguez-Lonebear & Martinez, 2019). Researchers and Indigenous communities can also develop a

partnership agreement together that outlines the partnerships goals, values, and principles to help align each parties vision and responsibilities, as well as to direct the research being conducted (Carroll, Rodriguez-Lonebear & Martinez, 2019). Clear and honest communication and collaboration at every stage of the research process is essential.

D. Examples of Indigenous-Led Data Sovereignty Practices in Canada

Below are three examples of Indigenous-led data sovereignty practices from sectors outside of homelessness and housing.

Regional Health Survey

In the early and mid-1990s, several large-scale initiatives were developed by Indigenous communities across Canada to assert control of data collection, management, and dissemination (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). One of the largest initiatives was the first Regional Health Survey (RHS). The survey, originally called the First Nations and Inuit Regional Longitudinal Health Survey, took place in 1997. It resulted from the exclusion of Indigenous Peoples living on reserve and the small sample size of off-reserve Indigenous Peoples in several national, federally-mandated, large-scale surveys (e.g., the National Population Health Survey, the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, and the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics). Challenges in the implementation of the RHS included: (1) balancing national and regional objectives; (2) developing questions that were comparable with existing surveys, but also meeting the needs of Indigenous communities across Canada; and (3) defining who has control of the data at national and local levels. The solution to these challenges was restructuring the frame of the survey from one national survey, to a collection of regional surveys that could provide a level of cross-Canada data, but also allowing for regional priorities to be addressed in the survey.

The Tui'kn Partnership – A System for Health Information Management

The Tui'kn partnership involves five First Nations communities on Cape Breton Island – Eskasoni, Membertou, Potlotek, Wagmatcook, and Waycobah (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). This collaborative developed partnerships with several health authorities, including the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, Health Canada, and Dalhousie university. The Tui'kn partners retain ownership, access, and control over their communities' health data, while working with the health authorities to improve community health services and policy (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). The Tuk'in communities have developed privacy policies and procedures and offer privacy training opportunities for health centre personnel (Tuk'in Partnership, n.d.).

Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES) – Data Governance Agreement with the Chiefs of Ontario, Métis Nation of Ontario, and Tungasuvvingat Inuit

The Chiefs of Ontario is a coordinating body for 133 First Nations communities in Ontario (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). They have a Data Government Agreement with the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences to conduct health-related analyses for the Chiefs of Ontario and the First Nations communities. Proposals to use the data to conduct Ontario-level analyses are vetted and approved by a First Nations Data Governance Committee that has members appointed by the Ontario Chiefs' Committee on Health (Pyper et al., 2018). Similar relationships with the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences have developed with the Métis Nation of Ontario and Tungasuvvingat Inuit (Pyper et al., 2018).

2. Methodology

In order to examine the potential impacts to Indigenous communities through the implementation of a coordinated access system to address homelessness, several sources of data were used. Prior to beginning the data collection process, this project received ethical clearance from York University's Office of Research Ethics. As part of this process, the COH team was required to familiarize themselves with the Aboriginal Research Ethics Guidelines and complete a separate ethics application that was reviewed by the Aboriginal Research Ethics Advisory Group at York University. The methodology was co-developed by members from the Indigenous Reaching Home (IRH) team of the Social Planning Research Council (SPRC) and the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH), while the data analysis process was led by the IRH team of the SPRC. The data was collected through surveys, key informant interviews, focus groups, and community consultations. A broad overview of each method is described below.

National Survey of Reaching Home - Indigenous Community Entities and Community Advisory Boards

A survey of Reaching Home - Indigenous Community Entities across Canada was conducted in 2019 by the IRC team of the SPRC. This survey sought the feedback of Indigenous leadership on the following:

a. Where Reaching Home Indigenous communities were in the coordinated access design and implementation process - Had an Indigenous Coordinated Access lead been identified for the community? Had coordinated access been implemented?

b. Depth of Indigenous participation in the development of coordinated access - How frequently were Indigenous community representatives meeting with Designated Community Entity? Was the Indigenous definition of homelessness utilized? How did the community's assessment and prioritization processes incorporate the needs of Indigenous community?

c. Additional resources and support needed to design and implement a coordinated access system that could meet the needs of their community

Please see Appendix E for the results from the survey.

Hamilton Key Informant Interviews

Members of the IRH team of the SPRC identified senior leadership of local Indigenous agencies who work with Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Four key informant interviews were contacted and three agreed to participate. All the interviews were conducted on the telephone by members of the COH research team. The interviews were based upon a semi-structured protocol. This means that the protocol included specific questions, but also allowed for new questions to be asked based upon the topics that emerged during the interview. The interview protocol was co-developed by team members from the IRH team of the SPRC and the COH. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed by the COH team.

Hamilton Focus Groups

Members the IRC team of the SPRC identified several groups to conduct focus groups with. These were: 1) Elders/Seniors; 2) Youth; 3) Men; 4) Families; and 5) 2SLGBTQ+ (Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus Other Gender and Sexual Identities). A focus group was also conducted with front-line service providers. IRC team members organized and led all of the focus groups. The focus group protocols were also based upon a semi-structured protocol. The focus group protocol was co-developed by team members from the IRH team and the COH. Drawing on participants lived and professional experiences, discussions gathered feedback on best practices and challenges within the current homelessness system in Hamilton that could enhance the development of a coordinated access system. The focus groups were recorded and later transcribed by the COH team.

Jurisdictional Scan Key Informant Interviews

Members of the IRH team of the SPRC identified Indigenous homelessness experts from across Canada who were in various stages of the implementation of coordinated access in their community. Eight Indigenous key informants from urban, rural, and remote communities were identified, four from Western Canada and three from Eastern Canada. The eighth key informant represented a national perspective. The IRH team initiated contact and COH team members conducted the interviews. All the interviews were conducted on the phone. The interviews were also based upon a semi-structured protocol. The interview protocol was co-developed by team members from the IRH team and the COH. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed by the COH team.

Community Consultations

Two community consultations took place with members of Hamilton's Indigenous community. These open forums took place the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre and the De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre. The focus of the consultations was providing a platform for the direct input of people with lived experience to share their experiences the current support system and discuss the benefits and concerns of developing a coordinated access system. Participants were asked to join in open discussions and provide feedback via written notes based upon the topic of the community consultation. Detailed notes were also taken during each community consultation.

Data Management Consultation

A consultation took place with an expert on data management systems. The consultation provided several different approaches that communities can take to store and analyze data collected through coordinated access processes. The full report from the consultation can be found in Appendix D.

Data Analysis

The IRH team members led the data analysis. The data was analyzed using an iterative, thematic approach. Each IRH team member reviewed the transcripts and community consultation notes and made comments and reflections based upon their interpretation of the data. These comments and reflections were then shared with the larger IRH team and COH team in a group setting. The codes were refined during group discussions, and themes were created.

3. Results

The results are presented separately for the three groups we spoke with:

1. Community focus group respondents from Hamilton;
2. Key informants and front-line service providers from Hamilton; and
3. Jurisdictional scan respondents from across Canada. The results are generally presented based upon the four pillars of coordinated access.

1. Community Focus Group Respondents from Hamilton

Access Points

Indigenous Agencies are the Preferred Access Point.
Community focus group respondents commonly named highly visible Indigenous organizations, such as the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC) as a place where someone needing help could access. Other agencies listed were De dwa da dehs nyes (Aboriginal Health Centre), and the Native Women's Centre. Although less common, some respondents spoke of mainstream agencies in Hamilton, such as Good Shepherd, Notre Dame Youth Shelter, Wesley, and the Salvation Army. When asked why agencies, such as the HRIC, were places respondents would access, respondents provided several reasons. These included accessibility by public transit, a geographically central location, and a place they trust. Related to trust, a respondent shared:

> **I haven't been coming here lately, but before I was homeless, I sat in the parking lot because I felt safe here because it's like a Native ground type of thing here, people aren't going to screw with you. People know what this place is.**

Racism and Lack of Safety in the Current Mainstream System.
Respondents noted that some Indigenous individuals in need will choose to be out on the street because of the racism and safety concerns encountered within the shelter system. While on the street, Indigenous individuals can look out for one another, build community, and live with more safety than in the shelter system. A respondent stated:

> **A lot of these people who are choosing to be homeless are doing it out of fear because of what happens at some of the shelters. They get robbed. They get beaten. They get hurt... What I am saying is that these some of the reasons why they aren't going. They live in tents and railroad tracks because they feel much safer amongst their own. They all look after each other. As much as you want to tell them to go to a shelter it's a fear that they have.**

The Indigenous Community Take in Family and Friends Who Need Support.
Many respondents, particularly young people, stated that if they had the means, they would take in a family member or friend who was in need. One respondent shared, "Kind of see if they – like, taking them in myself, kind of thing. And then whatever, if they're comfortable, depending the state they're in, like I or them could either reach out to here or HRIC for services." This demonstrates Indigenous values and traditions where community members look out for each other, particularly during times of need.

Cultural Competency Training is Needed for Mainstream Agencies.
Respondents felt that mainstream agencies should all receive Indigenous cultural training. It was thought that some staff at mainstream agencies did not know how to work with Indigenous clients in a culturally respectful manner. A respondent shared:

> **You can't be sure if they have culturally training or not. Most of the time they have no social skills. Most times they don't, they have been trained on a base paper level. Their social skills that involve us as a people are very minimal, so they actually are going by only what they have read and what they've written. It's not on real life.**

Mainstream agencies need to work from a place of respect with all clients, regardless of if they are Indigenous or non-Indigenous. A respondent said:

> **It comes back to decency, respect, trust building and learning how to talk to people. If you don't know how to talk to people, then you shouldn't be in that role. That's if you don't know how to talk somebody. It doesn't matter what ethnic group they were from.**

Gender-Specific Services.
A female respondent shared that she would be more comfortable accessing agencies where she could work with female staff. In co-ed spaces, she recommended that staff members ask female clients if they would prefer to speak to a woman or a man.

Ensuring Supports are Available to Those Unfamiliar with Hamilton.
A smaller number of respondents talked about being unfamiliar with the services available in Hamilton. These respondents often came from other communities across Ontario. One respondent shared their experience:

> **When I first moved here, the first thing I did, I went to Notre Dame to stay for the night or for a while. On the first day, I asked about HRIC [Hamilton Regional Indian Centre]. I went over there and tried to ask if I could meet anyone to help me. … If I'm thinking about a friend who is coming to Hamilton, the first place I would take them is HRIC.**

The respondent later shared that information about where to access support should be advertised in public transportation hubs, such as the GO Station and bus stations.

Method of Access

In Person Access Allows for Trust Building.
Most respondents preferred to access services in person, as they felt that there was more trust building in this approach. One respondent shared:

> **"I would rather be able to look someone in the eye and have this conversation with them, so you know that they're actually listening…I'd rather be able to see their actual feeling and connection within their face."**

For some respondents, they agreed that it would be okay to make appointments over the phone, but that any interactions with front-line staff members should be conducted in person.

Other Forms of Access (e.g., Telephone, Web-Based) are Also Important.
Other respondents shared that they would be comfortable using other mediums, including telephone, texting, online chat, and video. Again, trust was an important part of these methods. For example, a respondent stated:

> **I really don't know what to say. I wouldn't mind committing myself to anything whether it's over the phone or in person. It depends on whether I know that person or not. It all depends on the circumstances. I would have to know that person or get to know that person better.**

For some respondents, phone-based methods were preferred to computer-based methods since not everyone will have access to the Internet. It was noted that older individuals may not always be comfortable using computer-based methods, but younger people may prefer this option. The ability to access support virtually (e.g., Skype) or on the telephone was important for convenience and financial reasons. For example, a respondent said:

> **I like idea of Skype. Say you know you have those appointments where I didn't really have to travel so far and spend money on a bus ticket, and you get out there and you could've done this over Skype. So, it's like, intakes that could just be done via Skype.**

Further, virtual and telephone appointments were important for individuals with mental health challenges. A respondent said that some people feel anxious about accessing services:

> **Feeling anxious about like coming out. Like, 'I really can't' because it's paralyzing for them to leave the house. There's a lot of us that are like, "yeah, we're on our way." But we still can't manage to get the strength to get up out of bed and to get changed. But we'll tell them, "Yeah, we're on our way" because we don't want them to wait, but yeah, that's when you know that they need something like Skype or something.**

Assessment & Staff Qualities

Speaking with Indigenous Service Providers is Essential.
Most of the respondents agreed that they would prefer to work with an Indigenous service provider. Respondents described negative experiences when working with mainstream agencies, particularly feeling judged by service providers. A respondent stated, *"We get used to a certain kind of treatment from workers."* Another respondent said they had to act differently around non-Indigenous service providers. They said:

> **I am more comfortable with a Native person because I feel like I have to be something else when talking to a non-Native person. If you feel that there is trust or that vibe then you're going to talk.**

Similarly, another respondent shared the following:

> **What's that word for when we're being stopped by the police and we're asked... Profiling? I'd say as an Indigenous, we're used to being racially profiled, we're used to being asked a lot of questions that don't make sense why they're asking this. So, I'd say, make the process transparent and clear that they can be trusted with this information through these questions.**

Respondents shared that non-Indigenous service providers cannot fully understand the knowledge, traditions, and culture of Indigenous peoples. A respondent shared the following:

> **Some persons don't understand the culture. For instance, [some] Indigenous men don't like eye contact. So, they might view Indigenous men as being evasive by not keeping eye contact. But that not it. It's because of the culture. So, it's about having that sense of cultural sensitivity.**

Young people were also looking for positive guidance and role models from Indigenous service providers.

These quotes and examples all demonstrate the importance of having Indigenous service providers available within Indigenous and mainstream agencies. This is important because it allows the community member to share their experience more comfortably and allows the service provider to have an enhanced understanding of their support needs. As the community member is listened to, they may feel more confident in the support being offered to them.

Indigenous Languages Must Be Respected.
One of the respondents shared that Indigenous languages should be respected during the assessment process. The quote below shows the importance of having Indigenous staff with a variety of lived experiences. The respondent shared their experience:

> **My [siblings] speak Mohawk so English is their second language. That is like a lot of us. Our words in English are pronounced different, because we taught ourselves English words all through high school, and up to grade 8 it was all Mohawk, Mohawk, Mohawk. So, like even at home, my [siblings] none of them, one is ok but the older one [they] cannot read or write and [they] do not like telling people that because [they] get judged right away. But like [they are] very intelligent and [they] can do everything everyone else can do.**

Qualities and Traits of Service Providers – Age and Lived Experience.
Some respondents described qualities and traits of service providers that should be considered during hiring practices. Age of the service provider was an important factor for one respondent, as they would prefer to speak with someone their own age or older. They stated:

> **Lots of times I feel like the people I am talking to are younger than I am, and I am very intimidated by that. It really irritates me I just walk away like I don't really feel comfortable talking to a 23-year-old about my experience.**

The lived experience of service providers was another important consideration. Some respondents felt that it would be helpful for service providers to have lived experience of homelessness or housing insecurity. A respondent stated, *"It would be good if they had experience, some kind of experience with what they are dealing with."*

These quotes highlight the importance of having service providers with different Indigenous heritages or those who are aware of and are respectful of different Indigenous knowledges, cultures and practices. When service providers have diverse Indigenous or culturally aware staff, they may find that they are able to better relate to the different clients they serve.

Continuity of Staff Support.
Some respondents, particularly young people, preferred to speak to the same service provider within an agency. This was related to not having to share one's story with multiple people. The respondent said:

> **I think it's also important for youth to have the same worker instead of having 10-20 workers within the run of 6 months. Then they don't have to re-open up. They're already comfortable with that person. If they do enter into crisis mode, then they can continue with that person that they feel comfortable with, instead of reaching out.**

Reconnecting to culture through staff support.
Some respondents were exploring and re-connecting to their Indigenous culture and heritage. They had some trepidation in sharing this because they were unsure of their Indigenous background. Many are trying to find out who they are and want to learn more about their Indigenous side, but it can be intimidating when seeking assistance. This group relied on the agency staff to provide the cultural connection so that they could learn, and at the same time developing a supportive network and a sense of community. They felt that something was missing from their lives which proved to be the Indigenous part of themselves. Now they are being connected to culture which helps them to heal and create good values for themselves by living with the traditional teachings.

Among the community focus group respondents, there were different experiences of connection to Indigenous community and identity. For example, some respondents identified having intergenerational trauma for their direct contact with family members who experienced Residential School, 60's Scoop and systemic racism. Other respondents were denied their Indigenous heritage in the early years and are now becoming aware of their missing roots and are trying to reclaim it back. Others were pushed out of the system, not knowing till late in their lives that they are Indigenous. Canadian history has not been truthful to the impact of colonialism has had on the original people of this land. The impact is reflective on today's large number of Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness.

Assessment – The Process

Asking the Right Questions at the Right Time.
There was agreement from the respondents that questions related to coordinated access should not be intrusive, particularly if someone is in crisis. For example, respondents said the following:

> **"Yeah, like if you're in a crisis or not...If it's, like, extreme because then if it's extreme, you won't really be able to talk or think about stuff straight."**
>
> **"It wouldn't hurt to ask them if you may ask them a few questions instead of just jumping in their faces and just asking them."**
>
> **P1: "Why are you homeless is not a good thing to ask too." P2: "Yeah it puts blame on the person."**
>
> **"I would, like, want them not to ask about my situation."**

Asking about one's Indigenous identity was also discussed. One respondent said, *"Everyone just assumes that I'm Native. But no one has really ever asked me."* Respondents felt that a staff member should not make assumptions about anyone's identity and allow individuals to self-identify. A respondent stated:

> **I feel like they should just say, 'What do you feel you identify as?' I feel like that would be more... instead of saying – or instead of going down a huge list, I feel like they should say 'Hey, what do you identify as?' And let that person disclose what they are, instead of just going straight for assumptions.**

2SLGBTQ+ respondents also discussed the importance for staff to ask about gender pronouns while doing an assessment and not to assume anyone's gender.

Not Having to Repeat One's Story.

Respondents shared that they did not want to repeat their story multiple times to multiple people. A respondent stated, *"Or asking questions repetitively. I hate that. You go to the hospital and you have to answer every single nurse and doctor and you see it, 50 questions, all the same thing."* Once information has been shared, some respondents felt that the information, with their consent, should be available to other staff members within an agency. This way, it would reduce the number of times a respondent had to share their story. A respondent shared the following:

> **At intake, you have to go through that, right? But after that, I think that any information – if they're going to come and see someone else, any information should be passed along so that they know what's going on and don't have to ask that stuff...If you're working on the same case and you know, it's agreed on with the client, why not just pass it on. That's why people get frustrated, right?**

Confidentiality is Key.

Some respondents were concerned with the confidentiality of the information they would be providing during an assessment. Given the tight knit nature of the Indigenous community in Hamilton, it was thought that information may be shared with others in the community. A respondent shared their concerns in the following quote:

> **Sometimes there's always that thought because we are so close, you know a lot of people and people know each other, how do we know that what we are telling you is going to be kept confidential. When you know that person knows your Auntie, or they know some person who knows you and I know that you're not going to tell me community. Whereas when you are dealing with a non-Indigenous individual, they don't give a shit anyways, so you can give them information and you don't have to worry about it going anywhere.**

Prioritization

Prioritization Based Upon Indigenous Values and Traditions.
When asked who should be prioritized for services, most of the respondents listed children/youth, families, women, and Elders/Seniors. Respondents described that they based their decision upon Indigenous cultures, knowledges, and traditions. For example, a respondent said:

> **If you have a situation, you're looking at it with a whole approach. If I was working with an Indigenous agency and they were following culture and there is a homeless Indigenous man and a single mom with a child; I am going to pick the single mom and the child regardless of what is his circumstance. That's a very strong view in our community.**

Prioritizing families was crucial since it meant that family members would not be separated. This is particularly important for Indigenous families, since the rate of child welfare involvement for Indigenous families is disproportionately high. A respondent said:

> **The child's now at risk of being taken away from mom. So, family separation becomes an imminent risk, right? It's already bad enough that the woman and child are facing homelessness, what if they're facing – you know, they have to be reunified as a family later on. You don't want to split families apart.**

The needs of prioritizing children/youth, families, women, and Elders/Seniors was challenging in a time of few resources available. A respondent stated:

> **Yeah, like the future is thinking about the kids and making sure that they have a place, but we have to kind of time share them. But like what about the old people where are we going to put them, like where am I going to go now?**

Vulnerable Populations Need to Be Considered.
Some respondents felt that individuals who are working through mental health and addiction challenges, and those experiencing domestic violence should be prioritized for services. One respondent shared that individuals and families who really need support should be prioritized, whereas those without mental health, addiction, and domestic violence issues can wait. They said:

> **Family, addictions, and mental health. Because people that really need it like mental health, addictions and families, they should be the ones going first. Because if you think about it, people that are okay, in a way, that can wait a little longer, and people that are in extreme need that have little ones that need a house or a place, people with mental health that need a place to help themselves and have workers that can come and check up on them on regular basis, especially with people with addictions – those people, I feel, should be one of the first ones.**

Other groups identified as being vulnerable were young people, Elders/Seniors, and individuals with disabilities. Speaking of young people, a respondent said, *"They're more easily influenced and easier to get exploited out there when they're homeless, right?"*

Speaking about Elders/Seniors, a young person said:

In a way I also feel that Elders should also be again, another one of the first few people to get housed. Just because they're older and they might, you know, need a good place, where they can be taken care of, like either their caregiver comes and helps take care of them. They might need that kind of placement for them, as well, I think.

Addressing Challenges Before Housing.
Some respondents, particularly the Elders/Seniors, indicated that individuals should address mental health and addiction challenges prior to accessing housing supports. A respondent stated:

> **I would do it based on their needs... So, what brought them to the point of homelessness? So, if it was addiction, they should seek services that help to treat for addiction. Things like that. You won't be able to hold at home until you get that figured out.**

Giving Up One's Prioritization Position for Someone Else in Need.
Several respondents, particularly young people, said that they would give up their spot on a prioritization list for someone who was in greater need.

Everyone Has Needs – Why Do We Need to Prioritize?
Other respondents questioned the need to engage in prioritization processes. Below is an exchange that happened during one of the focus groups:

> **P1 - I guess my question is, why are we asking which experience is sadder? Or worse than the other?**
>
> **P2 - Why are they comparing situations?**
>
> **P1 - Yeah. Why are they comparing situations in the first place?**

The exchange demonstrates that these respondents felt that all individuals who need support should be able to access it, regardless of their circumstances.

Matching - Housing

Experiencing Racism While Searching for Housing.
Housing options in Hamilton were limited and respondents shared the racism they encounter from landlords. One respondent said:

> **Because I think that's also the things that they say 'If you let an Aboriginal person move into your house, they are going to trash it, forget it. So, it's not worth us allowing them to go in there.' And there is just as many if not more non-Aboriginal people who go into apartments and homes and they do the same destructive things that they accuse the Aboriginal people of doing.**

Discrimination Based Upon Age.
Young people identified the challenge in trying to find housing when you are under 18, including requirements for a credit check. A young person said:

> **It took me a year and a half to find an apartment that would rent to me because when I got it, I was 16. It took me forever to find my apartment that would take me without a credit check.**

Poor Housing Quality.
Other respondents noted that affordable housing options were often in disrepair and it was difficult to get social housing providers to do repairs.

Housing Specific for the Indigenous Community.
One respondent had the idea of creating unique housing spaces for the Indigenous that have a strong sense of community. They said:

> **I think maybe it was already, but kind of like a village, like our own space or like an apartment building for single men, or maybe a condo for families and then another building for the elderly. Like a little community centre.**

Data Sovereignty

Legacy of Data Being Used to Harm.
Respondents had varying opinions about sharing data, data storage, and data sovereignty. All the respondents recalled how governments have used data to control Indigenous peoples throughout history. As stated by one respondent, *"History recalls that [the government] will keep doing that to us forever."*

There was a general sense of discomfort of having personal data being stored by non-Indigenous agencies. A young person said:

> **To be honest, I feel like I would feel more uncomfortable now understanding that one piece. Just because, like, I would want – like, let's say if it's my data, I would want to make sure that my data isn't being used against me or anything like that, if that makes sense.**

Indigenous Agencies Should Hold the Data.

Some respondents were unaware that their data was not currently being housed within Indigenous agencies. A respondent said, *"Oh, isn't this already being done?"* One respondent felt more comfortable with Indigenous agencies storing data collected through coordinated access. They said:

> **We already know that we can't trust the government. So far, when we look at what does work is grassroots organizations. I think so far, grassroots organizations have been so much better, so far that's helped us...but I guess I feel safer knowing that my data is being processed through them rather than looked at by western society. Western organizations.**

Working with the Mainstream to Share Limited Data.

If it was necessary to store data within non-Indigenous institutions, such as the City of Hamilton, one respondent thought that the Indigenous community should be involved in shaping what this data storage would look like. They said, *"I think there should be a representative for the Indigenous community who handles that stuff in the office, so they understand it from the ground up."* Other respondents were comfortable with sharing data with non-Indigenous agencies and institutions, but only the necessary data. One respondent thought that two databases should be created. One could have personal data that is housed within an Indigenous organization and the other is essential data that could be shared with non-Indigenous agencies and institutions.

2. Key Informants and Front-line Service Providers from Hamilton

What is Coordinated Access for the Indigenous Community in Hamilton? A Wholistic Approach.

The key informants and front-line service providers described coordinated access as a wholistic approach that makes it easy for people to move through the system. A wholistic approach addresses the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual parts of the whole individual. A key informant shared:

> **But when you're talking wholistic in an Indigenous point of view, it's like, it's making that person whole again so that they can move forward in life. Because if you're beat down spiritually, you don't know who you are, how can you accomplish success in life?**

A wholistic approach should also address access to housing, mental health and substance use supports, cultural supports, and supports for families and their extended family members.

Access to services should be quick, using a community-based approach. As stated by one key informant:

> **"I think about those connections within the community to be able to easily move people through a system without retraumatizing them."**

The key informants felt that a coordinated access system should not burden individuals and families who require support. For example, a key informant said, *"Do their intake, do something else to get more services, and [don't ask them] the same questions again and again."*

Lastly, the key informants thought that any individual or family who requires support, whether they are residing in an emergency shelter or accessing other services for households experiencing homelessness, should be able to access the coordinated access system.

In building a coordinated access system, it is essential that is designed by Indigenous communities, implemented by Indigenous communities, and owned by Indigenous communities. A front-line staff member stated:

> **Everything that we do has to be designed for the seven generations that follows us. All those young people. We're setting up a blueprint of systems for them that we may only design but, that they have to implement. How do we implement our ways of life into these systems? We have to do this work with our own people.**

It is clear that Indigenous organizations in Hamilton were already engaged in coordinated access practices. Key informants explained how their organizations provide multiple, internal supports and refer out to other organizations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, when required. These wholistic practices help to reduce the number of people falling through the cracks. Respondents also agreed that a more formalized coordinated access system would be beneficial for Hamilton.

Access Points

Availability of Indigenous Agencies and Choice in Where to Access the Coordinated Access System is Key. Key informants and front-line staff identified the importance of choice in determining where Indigenous individuals and families can access coordinated access systems. An essential element to this is the availability of Indigenous organizations that Indigenous individuals and families feel comfortable accessing. The key informants and front-line staff members shared:

> **Key Informant 1 – "Ideally, there should be an Indigenous touch down point where you enter the system. It would ideally be an Indigenous organization."**
>
> **Key Informant 1 – "Not all Indigenous people will access mainstream organizations because there's some level of mistrust."**
>
> **Key Informant 2 – "I think it should be every Indigenous organization…I'm about the no wrong door approach."**
>
> **Front-line Staff – "When I work with youth, anytime I try to do any kind of services, I look for the Aboriginal community first."**
>
> **Front-line Staff – "They want Indigenous [organizations] because they feel safe."**
>
> **Front-line Staff – "For me, it's always Indigenous services first…In all cases they're asked to get cultural support. Also…there's traditional supports and housing supports. There's support for old people, young people, teenagers, and most cases, it's an Indigenous worker."**

De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre and the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC) were identified as key Indigenous agencies accessed by Indigenous individuals and families in Hamilton. It was also acknowledged that some Indigenous individuals and families do not access these agencies, indicating the need for multiple Indigenous access points across Hamilton. A key informant shared:

> **There's a whole group of folks who are maybe not connected because not every Indigenous person is connected to an Indigenous organization nor for whatever reason they don't need the service like whatever their reason is, but there's other touchstone points.**

Working with Indigenous Service Providers is Important. The importance of being able to work with Indigenous staff members was captured by a quote from a front-line staff member. They said:

> **I want to see as many Indigenous people facilitating and coordinating this process as possible. I find in the Indigenous community that it's Indigenous people who go above and beyond for our people. It's our people who work themselves to the bone for our people. Non-Indigenous people haven't got the same investment... It's got to be Indigenous designed, Indigenous implemented, and it has to have Indigenous ownership. We can't have non-Indigenous people dictating to us what is going to be the protocol and how to score people. We can't have that. It doesn't work for us. It's asking too much of us to compromise our traditional values to start doing those things.**

It is also important for Indigenous agencies to conduct outreach in the community to ensure that Indigenous individuals and families are aware of coordinated access. This includes outreach to encampments where Indigenous individuals and families may be residing. The key informant said:

> **So, our folks are going out to the camps constantly to meet with folks and see how they are doing. I think it's through those avenues that you are going to get a large response. A couple of posters won't hurt. You can do that. But I think it's the one-on-one interactions that really works.**

Assessment

Relationship Building and Trust Are Vital When Determining an Individual's or Family's Need. In determining the housing and service needs of Indigenous individuals and families, the approach should be conversational, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed, and not rushed. Key informants and front-line staff all shared that building trust with clients is critical. Service providers may be able to build more trust with their clients if there are more Indigenous service providers available and Indigenous art and culture within the space. This can help Indigenous individuals and families to see visual representations of their culture on the walls. A key informant shared:

> **What's necessary is it's building those relationships and trust. Walking into an organization and seeing a lot of brown faces. A culturally safe space where you're accepted for who you are and not judged when you walk in the door.**

The key informants thought that trust building requires in-person contact. A key informant stated, *"It's got to be in-person because … – like I said, it's all about building trust."* Through face-to-face contact, Indigenous service providers can begin to develop rapport with their clients and make the assessment process less impersonal.

This rapport development should be based upon building a sense of community among clients. One key informant noted that they offer a breakfast program for their clients who are currently experiencing homelessness or who previously experienced homelessness. By helping to support this sense of community, clients may feel more comfortable opening up about their needs. The key informant said:

> **So, we created a community from the beginning, and we brought that to the homeless community, and they invited all of their friends. Every Thursday morning, we have a community breakfast, and everyone comes together. What we have found that works is that the folks who have one person from the community bring the entire group. This is because we are now moving the community from the streets into housed spaces and then they can have their morning breakfast…They have drop in spaces where they can come in and have coffee. I think the community environment gives them that sense of belonging. They are very much part of a community.**

Getting to know clients can take time, therefore, assessment processes should not be rushed. A key informant shared:

> **It's not just sit down and answer this question answer that question answer this question. Some of it is. Some people you can, other people, you know, the workers recognizes that this is a conversation that might take two months to complete this piece of paper. And it's never the piece of paper sitting in front of them. It's all about relationships and making them feel like they belong.**

It's Not an Intake, It's a Conversation. The key informants stressed that rigid intakes and assessment tools are not appropriate for the Indigenous community. Key informants stated:

> **Key Informant 1 - It's not about taking people and putting them into this machine and coming out with a number. Or your little ingredients of what the needs are. It's about interpersonal relationships. Building that trust. Because it always comes down to building the relationship. Key Informant 2 - We don't bring somebody in take them through an assessment ask them all sorts of questions and give them a piece of paper and number and say here go call it…We don't asses people in the Western view of assessment. What we do is like we have a wide range of like programs and services so sometimes it's a home visit…sometimes it's the family comes in and it's not done in a checklist way. It's a conversation and through those conversations and relationships the family identifies their needs to us.**

Conversations are important because they allow service providers to understand the unique qualities of each client. A key informant recounted that Hamilton has a diverse group of Indigenous people accessing services, with each community member having a unique background. They said, *"Culture is unique to every individual. We have people come in who are from territories all over the country. So, they are all different."*

Related to this, a key informant stated that the Indigenous experience of homelessness is unique to Westernized conceptions of homelessness and that this cannot be captured in an assessment tool. One difference is that Indigenous community members are more likely to stay with extended family members when they need housing. A key informant shared the following example of an Indigenous person accessing their agency who was staying with their Aunt:

> **But to us that's the norm. They don't, they're not connecting that they're homeless, do you know what I mean? Because in our community we stay with our relatives and it's not a big deal.**

Related to assessment tools, particularly the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assessment Tool (VI-SPDAT), the key informants agreed that it does not provide an accurate representation of an Indigenous person's needs and may traumatize Indigenous community members. A key informant said:

> **And the VI-SPDAT...It is not safe for Indigenous people. And that goes back to filling out those forms and sitting down and asking those questions. They're not going to disclose. They're not going to disclose to you. They're not going to answer all those questions, so you get those warped numbers. It's just not going to happen.**

Key informants felt that assessment tools created by Indigenous communities could have value, but that a tool is only one part of the assessment process. A key informant stated, *"Now, if they're an Indigenous organization and the VI-SPDAT was more culturally safe, over time, yeah you could get an accurate score. But again, it's over time. It's after building relationships."*

Another problem related to assessment tools was assigning a number to respondents based upon their responses. This type of process is in direct violation of Indigenous tradition, knowledge, and teachings. It also has linkages to historically traumatizing practices that occurred during the period of Residential Schools and the 60's Scoop. A key informant said:

> **Absolutely, historically for us having a number like that is that it could be a trauma and a trigger that people are experiencing. So, we don't want to be traumatizing people by just coming by. You're already vulnerable and coming to ask for additional support for your family, we don't want to create any kind of environment that's not safe.**

A front-line staff member voiced similar concerns with the impact of assessment tools and scoring. They said:

> **To ask us to use a scoring tool, you're asking us to compromise traditional values. Indigenous people scoring Indigenous people relies on judging people and we will not subscribe to that**. We talked instead. We talked about individuals. We talked about all the things they had done, all the things they indicated that they wanted to do. We had conversation rather than applying numbers and a score that does nothing…It's not wholistic. It's not a wholistic approach. When we're working with our people, we always want to come from a wholistic place…If you really want to work with our community, that human element has to be present at all times.

Instead of doing one assessment of an individual or family, a key informant shared that at their agency multiple opportunities to provide feedback is given. By asking individuals how they are doing on a regular basis, they can deliver services that meet their needs at that moment. They said:

> **We're very responsive, I think that's one of the things that we do instead of an assessment, we ask for feedback constantly in different ways. It's not just in written form, it can be verbal, it can be a picture, it can be any kind of way that folks want to tell us what their needs are and then we're responsive with our programming.**

Prioritization

Allocating Resources Based on Indigenous Values and Traditions. In an underfunded system, respondents shared that children/youth, families, women, and Elders/Seniors should be given priority access to housing and supports. These groups were identified based upon Indigenous knowledge, values, and traditions. Respondents felt that it was important that households, particularly young people and young families, do not become entrenched into homelessness. A key informant shared:

> **We prioritize based on – it's a cultural thing. We take care of our children, we take care of our youth, we take care of our elderly. And prioritization – again, the VI-SPDAT looks at the individual situation. It's a very technical and very mechanical approach that takes the human out of it, right? It's a number. You're a number now. It's so institutionalized.**

A front-line service provider shared a similar opinion. They said:

> **We'd have to follow our traditional guidelines too. And our traditional guidelines tell us what? In every Indigenous community, what's the first sign you're going to see? "Children are our future." In every community.**

The Seventh Generation Principle, a philosophy common to many Indigenous cultures, reminds that the decisions we make today must result in a sustainable world seven generations into the future, was identified as a key factor as to why young people should be prioritized. A front-line staff member shared:

> **First, I have to look at what we always talk about. Our responsibility is we have to design something that follows seven generations in front of us.** Our design that we share innately, traditionally and everything that we do has to be designed for seven generations that follow us. All of those young people.

By focusing on children and youth, front line staff members said that it would help break the cycle of homelessness.

A person's vulnerability should also be considered in prioritization. Particularly vulnerable individuals were identified as women, girls, transgender women, Two-Spirt individuals, the elderly, and those with chronic health conditions.

Key informants also noted that they try to help everyone that comes into their doors. They described trying to not enforce waitlists for services, as they try to connect them with other programs within their agencies or referrals to other agencies.

Matching - Housing

Not Enough Affordable, Quality Housing Available in Hamilton. Although an Indigenous-led coordinated access system is important, the process is only useful if there is affordable and quality housing available for individuals and families to move into. All respondents shared that there is not enough affordable housing available in Hamilton and that the few affordable options that exist are often of poor quality. A key informant shared Hamilton's current housing situation in the following quote:

> **Right now, in Hamilton, we're having the issue of gentrification. Condos going up left and right. Property owners raising their rental prices, making housing unaffordable because there's opportunity. You can't blame them. They're in it for the money. But that's the reality. Housing is getting so hard to find and no matter what we do to try coordinated access and all this stuff, if you don't have the housing there.**

Racism Limits Access to Housing. Respondents also shared the racism and discrimination Indigenous people encounter from landlords. One key informant stated:

> **Racism, discrimination happens to Indigenous people trying to secure housing. You hear stories of people opening the door and seeing an Indigenous person standing there and slamming the door on their face and not even consider them or renting their property – and that's a reality. I've talked to workers who have experienced that.**

Front line staff members discussed how they need to educate landlords and advocate for their clients, particularly around the right to participate in cultural traditions. A staff member said they deal with, *"discriminatory or uneducated landlords who are trying to evict [Indigenous clients] because they're burning their medicines or are drumming too loud."*

Housing for Indigenous People, By Indigenous People. Because of the racism encountered within the housing market, key informants and front-line staff members recommended that housing specific to the Indigenous community be created. A front-line staff member shared:

> **I would love to see something that's Indigenous specific. Just for Indigenous people. That way we don't have to put up with non-Indigenous people complaining about us when we're smudging or doing other kinds of ceremony. We're not constantly having to explain what we're doing.**

It was suggested that housing developments should be for people of all income levels. This would include rent-geared-to-income and market rent. Key informants recognized that developing housing takes times, including finding the right properties and fostering necessary partnerships, so affordable housing plans should be expedited.

Housing for Community Members with High Needs. There were also discussions on the need for Indigenous supportive housing to be built for individuals and families with high needs. A key informant said, *"We don't have the infrastructure to house people who should otherwise be in a [psychiatric facility]."* They later shared that there needs to be housing for "hard to house" individuals. This may include a 24/7 support model that provides continuous support to individuals. They said that the system needs to:

> **Consider those people who are really the most vulnerable that are the hardest to house and coming up with a solution for that because those are the people who are let out of an institution. They are homeless and they going to end up back into the institution because they are homeless. Nobody else wants to work with them…I just think they need more support than a case manager who goes in to see them every week or two. They need more than the one-on-one support.**

Referrals

Supporting Clients When Referrals Are Made. An important part of coordinated access is matching individuals to the appropriate services. This will involve a referral process. The key informants stressed the importance of guiding Indigenous individuals and families in this process. Although it depends on the individual's or family's preference, the key informants felt that a warm transfer is helpful, particularly as it allows for Indigenous service providers to advocate for their clients. The key informants said:

> **Key Informant 1 - It's always about the individual needs. Does that person need to be – have a warm referral? Do they need to be taken over there and introduced? With the worker sitting in on, maybe the first meeting, or providing supports? Or is it, okay, this person we can write a referral, send them over, give them a call to let them know they're coming? That's both Indigenous or non-Indigenous, external organizations, and it's very just dependent on the person. Because we do – it's not out of the norm for us to advocate and be that supportive person when they're going to different appointments or meetings.**
>
> **Key Informant 2 - They need to physically go and say let's make an appointment with whoever it is with the housing person. Let's go. 'Do you have all your identification that you need? Oh, no you don't? Okay, let's go the health centre and I'll go with you. I know the health centre has id cards. Oh, you need some support or some cultural program?' or like whatever it is. 'Let me make that connection.' Because you have that one person that safe point now we're building community by going to all these other places with them.**

Systems-Based Approach

Working with Other Systems. The key informants discussed the importance of working with other systems outside of the housing and homelessness sector. Specific sectors identified included the child welfare system, the mental health system, the criminal justice system and the hospital system. One key informant recounted an experience of working with an elderly woman who was discharged from the hospital during the winter with no place to go. She said:

> **The person [from the hospital] who was letting them go could have made a call and made a connection to somewhere. What happens to that individual? In our case we had a place for her to stay two days later. So, we put her up in a hotel room for two nights. She didn't like the place and now she's back to being homeless. At least, she's not in a storm and it was her choice.**

Trial & Error. One key informant noted the importance of learning from their mistakes and refining practices based upon these learnings. They referenced a housing program that their agency offered. The program did not anticipate the number of visitors that would be accessing the housing but learned that residents were bringing in community members that they knew while they were homeless. This demonstrated the strong sense of community that existed among the residents but meant that the program needed to address this new challenge. The program learned from this experience and began to offer more supports for the residents. This example demonstrated large number of Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness.

Data Sovereignty

Indigenous People Have the Right to the Ownership, Control, Access and Possession© of Any Data That is Collected Through a Coordinated Access Process. Indigenous data sovereignty is a critical component to coordinated access. Key informants and front-line staff noted that the type of data that is collected and how it is stored are critical components.

Collecting the Right Data. Focused on data collection, key informants felt that standardized data collection procedures, grounded in Western-based methods, do not accurately capture the work that happens with Indigenous communities. The importance of qualitative data was highlighted by one key informant. They said:

> **Yeah, I think qualitative is huge. It's huge for recognizing what a success is. In mainstream – in data, you have your target, you have your actuals. Did you have success? Did you meet your target? Right? Did you hit every point along the way? In the Indigenous community, again, it goes back to that individual. What might seem as huge success for us, is not seen that way in mainstream...But to us, it's a process...Every little step a person takes is their success.**

A key informant also discussed that benchmarks brought forward by federal and municipal governments do not always reflect the experience of Indigenous service providers. For example, a key informant questioned the benchmark of housing individuals experiencing homelessness within 90 days. Given the racism encountered within the housing market, this 90-day benchmark is not reflective of the context for the Indigenous community. It also does not recognize that Indigenous homelessness is not just about a loss of housing, but also a loss of culture. As stated by one key informant:

> **So, I think there has to be that recognition that the limitations on, "Oh you have to get them housed within this many days or that many days." Sometimes, we just got to get them off the street and into treatment and taking care of all those other things where they can last more than a week in housing. You know, because they're so disconnected**

> **from their people, from themselves, from their spirit, that there's a lot of work that needs to happen with these people. And I think – and on top of that, being able to access houses for these people, within those periods of time can be a real challenge.**

Indigenous Agencies Hosting Data and Analysing the Data. The key informants and front-line staff all agreed that Indigenous people have the right to determine who has access to their data, how their data is stored, and how their data is used. Without data sovereignty, it would reinforce the history of data being used as a weapon against Indigenous people. For example, a key informant said, *"the history of controlled data for Indigenous people has done nothing but reinforce colonization."*

One key informant thought that the data should be housed through a coalition of Indigenous service providers. They said:

> **The control and managing should absolutely be, I don't know one Indigenous organization, I think through a coalition or a collective of all of us together. I think it should go there to figure out how to manage and who, like those kinds of things. The data, where its kept because ultimately you know that is creating a safe way to access services so folks know that this is you know, this data…your data as an Indigenous person is being safely housed in the Indigenous community.**

Another key informant stated that is important for Indigenous agencies to have funded positions to analyse the data that is collected. This contributed to Indigenous agencies having the autonomy to report on their data in culturally relevant and meaningful ways.

Meaningful Collaboration and Partnership with Mainstream Agencies Includes Adequate Funding and Resources. Indigenous community members may choose or need to access supports and services from mainstream agencies. The collection and use of Indigenous data by mainstream agencies should be developed in collaboration and partnership with local Indigenous agencies. A key informant said:

> **And it's not just the Indigenous organizations, right? You would have mainstream who are working with Indigenous people. To get those numbers of Indigenous. And it's not about the organizations' numbers; it's about the number of Indigenous people accessing the housing services, the homelessness services. They might be accessing them somewhere else, but it should still count.**

As this will be a potentially complicated process, one key informant noted that there needs to be adequate funding and employee resources to ensure that data collection and storage procedures are properly done. They stated:

> **I think that's a big part of securing our data – is to make sure you have the right resources, the right knowledge and expertise making those decisions. And I'm the first to admit I'm not an expert and what it looks like, but I know that there's experts out there. And put all those expert heads together, and we'll have something that will work for us.**

One key informant thought it would be beneficial to have guiding principles and documents on data collection and sovereignty. They thought that this information should be shared nationally so that other Indigenous communities in Canada could engage in similar processes.

Client Confidentiality is Key. Client confidentiality and access to data was raised as a concern by one key informant. They particularly thought client confidentiality was important for women fleeing domestic violence. They said:

> **I wonder about the individuals and their autonomy. Do they really want to have everyone access their information? I struggle with that. I know they need the support and if they want to be on a list, but I don't know if they want a number of different persons having access to their personal information.**

Indigenous Data Commissioner Office. The idea of an Indigenous Data Commissioner position and supporting staff to work with the City of Hamilton on data sovereignty issues was supported by the key informants, but there were also questions about the role. One key informant stated that the Indigenous Data Commissioner position would, *"still have to work within the constraints of the system that's there..."* This quote shows that any position hired within the City must not be housed within a settler, colonial institution because there would be inherent limits to the position that would inhibit this role's connection and responsibility to the Indigenous community.

Educating and Training Mainstream Services to Shift the Onus on Cultural Competency

Given the lack of emergency shelter services specifically for Indigenous individuals and families in Hamilton, Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness and in need of emergency housing may choose to access supports at mainstream agencies. As a result, key informants discussed the importance of mainstream agencies partnering with Indigenous agencies to receive adequate cultural competency training. Each key informant noted how they spend a lot effort to educate mainstream services. This education results in stronger partnerships, but also educates the mainstream services on the importance of informing Indigenous individuals and families who access their services that Indigenous services are also available to them in Hamilton. A key informant said:

> **We need to be a part of the system, in the sense that [mainstream organizations] need to recognize that an Indigenous person walks in the door, no matter what they do with some people, they're not going to have any success. They might house them, but how long will they stay housed? They need to be connected to the Indigenous organization because they're impacted by historic trauma. And we're the experts on fixing that. Helping people heal, not fix it. We help people heal. In the end, it's up to the individual, but mainstream can't help people heal from historic trauma.**

Related to coordinated access, a key informant shared that Indigenous organizations should also be included within mainstream tables focused on coordinated access. They said:

> **The City needs to also have somebody that is Indigenous in this whole coordinated access piece in the mainstream. You can't bring that lens, it doesn't matter how much training you get, you can't bring that lens to their work and [Indigenous organizations] can help identify some of the pieces that are barriers that will create a safe space.**

One way to inform mainstream agencies about the different types of services available to Hamilton's Indigenous community is through partnership building. A key informant shared their experience:

> **We're having collaboration agreements set up, we're drafting up all the programs and services that would make sense...we're having lunch and learns with folks from their organizations coming to our organizations. So, I think it needs to be more of that relationship building, you can hand anybody a pamphlet but that doesn't mean you know what your programs and services are.**

Although providing cultural competency training was important, the responsibility to provide this training often fell on the shoulders of the Indigenous community. This can be burdensome for Indigenous agencies since they are often fielding many requests to provide training and are under resourced and understaffed. Instead, it was thought that mainstream agencies and the City of Hamilton should be creating opportunities for cultural competency trainings to occur. A key informant said:

> **I think there needs to be reciprocal relationship but I don't think the responsibility should just on us because we're overworked, under resourced and we're tapped on far too often, I think that needs to be an effort on the City of Hamilton and folks working in these agencies within the network of doing that work to connect out to organizations to see what we all offer.**

3. Jurisdictional Scan Respondents from Across Canada

Ceremony and Culture Needs to be Included in All Coordinated Access Plans and Practices from the Beginning

Building ceremony and culture into a coordinated access system, particularly by offering programming that can contribute to one's healing journey, is a critical element for Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness. While it was acknowledged that infusing culture into a coordinated access system was necessary for healing, implementing ceremony at the onset of relationship building with non-Indigenous partners should be considered a first step. When considering Indigenous worldviews and incorporating them into a coordinated access process, ceremonies were believed to tie mandates and service agreements to spiritual commitments. One jurisdiction explained that ceremony allowed mainstream communities to understand the significance and complexity of the work that is being done:

> **If we're going to incorporate the principles, the values, and also the practices and approach then, we know ceremony is very much part of that. Because ceremonies tie us to a commitment that's very different than just sitting there and signing an [Memorandum of Understanding] (MOU) saying we agree, we're going to onboard, and we're going to be part of it. Ceremony has that – it ties you spiritually to that commitment of the work, moving forward, which is a very different thing than just signing a service agreement or an MOU. And so, that's part of that best practice. And Elders are very important to include in that because Elders bring that too, and they keep you mindful of that, because the work sometimes gets very complex, very difficult.**

Jurisdictions discussed how the importance of infusing culture into coordinated access helps to create a sense of belonging among Indigenous individuals and families. This was an important aspect, as a sense of belonging would allow for Indigenous clients to heal from historical and intergenerational trauma. A respondent shared:

> **It's very common with our clients who have ended up homeless that they have experienced traumas in their lives whether its childhood trauma or growing up. Its common, and some of our clients haven't been to residential school but some have, or maybe their parents or grandparents went, and it's also very common that a lot of them have been through the adoption scoop. The Sixties Scoop where [Children's Aid Society] came in and removed them from their homes, so a lot of them haven't been exposed to culture. So, bringing them into an Indigenous organization it's kind of like the community bringing them in and embracing them and giving them a sense of belonging. A lot of our clients when they come, they'll also go to the other socials, they have the Native Centre, they'll participate in the other Indigenous communities around here or participate in Pow Wow and volunteer. So, it helps the clients a lot, it gives them that sense of community and belonging. And often when you are homeless you are really lonely, and you don't have that sense of belonging, so it really helps with that.**

Access Points

Indigenous Access Points are Key. Participants from the different jurisdictions believed that a coordinated access system was a key factor in supporting clients to move out of homelessness quickly, but that Indigenous access points were essential. The advantages of coordinated access meant that Indigenous people could be connected to Indigenous services in their communities in a quicker and more seamless manner. This connection to Indigenous services was highlighted as particularly important for individuals and families who were new to the area, or for those who may not have been aware of the availability of Indigenous services available to them in their community. The respondent stated:

> **I think the advantages are, one, that Indigenous people are being connected to the community. So, we have a number of people who are new to [name of community] who in some instances, possibly never, would have never been connected with us or with their community. So, there is at least that. And I'll also say in the same breath that there are people in our community that have been here for a number of years and have never heard of our agency. So, the advantage of coordinated access is at least that they are getting help from the appropriate services. Whether or not they want to work with us moving forward into housing, they don't have to. They have that option to work with any agency in [name of community], but at least if they are working with us, we are making sure they know where their community is, and where the additional resources are.**

While having Indigenous-based access points were necessary, another jurisdictional scan respondent believed that coordinated access went beyond providing just services. For them, having access points that Indigenous people could utilize was part of a larger picture. Understanding the Indigenous access points in their community meant that a bigger picture of Indigenous homelessness can be seen and that the gaps between service delivery are more apparent. The respondent said:

> **So, coordinated access will give us that opportunity to look at that bigger picture piece, because we know that for people who are Indigenous and are on the street, they basically meet up with almost every system that is out there. So, coordinated access – moving towards a coordinated access system will allow us now to have the whole picture, the whole connection of where people are moving to what, and where are the gaps, and where do they fall through the gaps.**

It was also recognized that training for non-Indigenous organizations is key, especially for organizations that are utilized as access points. A respondent stated:

> **Indigenous-specific access point [are important]. (We) have built into the project funding for community-lead. They do cultural competency training for all staff at the access points. All of them will be serving Indigenous people.**

While most jurisdictions were initiating their community's access points into their coordinated access system, one jurisdiction had a unique take on what it meant to be an access point for Indigenous people wanting to receive services. They believed that traditional activities, such as hunting and trapping, were vital ways to engage Indigenous clients who may not have entered the coordinated access system otherwise. It was important for this jurisdiction to acknowledge that both informal access points were just as important to utilize as formal and official access points. The respondent shared:

> **We're actually encouraging, and in a lot of cases, we expect there to be an Indigenous worldview presence in the service delivery. One of the things we see is that in one of our Housing First projects, they actually take the participants out to do trapping, and hunting, and fishing, and things of that nature to get back to that connection to the land and to the traditional means of sustenance. And so, when we do have a project like that, we're actually scoring them higher in our adjudicating because, you know, it's bringing that element in.**

Assessment

Assessments Need to Be Completed Using a Trauma-Informed Approach. When conducting an intake, it is important that a system does not re-traumatize clients. A coordinated access system could be beneficial for this, as clients would not be expected to re-tell their story at agencies across a community. A respondent said:

> **I guess if we have a coordinated access system then clients won't have to do intakes whenever they access a new service. Clients would also have the opportunity to attend not just Indigenous services but also non-Indigenous.**

Several jurisdictions identified concerns that assessment tools were not created with Indigenous worldviews in mind. For example, one jurisdiction believed that assessment tools that use a scoring system, such as the VI-SPDAT, were problematic as it assigned a number and score similar to the residential school system. This may be incredibly traumatizing for clients who had either first-hand or intergenerational experience of the residential school system and as a result, may be less likely to engage with service providers when completing these assessment tools. A respondent shared their experience with the VI-SPDAT:

> **So, tell me about your life [as case manager] do-do-do [checks box] check the box and everything that you have experienced in your life is how I perceived it in my scoring and you have no value. You're just another number and your number has no value. Oh, and just a minute, while we are assigning you a number and a score, why don't we traumatize you, just like when you were in residential school and you were given a number.**

The importance of applying trauma-informed approaches when conducting assessments in a coordinated access system was highlighted by another jurisdiction. This jurisdiction believed that the use of assessments that focus on deficits forces Indigenous people to relive their pain in order to 'deserve' services. In this way, deficit-based assessment scores shift the blame towards Indigenous people who then may go on to believe that they are only deserving of support after retelling their story. The respondent replied:

> **We can't underscore the importance of trauma-informed engagement, right? Like constantly making people relive their pain. If we could just have it all in one spot so you're not going and repeating and repeating. People get criticized for that, right? "Oh, they have no boundaries. I just asked a question and they told me everything." But people have been conditioned to that. So, it's like, we're blaming people for doing what they've been conditioned to do, because they have to make themselves too needy, so they'll be deserving of help. So how can we and our coordinated access just have it from being pitiful – because if you do it enough to people, they start walking with their**

> **heads down. Because you constantly repeat stories of 'I am not good enough.' Right? So, how can we do coordinated access from a system perspective. People aren't always just saying they're – "if I'm pitiful enough, they'll actually give me help." We don't want to behave that way.**

While several jurisdictions discussed the negative aspects of deficit-based assessment tools, two jurisdictions provided alternative ways to conduct assessments within a strengths-based lens. One jurisdiction discussed the impact that assessments can have when they are conducted within a trauma-informed lens, specifically by focusing on the individual and less on the score. The respondent shared their experience:

> **You can be in the same room with people who work with youth all the time and hear multiple stories. You hear those stories from the youth and you hold that in your heart when you're making decisions about policies, because if you want people to change, you have to get them out of the head and into the heart. That's where change will come, when it's in people's heart. When it's in their head, you can cross out words cross out numbers, who cares.**

Another discussed how assessment tools can be more strengths-based by creating a more welcoming and respectful space for clients. In this way, the use of assessment tools can be conducted in more open and less traumatic ways. They said:

> **[There's] not a lot of interest in changing assessment tool. [They are] interested in making the intake process more appropriate and open…more welcoming and treating people with dignity and respect. Working from a strengths-based approach.**

It was clear from the jurisdictional scan that many communities believed established assessment tools to be problematic for Indigenous clients. One jurisdiction had already begun making headway on re-creating the Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT) to be more supportive and respectful towards Indigenous worldviews. Cultural remediation was a cornerstone of this work, as this jurisdiction believed that a reconnection to Indigenous culture was a necessary aspect of redeveloping assessment tools for Indigenous communities.

Prioritization and Matching

Matching Indigenous Individuals and Families to Culturally Appropriate Housing and Services. The importance of matching clients to appropriate, culturally specific services was an important aspect of ensuring that a coordinated access system was supporting clients experiencing homelessness. However, when Indigenous services did not exist or gaps existed in the system, one jurisdiction wanted to find a way to close or fill it. This jurisdiction believed that for Indigenous clients who may have multiple and complex needs, they should be matched with as many supports as possible. The respondent noted:

> **If there are needs out there, I'm going to fill it. One need we saw, a while ago, a lot of our clients come here sometimes from the hospital. Sometimes they are released prematurely, sometimes clients have injuries and they don't go to the doctor, so there is a nurse on staff.**

Matching clients to appropriate and culturally specific services was a key component of a well-designed coordinated access system. However, one jurisdiction brought forward the issues that their clients may face when services become more coordinated and a By-Name List is created. Prioritizing clients for housing in an inherently racist system can potentially do more harm as it may take longer for Indigenous individuals and families to access housing. As non-Indigenous individuals and families may access housing more easily, this may discourage Indigenous individuals and families. The respondent said:

> **I think one of the disadvantages is the By-Name List...there's a really big need for it to be very transparent, and I think some issues could arise in the prioritization piece of coordinated access. And I would really hate to see an Indigenous person say, "Oh, I don't feel like I'm being housed. I feel like I'm being – I'm waiting longer than other people." And I would hate for them to think it's, you know, because they're Indigenous. You know. And you hear that often, that folks say, you know, "It's extra hard for Indigenous people to find housing due to racism that's out there." So, you know, those kinds of things, I think may arise in the process.**

One subpopulation noted by one jurisdiction was its senior population. For this jurisdiction, seniors had much more difficulty accessing different housing options. While it is known a lack of housing exists throughout different communities in Canada, it may be even more difficult for seniors to be matched with appropriate housing as their needs are higher and more complex. The respondent noted:

> **Here at the Indigenous Friendship Centre, those grandmothers and grandfathers have very strong opinions on housing. They often come here because of disability and are desperate to get away. A lot of it is ability issues, and they need housing without**

> stairs, Indigenous people are coming here for diabetes, and other health issues and accessibility in housing is an issue for everyone. We would try to do a match on all the criteria that was brought up, but we haven't had a plan for seniors.

Data Sovereignty

Trust Needs to Be Developed with Designated Communities When Collecting and Storing Data. When considering data on Indigenous people and their communities, there was a large need for trust and relationship building to be established first. For one jurisdiction, establishing trust was the first step when enacting a coordinated access system. They shared:

> But I think another really, really big piece and another kind of Indigenous – coming from an Indigenous worldview is that relationships are a really, really, really important piece of all of this. I really don't think coordinated access will be successful unless there are strong relationships between all of the agencies on board, Indigenous and non. And you know, that means more than just the bare minimum type of thing. It means really establishing that trust. It means taking time, you know, fleshing out conversations, fleshing out problems.

Another jurisdiction discussed an innovative way they were able to foster and maintain a positive relationship with their municipal government, who held the mainstream data in their community. This relationship was upheld because of the focus on respecting Indigenous practices and traditions. This relationship between the municipal government and the Indigenous-led organization was paramount to not only the sharing of data but also to ensure that the Indigenous-led organization had sovereignty over their community's data. The respondent said:

> I think what works well in [name of city] now is this agreement...which is an agreement with [name of organization] which highlights how we are going to work together in a respectful way. And that is complementary to Indigenous culture and Indigenous ways of doing things and ways of knowing. And is very much a living document because annually we will get together with our partners at [name of organization] and assess the document and measure how we think we are progressing along on the commitments that were made. So that really has opened up a relationship of cooperation and trust, and, so I think often in order to make Indigenous coordinated access to work you need cooperation and trust with whoever the operators of the mainstream homelessness providers are, either mainstream CAB [Community Advisory Board] or CE [Community Entity]. That relationship has to be there, it's all about relationships.

The need for trust when sharing Indigenous data was a staunch requirement for one jurisdiction, who believed that trust would be established when Indigenous communities understood how their data would be used and for what purposes. Without this understanding, data sovereignty would not occur. A respondent noted:

> **We can see what the trends are, and we will be able to improve data, but again where is all this data going? And I said I'm not signing up and I'm pretty sure that my community is not signing up for this if we don't have control over this data. We want our privacy with all these things. So, unless you figure out the privacy issues and then come back to me and we will have that conversation. You know what does this actually look like? Is it actually going to serve its purpose? Where is it going? Is it going to cause more hardship on individuals? and at the end of the day, we are not going to negotiate around data sovereignty.**

An interesting perspective was brought up by one jurisdiction who questioned whether data sovereignty practices could even occur. They believed that no individual organization had the right to own the stories of Indigenous people's pain and trauma. However, that data sovereignty meant that Indigenous communities could learn from historical pain and trauma in order to create better solutions to homelessness. The respondent stated:

> **If we keep owning the data, it's like people have this weird thought that – because, really, a lot of the data is pain. It's stories of pain and trauma. So, no one, none of us, not an organization, not an individual has a right to own anyone's pain, because that pain was given so we could learn from it. So, I think we need to move in and understand that. And I think there's fear there.**

Lack of Control of Indigenous Data with Designated Community Entities. Several jurisdictions were exploring issues related to Indigenous data sovereignty within a coordinated access system. Collecting data was a difficult topic to negotiate, as many organizations were wary of the potential data had to inflict harm to their community. A few jurisdictions believed that this worry stemmed from the lack of capacity that may exist in Indigenous communities, who may not have been provided the resources to establish data handling, storage and analysis resources. A respondent stated:

> **I'm also cautious on the Indigenous side of things, we don't want to collect data that might potentially hurt the community, or data that we may not own. It's like the street needs assessment, we have the opportunity to ask more questions but we're cautious that it might not be our data, so we don't want to dig too deep.**

One of the main issues that several jurisdictions had with implementing data sovereignty was the lack of control they felt they had with their community's data. One jurisdiction discussed the history of data sovereignty in Indigenous communities, where university and academic researchers held data that Indigenous communities could not access. This particular jurisdiction discussed the significance that controlling one's data had for Indigenous communities, as it was akin to controlling the often-biased narrative that mainstream communities had on Indigenous homelessness. The respondent said:

> **Data sovereignty is a huge issue for Indigenous service providers because a lot of time organizations have worked with university researchers, have worked with Canadian institutions and other institutions to carry out research about the Indigenous issues and the issues that our communities are facing. What ends up happening is that data get locked away and I'm guessing that's not what's happening this time because you got contracted, but when it comes to just straight research that data just gets locked away because you know, it's very protectionist in terms of university research and who gets to define the inclusions and the Canadian institutions their interests is they don't want this data to get lost in the wild where it can get used against them so they control the narrative by not sharing the data and the same goes for other organizations. So, having our own database for the Indigenous community allows us to control that narrative, doesn't mean we aren't going to be sharing that information, but if we control the data, we control the narrative, surrounding Indigenous homelessness. Which is a huge shift for the Indigenous community.**

While it was important for one jurisdiction, a major urban centre, on complementing the mainstream system, they were concerned with interactions with the mainstream. This caution, as highlighted above, was the historical mistrust that existed between Indigenous and mainstream organizations. Many jurisdictions believed that this lack of trust was due to the lack of control that Indigenous organizations felt they had when owning their data. One respondent shared:

> **We want to achieve data sovereignty with [name of organization], they've explored it and are looking into with their legal team as well. Particularly around having data sovereignty over it. We're not sure how that is going to work is a data, reporting scheme of things. Capacity also, I don't know if we will have the capacity to have a data analyst to pinpoint trends or case manage things as a crisis may arise or those sorts of things. I'm sure we will get to that discussion when the time is right. Yes, I'm aware, if there was no data sovereignty, or even if there is there still are some risks involved, particularly around people's confidential information. That's a risk that's already out there in terms of banks, or insurance companies, um just a little while ago there was a blood place that lost a lot peoples data. So, it happens everywhere, we haven't really heard of it in Indigenous communities, but I think that the benefits far out-weigh the risks.**

Data sovereignty was also discussed as more than providing consent to non-Indigenous organizations collecting Indigenous data. For one jurisdiction, it meant breaking the cycle of Indigenous clients telling their entire story in order to be deserving of receiving housing and homelessness services. Data sovereignty practices meant that clients and Indigenous-led organizations are empowered to understand the importance of consent and their rights as the original shareholders of their own data. The respondent stated:

> **Who are going to be served by coordinated access system? Protecting and ensuring that, you know, they give their consent, and they know what that means as well. Because, as [P1] previously mentioned on a different question, people that have been so marginalized, they've been conditioned to just blurt out everything because they think in order to get service, that's what they have to do. So, how do we empower them to understand that they have every right to withhold information, and they can consent to whatever it is they want to consent. How do we ensure that they feel empowered and that they know that, you know, they have rights as individuals?**

Another jurisdiction also spoke about the lack of capacity they had in their own community to analyze and report on their data. This lack of capacity was particularly harmful for Indigenous communities, as it did not allow them to tell their story on the issues of Indigenous homelessness in their community. The respondent said:

> **So, what I am asking essentially is for them to learn a new program and a new process, which has to be added to their current programs. Obviously I am going try to make it as soon as possible and ideally make it less work then they currently have, because a lot of them are currently using excel or are using paper, and they have this huge stack of paper and stuff like that so if I can make it easier for them in some way that would be great. But the reality is they all have to learn a new process and a new way of working, and there is going to be a lot of turn over.**

Finally, another highlighted aspect of data sovereignty was the importance of cultural competency training for non-Indigenous organizations. This was discussed as a requirement for coordinated access systems that valued data sovereignty, as mainstream organizations should understand the necessity and importance that data sovereignty principles have on the empowerment of Indigenous communities. A respondent shared:

> **And that training has to be part of that whole data sovereignty piece training. The non-Indigenous – and even the Indigenous services have to understand what that means.**

Developing Systems for Data Storage. A concern around data sovereignty was the lack of infrastructure in place to engage in data handling practices at the same level as mainstream organizations. For example, for one jurisdiction, Indigenous organizations in their community did not have the infrastructure in place to handle the implementation of Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), a commonly used data management system for data related to housing and homelessness. This lack of capacity was problematic as Indigenous organizations were not operating at the same level as mainstream organizations and as a result, were withheld from fully possessing and owning their data. A respondent said:

> **I think also with our communities to with having the infrastructure in place to even use HIFIS, you know even some smaller organizations have absolutely no data systems in place. So to be able to, like I don't know if there is more, like if your computers need to be updated, and you need to have all that training and knowing that that has to go there, and knowing the language and training someone in Inuktitut, or whatever it might be. So, I know that some agencies have no data systems, but [name of agency] because we are a health agency, we have something already in place. So, I think there is a piece we have to look at within our communities, not saying you have to rule this out, but are you going to give us the tools, the proper tools and resources to do this.**

Another data-related issue was brought forward by one jurisdiction, who believed that current data collection methodologies did not accurately represent Indigenous worldviews. For example, they discussed how data in HIFIS provides a very numbers-focused perspective on an individual but does not accurately provide an understanding of what success might mean for an Indigenous person. The respondent stated:

> **One of the great things about HIFIS is that, yeah, it's kind of like – it's a good tracking mechanism but it really only kind of – I mean, data is limited, right? It really only tells you one side of the story. So, it doesn't really allow for that nuance and that – there's no personable touch points, no there's no personable context of why a person's there. So, its very numbers focused. And I can run an aggregate report a spit out a bunch of data at you, about all efforts that were put forward for this individual, all the case notes, and everything like that. But it – did it improve the person's situation? Who was it for? Was it for us or for them? Did it have any outcome on them? Well, I think what it does is in an aggregated form, or in a wide collection, in a wide net of data, it can tell you what trends are, okay, what's successful.**

A problematic aspect of data sovereignty was around competing data management systems that will hold Indigenous versus non-Indigenous data. For two jurisdictions, having the mainstream and the Indigenous organizations using different data management systems was problematic for several reasons. For one, they believed that creating a sense of trust,

comradery and relationship-building would be affected if Indigenous organizations were forced to comply with mainstream data management practices. The respondent said, *"Other organizations said they already work with a number of data systems, not related to homelessness, and this would be bringing on another one and they were resistant to that…."*

Although it was discussed at the federal level that merging and analyzing data from different homelessness data management systems will be seamless between mainstream and Indigenous organizations, one jurisdiction believed it was a cause for concern. They acknowledged that conversations between different organizations may mitigate potential issues but that actually implementing different systems between communities will be difficult.

Resources

Resources Required for Coordinated Access. Different jurisdictions had differing amounts of resources available to them to conduct the process of enacting a coordinated access system in their community. For one jurisdiction, the responsibility of planning, designing and implementing a coordinated access system for Indigenous people was on a single individual. The respondent noted:

> **It's just me. There will be a team working under me at some point but the moment it's just me, but in terms of the research and implementation of this work I will be managing and planning it all myself. And then delegating to others.**

Lobbying for proportional funding for Indigenous organizations was a common theme. Many jurisdictions believed that federal funding should be proportional to the amount of Indigenous homelessness found in their community, which often were overrepresented in comparison to the mainstream population. A respondent shared:

> **I think that if we could understand what people need, then we could understand where the money needs to go, which is a big issue that really needs to be talked about because if you look at where the money goes in society, it doesn't mainly go to Indigenous organizations. It goes to non-Indigenous organizations and they can be providing support services to like 95% of people they work with could be Indigenous, so, unless we really understand who's using those services and how they need them and how they need to be provided to people, then we just continue on this pattern of whoever can write the best or do whatever the best. Or whoever can take months to write proposals and get the money. But that doesn't necessarily mean that the people who are seeking the support are being provided with support in the way that they may need it.**

When communities did not receive proportional funding, Indigenous organizations were then forced to collaborate with mainstream organizations. This was difficult, as Indigenous organizations wanted to be able to co-create coordinated access system for their community but were only able to fit programs and services that aligned with mainstream mandates. A respondent shared:

> **When it came to the community plan, it just said "collaborate". Collaborate for the Designated CE [Community Entity], just meant consult...For us, no, we want to be part of building this. We have to co-create, have say in how it's built, and create with you.**

Historical Lens

Coordinated Access System as a Colonialist Practice. While coordinated access is mandated by the federal government, several jurisdictions examined how the process of designing a coordinated access system for Indigenous communities further enacted colonialist practices. 'Indigenizing' a colonial practice felt top-down for one jurisdiction. They said:

> **Indigenizing suggests layering something on top of it, (like) colonizing, instead of coming at it from these values. [It] feels imposed on top of, instead of coming from the values, teachings, and cultures [of Indigenous people].**

The process of designing an already established practice, like coordinated access, felt paternalistic to another jurisdiction. They believed that implementing a coordinated access system in their community did not fully address systemic barriers that exist for Indigenous peoples. They stated:

> **I think it's obviously the red flag in this system. And I think that this – implementing a system like this can be done well, and it can be done very poorly, and I think when it's done poorly, it exacerbates paternalism. And with our Indigenous people, you know, there's a risk of this being delivered through a colonial lens –through a colonial approach. And so, it has to be very carefully developed on the onset, with the prioritization tools and with the – you know, where the access points are going to be. Just being very user-aware of how systems and racism and all of that play into the current system and making sure that those risks are mitigated.**

Moreover, this jurisdiction also discussed that a coordinated access system designed for Indigenous communities was challenging, as it would be difficult to align both mainstream and Indigenous worldviews together. For them, the solution rested in enacting ceremonial practices to ensure that implementation was done well. They shared:

> **It's like, no, an Indigenous approach is more like an organic and wholistic movement. It's a movement. It's not a system. You know? And so, yeah, how do you align those two worlds? How do you bring those two worldviews together? And I think that's where the pre-work needs to be done, is maybe what it is, is it's doing a pilot, taking one community and really doing it right. Really starting off in ceremony. Starting off with the Indigenous people. And doing what they do in order to develop something in their community. And in doing it with the experts and doing it right. And then building out that approach, and then kind of sharing that across the nations, "Hey, this is what works."**

This was supported by another jurisdiction who explained that a coordinated access system could only work if it integrated an Indigenous lens with the principles and values important to their community. Interestingly, they believed that a collaboration between non-Indigenous organizations and Indigenous leadership in different systems was the way forward to ensuring that these values are respected and enacted. They stated:

> **What we need to develop is going to be a coordinated access system that integrates that whole Indigenous lens, principles, values, and how we move forward. We recognize it's not going to be easy because not only do we need to bring non-Indigenous partners on board, we need to bring our Indigenous service providers and they need to be at the leadership role. But also, we need to bring in the government systems that have created all those barriers. So, health, child welfare, mental health, addiction services – they all have to be brought into this.**

Systems-Planning

Working with Other Systems is Important. The need for systems planning was brought up by one jurisdiction, who believed that this process would ensure that clients would face less barriers, especially if they were exiting another system such as the correctional system. For these clients with multiple barriers, engaging in systems planning within a coordinated access system would ensure that a seamless path between the justice system and the homeless-serving system existed. This respondent stated:

> **That's really helped a lot of those clients; once they get housed, they still follow up with them to make sure there are no barriers to, to eliminate barriers that will not make them homeless anymore. And we also have, recently we started providing services in some of the local jails, we know that people leaving corrections is a pathway to homelessness**

> **so we have a native liaison officer at the [name of city] South Detention Centre, and we have a Native liaison officer at the [name of province] correctional centre in [name of city].**

Working with Designated Community Entities. Working under the federal government's directives as part of Reaching Home posed some challenges and opportunities for growth. One jurisdiction spoke to their unique position as the Indigenous Community Entity and the relationship this created with their own provincial government. They believed that the mandates of the federal government and the policies and mandates of their provincial government on homelessness-related issues could be successful if Indigenous communities were full partners. They said:

> **Again, we are very fortunate in that we are the Indigenous CE and [later] this year we will also be the Designated Community for the mainstream fund, which is very, very rare in Canada. But in terms of convincing, now the organizations they need a package, and again the top down would be fantastic if the federal government could work with the municipal governments or provincial governments to basically mandate that this has to be the case. I think that the federal government is trying, Service Canada is trying, they are taking our feedback in terms of how they can improve coordinated access and how they can improve the guide to coordinated access, and how they can improve the reporting documents and make it clear that the Indigenous community is a focus on this. I think they need to do a bit more work in ensuring that these solutions for these mandates are Indigenous led and that Indigenous organizations have a voice and always shave a voice.**

While this jurisdiction recommended that a guidebook or report could be created to support other Indigenous communities in implementing a coordinated access system in their own jurisdiction, others spoke to the successes they have seen so far. For them, success will occur for Indigenous communities if they work together through the complex areas of implementing a coordinated access system, such as data sovereignty and assessment tools. The respondent shared:

> **I think for the most part, everyone is in the very early stages. To my understanding, [name of community] kind of were doing coordinated access before it was mandated. So, I think they're a little further ahead in the process, but for the most part, folks are just starting to roll this out. I know here, we're still looking to hire a consultant to bring in to do the governance piece so kind of all that legwork of going around the community and identifying agencies who want to be part of coordinated access. So, I think that's where most folks are at. Like rolling out that implementation. And so, they're in the early stages of that as well. So, it's still kind of in those stages of early meetings and kind of getting buy-in from the community, and just really figuring out how we are going to make this**

> **process work in terms of data sovereignty – that's, I think, the biggest issue we're facing here. So yeah, I would say still in that conversation phase of how we work together, and by we, I mean Indigenous CEs [Community Entities] and kind of the mainstream designated community CEs [Community Entities], and everyone else as well. To my knowledge, very early stages.**

The same jurisdiction also discussed that a major challenge for Indigenous Community Entities was the expectations on their relationship with Designated Community Entities were and how program directives from Reaching Home could impact them. For them, a lack of clarity from the federal government meant that it was not clear on what the differentiating roles between Indigenous Community Entities and Designated Community Entities were and that, as a result, collaboration between the two organizations could be negatively impacted. The respondent said:

> **I think another disadvantage is that – and again, I say this fully understanding the need for the different streams within Reaching Home, so the Designated Community stream, Indigenous stream, rural or not. Like, I totally understand, but at the same time, from what I'm hearing again, that kind of dynamic is causing some kind of confusion about how does the Indigenous CE lead their own Indigenous process in their community, you know, in tandem with the DC CE, who's doing it in the mainstream. And I think there's a lot of kind of confusion. And I think that the program directives for Reaching Home lack clarity there. It's kind of a gray area. Like, in the program directives, it kind of you know suggests that the DC and Indigenous CEs should collaborate, and I think that that just leaves too much room for stuff to happen. And basically, yeah, from what I'm hearing, it's how do we work, you know, collaboratively with them?**

Another jurisdiction discussed the complexity and difficulty of having a lack of Indigenous voices at the table when planning a coordinated access system. Tokenism was one of the most discussed disadvantages, as a lack of resources provided to Indigenous communities meant that representation would be affected as a result. The respondent said:

> **The way that it's set up at the moment it's just a bit too easy to have like a token Indigenous person sitting on your government group and never listening to them. So... you basically need to have all that work there done because I don't think that if you walk in to your designated community and say that we need this and that and we need all these other things and you need to figure out how to do it, they just won't do it. You know because Indigenous issues just get ignored all the time, it's much easier to do that.**

Advantages of Coordinated Access. Several major highlights of coordinated access and coordinated access systems were brought forward during the jurisdictional scan interviews. For several jurisdictions, gaining a fuller picture of Indigenous homelessness in their community was a main highlight. A respondent said:

> **There are some great advantages, there will be a By-Name List. So, we will know by name how many folks who are homeless are Indigenous. We will have a greater understanding of the magnitude of Indigenous homelessness within the city.**

Gaining a more accurate and fuller picture of Indigenous homelessness was important as communities could then fully understand the broad range of services that their community may need to provide. As Indigenous homelessness is a complex and multifaceted social issue, coordinated access could allow Indigenous communities to engage in systems planning processes by streamlining services or closing service gaps in their social safety net. A respondent stated:

> **I think the most important advantage is the fact that Indigenous people have been in crisis for so long in terms of homelessness and in terms of the range of services that they require to actually have a chance of getting out of homelessness. You have to offer a very broad range of services you can't just be offering siloed services to people like that because you just give one small services to someone suffering from 15 different issues. It's like a waste of time in a sense because you can't really help that person in any long-term way.**

For Indigenous communities, a well-designed coordinated access system may mean that the user experience is much more positive for clients. A positive user experience was especially important for Indigenous clients, one jurisdiction discussed, as they believed that a sense of respect would be felt when Indigenous people could see that their own values and principles reflected in the system that they are accessing. The respondent shared:

> **I think that one of the advantages is that, once all the kinks are worked out and once people are kind of over the re-adoption of a community approach to health and wellness, I think that user experience is one of the biggest advantages of a coordinated access approach…I think it improves user experience because you know what to expect. You know what's going to be said. You're being measured – not measured, but – well, in some cases measured, but you're being treated through same lens and through the same sets of principles…And I know for Indigenous peoples, and I know for us and for me, it's really important that respect is built into the systems. And to – yeah, I might present with these issues and I might present with this crisis and this challenge, but the dignity and respect of being and looking at my challenges as hurts not moral dilemmas – I think when you build that coordinated assess system, and you build those intrinsic world views or principles into the tools and into the approach, you're going to have higher outcomes.**

A unique take on the advantages of coordinated access was brought forward by one jurisdiction, who believed that a properly designed coordinated access system could be healing for Indigenous people. They believed that coordinated access could allow Indigenous people to receive the supports that they need to process and heal from historical and intergenerational traumas and that if a coordinated access system is designed from Indigenous worldviews, that Indigenous people could benefit from having their teachings be implemented more broadly. The respondent said:

> **I guess for me, through all these decades just watching people be fragmented, so, pieces of people all over the place like no one ever getting quality, whole-person care and support. So, in my mind, coordinated access would help us – because it feels like we lost a lot of the teachings that we keep people's pains going. Because people tell us the stories and then some people are murdered or missing, and we never get to understand the story so we can prevent it moving forward. Because everyone holds on to their information and uses it for their own purpose – whatever the purpose may be – to get more of the programs for themselves, or to fundraise, whatever it is. But we never – there's like people who sacrifice but we never learn those teachings and we keep sacrificing them every year each time.**

Disadvantages of Coordinated Access. While several advantages of coordinated access were highlighted above, there were several disadvantages discussed. Some of the disadvantages of coordinated access was around the implementation of new concepts, which may prevent communities from jumping 'on board' immediately and whose learning curve may pose as a challenge for others. A respondent stated:

> **I can't really think of any disadvantages other than some of the organizations are not really familiar with these database systems that we are going to go with. And it will be a bit of a learning curve for them, fortunately these database systems are user friendly.**

Another disadvantage of a coordinated access system is that it is created with urban communities in mind and that for rural and remote communities, the advantages may be less apparent. One jurisdiction discussed the difficulties this may pose for Indigenous people who are in smaller communities from wanting to participate in coordinated services. The respondent shared:

> **Well, and in large part, I think, it's understood that coordinated access is – well, at least from my perspective, it's more of an urban developed strategy, and so, yeah, when you're getting into these smaller centres, it gets thicker and thicker, like the racism and the history and the trauma. And so, when you have urban Indigenous people that are leaving reserves or leaving those communities and going to the urban centres. They're leaving a lot of that and they're finding more progressive more urban centres that are down the scale or the spectrum on that process of healing or reconciliation. So, they're able to make that transition more holistically. But yeah, in smaller centres, it's really going to – it's an uphill battle.**

4. Interpretation & Recommendations

The results from the community focus groups, key informant interviews and focus group with front-live service providers, community consultations, and the jurisdictional scan interviews all showed that coordinated access processes are not fully aligned with Indigenous values, knowledges, and traditions. It is important to note that the community focus group and key informant interview findings and priorities emerged from the perspectives and experiences of the Indigenous communities in Hamilton. These views may not necessarily reflect the views of other communities. It will be important for future research to engage or support similar discussions in every Reaching Home community. Rather than "Indigenizing" coordinated access, where Indigenous values, knowledges, and traditions are used to infuse culture into coordinated access procedures, current coordinated access procedures should be modified to align with Indigenous values, knowledges, and traditions. The only way for this to happen is through meaningful engagement, trust building, ceremony and partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders. We base the interpretation of the data using different lenses. The first lens is focused on engagement with the federal government and designated communities. The second lens is focused on the implementation of coordinated access. The third lens is focused on data sovereignty.

1. Engaging with the Federal Government and Designated Community Entities

Need for Clear Directives from the Federal Government on Indigenous Engagement and Coordinated Access. There is a clear need for greater engagement between Reaching Home, Community Entities, and Indigenous Community Entities on the roll out of coordinated access. As per the requirements in the Reaching Home directives on coordinated access, communities that receive funding from both the Designated Communities and Indigenous Homelessness streams must enable cross-stream engagement on the design and use of a coordinated access approach. In addition to this, all Designated Communities must report on Indigenous homelessness. In communities like Hamilton, where there is a Designated Community Entity and an Indigenous Community Entity, Reaching Home directives state that both streams need to engage in the planning and implementation of coordinated access to support the active participation of all service providers. Through this collaborative process, it will facilitate appropriate and culturally sensitive referrals to the coordinated access system.

Although we heard that engagement between Community Entities and Indigenous Community Entities is occurring across Canada, with some Indigenous Community Entities also serving as the Designated Community Entity, the level of engagement varied. We heard time and time again that Indigenous partners are often brought to the table, but only as a means for mainstream organizations to "check the box" for engaging with the Indigenous community. Thus, in some communities, more formalized procedures for engagement between Designated Community Entity and the Indigenous Community Entity need to be in place.

Reaching Home's directives on the development of a governance operating model also require further refinement. The directives state that communities are required to build a governance structure to establish leadership for the planning, implementation and ongoing management of the coordinated access system. An Indigenous lead should be identified and appropriately resourced to co-lead the coordinated access system. The governance structure can involve consultations between the Community Entity and the Community Advisory Board and may result in the establishment of working groups focused on identifying the governance model that would work best for the community.

Again, although we heard that engagement is occurring across Canada between Designated Community Entities and Indigenous Community Entities on developing coordinated access procedures, without clear guidance on the composition of a governance operating structure Indigenous communities may be excluded. Indigenous communities spend considerable time, resources and energy in advocating for their right to be represented within mainstream governance structures. Therefore, stronger directives from Reaching Home related to Indigenous representation on governance structures and coordinated access coverage.

Recommendation 1.

Reaching Home should create clear guidelines on cross-stream engagement between Community Entities and Indigenous Community Entities. With the overarching aim of enhancing Indigenous decision-making and leadership, these guidelines must be developed in a manner that allow local Indigenous leaders to align with local community traditions, cultures and needs at the grassroots level. These guidelines should also be completed in collaboration with national Indigenous homelessness experts, such as the new national gathering of members from Indigenous Community Entities and Indigenous Community Advisory Boards. The guidelines should include templates that communities can use.

Early and Persistent Engagement Between Indigenous Community Entities and Designated Community Entities. Directives aimed at "Indigenizing" coordinated access within local communities do not meaningfully engage Indigenous communities. From the jurisdictional scan, we heard that this process puts the onus on Indigenous communities to layer on Indigenous knowledge, values, and traditions to Western-based processes. For true engagement to occur with Indigenous communities, engagement needs to start at the beginning of the process and be sustained throughout. For Indigenous Community Entities that also act as the Designated Community Entity, this process is built into their current practices. For Indigenous Community Entities who collaborate with Designated Community Entities, this means that specific measures may need to occur. The jurisdictional scan interviewees shared several recommendations as to how this can happen.

Recommendation 2.

Enact the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada when developing coordinated access systems. The Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada are meant to rectify the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation. There are 94 Calls to Action grouped upon several themes. The Calls to Action address the inequities that Indigenous people in Canada face, with calls to identify and close these gaps. Addressing Indigenous homelessness is one part of a community's action toward reconciliation.

Recommendation 3.

As advised by local Indigenous community leaders, engage in ceremony when developing coordinated access systems. We heard the importance of including ceremonial practices as part of the development of a coordinated access system. Through ceremony, mandates and service agreements could be tied to spiritual commitments rather than written documents. An important element of this process is the inclusion of local Elders.

Recommendation 4.

Engage with local Indigenous experts to contextualize local issues impacting the Indigenous community. There was some concern that federal directives from Reaching Home did not always account for the local Indigenous knowledge and expertise within communities. By bringing in tools and trainings that are not local to the community, it can create a system that is not acknowledging the unique fabric of each community. Engaging with local experts, particularly Elders and individuals with lived experience of homelessness, will ensure that the coordinated access system is grounded in the local community.

Recommendation 5.

Acknowledge and address the racism Indigenous people face in the community. Communities need to openly acknowledge and address the racism that Indigenous people in their communities' face. To address racism, there should be commitments to prioritize Indigenous homelessness and acknowledge that it is unique to the experience of homelessness among non-Indigenous people. Communities should also develop a system that is culturally safe for Indigenous people, by ensuring that all staff members within a system receive regular cultural competency training. Communities should also work to fund Indigenous specific housing and service providers.

A Wholistic, Multisystem Approach to Indigenous Homelessness. Jesse Thistle's *Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada* clearly states that Indigenous homelessness is more than the lack of a housing, and extends to isolation from relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages, and identities (Thistle, 2017). As a result, a wholistic approach to working with Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness is required. The local key informants and front-line staff providers in Hamilton all shared that they use a wholistic approach in their work. As stated by a key informant, *"it's making that person whole again so that they can move forward in life. Because if you're beat down spiritually, you don't know who you are, how can you accomplish success in life?"* It is clear that Indigenous organizations in Hamilton were already engaged in coordinated access practices. Key informants explained how their organizations provide multiple, internal supports and refer out to other organizations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, when required. These agencies acted as service hubs where Indigenous clients could access a variety of necessary services in one place.

Recommendation 6.

Indigenous agencies need to be adequately and sustainably funded to provide wholistic services. Designated Communities should be responsible for finding creative funding solutions in order to ensure long-term sustainability of Indigenous agencies. When working with Indigenous individuals and families, Indigenous communities offer a wholistic approach to care. This means that an individual or family is provided with a variety of supports, including housing, mental health and substance use supports, cultural supports, and supports for families and their extended family members. Rapid access to housing is still key, but wholistic, wrap around supports are also necessary. Given this comprehensive approach, increased funding will be necessary to provide the necessary supports.

Recommendation 7.

Any service hub where multiple services can be accessed under one roof should facilitate an Indigenous wholistic system of care and should be created/sustained in communities. Being able to provide multiple services in one setting was identified as an important part of wholistic service delivery. This reduces the burden of clients having to access multiple agencies for multiple services, which can be costly and emotionally exhausting.

A wholistic system also requires engagement from the various sectors that are interrelated to homelessness. As identified by all the participants, these sectors include the mental health system, the child welfare sector, the correctional system, and the hospital system. We know that Indigenous individuals and families are overrepresented in the child welfare and correctional systems, and we heard that the hospital system does not always have discharge plans in place for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Recommendation 8.

In order to ensure that no Indigenous person or family falls through cracks created by the lack of systems integration and system failures, representation from the child welfare sector, the correctional system, the mental health system, the hospital system, and other systems unique to each community should be convened with Indigenous housing and homelessness tables, particularly those related to coordinated access. By including the various systems that impact, and are impacted by, the homelessness and housing sector, a coordinated response to homelessness can occur. This coordinated table will create a wholistic, and comprehensive approach to contribute to the prevention of homelessness and housing insecurity among Indigenous individuals and families.

Adequate Funding for Indigenous Agencies to Rollout Coordinated Access. This project has highlighted how a coordinated access system for Indigenous individuals and families is inherently unique to mainstream coordinated access systems. The wholistic approach that Indigenous agencies take when working with community members and the need for a separate data collection and storage system that aligns with data sovereignty principles, requires adequate funding for full implementation.

Recommendation 9.

Indigenous communities need to be equitably funded to rollout a coordinated access system and increased Indigenous housing stock. Increased long-term funding to Indigenous Community Entities to implement coordinated access is required. This funding will allow for dedicated positions for coordinated access to be created, particularly positions dedicated for intakes and for data sovereignty.

Recommendation 10.

In order to support capacity for Indigenous communities to co-create and lead coordinated access, governance models and framework documents centered on enhancing Indigenous leadership within a coordinated access system must be co-developed by Indigenous homelessness experts and the federal government. These framework documents should cover areas such as policy and practice, technical standards, roles and responsibilities and accountability.

2. Implementation of Coordinated Access

Communicating to the Indigenous Community Who are Not Connected to Services and to People New to Your Community. Indigenous community members will not always be aware of the coordinated access resources in their community. One reason for this is that Indigenous individuals and families may prefer to reside in encampments. This is due to the racism experienced in emergency shelter systems. As a result, some Indigenous individuals and families want to reside in a safe space and to build community with other Indigenous individuals and families. Therefore, outreach measures are required to let these individuals and families know of the resources available to them. A second reason is that some Indigenous individuals and families are not accessing any form of support, whether through mainstream or Indigenous agencies. Relatedly, the Indigenous community takes in family members and friends who need support, as part of their traditional values. These community members may not be aware of the housing resources available in the community. A third reason is that Indigenous individuals and families who are new to a community may be unaware of the Indigenous-specific resources that are available. We heard of individuals and families coming to Hamilton who felt lost when they first arrived as they were unsure where to access help.

Recommendation 11.

An effective communications strategy, including in-person outreach, posters in travel hubs, and electronic posts on social media, is necessary to ensure that coordinated access systems are accessible by all. Assuming that individuals and families are aware of the coordinated access system means that some individuals and families who could benefit from coordinated access will slip through the cracks. A broad communication strategy will help to ensure that there is broad uptake of a coordinated access system.

Indigenous Access Points Are Critical, Using a "No Wrong Door" Approach. Housing and homelessness systems in Canada are largely dominated by mainstream service agencies. With no Indigenous-specific emergency shelter or housing service available, many Indigenous individuals and families are forced to access mainstream services. As heard during our interviews and focus groups, Indigenous individuals and families can experience racism while in these mainstream services, and do not always receive culturally sensitive supports from mainstream staff. Therefore, it is critical that Indigenous organizations are available for Indigenous individuals and families to access supports. We heard from Indigenous individuals and families feel that they feel more comfortable accessing Indigenous organizations, as they have trust in the organization and can work with Indigenous staff members. The Reaching Home directives state that specialized access points for Indigenous people may be necessary.

Recommendation 12.

In mainstream coordinated access systems, an Indigenous agency or agencies should be included as an access point for coordinated access. Indigenous access points will ensure that a wholistic, Indigenous-led service is offered to Indigenous individuals and families. As part of this, Indigenous agencies should receive additional funding to facilitate the coordinated access process. Reaching Home, in its directive on access points, notes that Indigenous Peoples must have equitable access to coordinated access sites, regardless of the way coordinated access is organized in the community, and that this may require specialized access points for Indigenous Peoples.

Recommendation 13.

Indigenous representation among staff of mainstream agencies needs to be increased so that Indigenous individuals and families who access these agencies can speak with an Indigenous service provider. Some communities across Canada may not have Indigenous-specific agencies for Indigenous individuals and families to access. In this case, hiring Indigenous staff members should be prioritized so that Indigenous clients can access culturally safe services. The hiring of Indigenous staff in mainstream agencies, including senior positions, should also be prioritized more broadly. By having Indigenous staff members available within mainstream agencies, Indigenous clients will feel more comfortable accessing services.

Recommendation 14.

Indigenous outreach workers should be hired to collaborate with mainstream services to ensure that coordinated access systems are accessible by Indigenous individuals and families. Some Indigenous individuals and families may access mainstream access points for coordinated access. Because of this, Indigenous outreach workers should be hired to collaborate with mainstream services. This collaboration could include the provision of office space for Indigenous outreach workers to conduct coordinated access intakes at mainstream services.

In Person Access is Preferred, but Multiple Methods for Access are Necessary. When accessing a coordinated access system, in person access was preferred. In person access allows for trust building and rapport development between clients and Indigenous service providers. However, other methods of access to a coordinated access system must be offered. This includes the telephone, video calls, and online platforms. As well, all forms of coordinated access should take an intersectional lens, ensuring that identities of clients are respected. This includes offering female clients the opportunity to speak with a female worker and being respectful of a person's sexual orientation and gender identity.

Recommendation 15.

Provide free transportation, such as monthly bus passes, so that Indigenous community members can enter access points in person. Access to coordinated access agencies may be limited by transportation costs. Affordable transit passes, offered to those with low incomes or who receive social assistance, are currently available in most urban centres, but even at a reduced fare, they may still be financially inaccessible for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. For full equitable access, the availability of free transit options should be examined.

Recommendation 16.

Coordinated access systems should include multiple modes of access, including telephone, video calls, and online platforms. Individuals and families may want to access coordinated access systems through the telephone, video calls, and/or online platforms. Online platforms included the ability to online chat with someone in real time via an online messaging platform, something like Facebook messenger. These modes are particularly important for individuals who cannot travel the distance to conduct an in-person assessment and for those who may be struggling with mental health challenges who would prefer to remain in place to do an assessment.

Recommendation 17.

Coordinated access systems need to take an intersectional, culturally safe, and trauma-informed lens in implementation. Clients who access the coordinated access system will each bring unique histories and experiences. In order to respect these histories and experiences, an intersectional lens should be applied to coordinated access processes. Examples include offering females the opportunity to speak with a female worker, as some of the female community members we spoke stated that they did not feel comfortable speaking with a male worker due to previous traumatic experiences. For 2SLGBTQ clients, asking a person's pronouns at the beginning of an interaction is important so that the client is not misgendered.

Intake and Assessment Procedures Should Be Completed Based Upon the Pace of the Client. We heard that intake procedures for Indigenous individuals and families should not be rushed. Given the intergenerational trauma that Indigenous people face, it is important for staff members to create a safe space that is built upon culture, community, trust, and choice. Clients must be given the right to choose when they want to share their story with staff. Trust building can be facilitated through culture and community building through community gatherings and events, such as meals and drop-ins, and creating inclusive spaces.

Recommendation 18.

Strict time frames for the completion of intakes should not apply to Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness. An intake can be a traumatizing process for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. In order to not retraumatize Indigenous individuals and families, time frames for the completion of an intake should not be applied. This will allow for trust building and community development to occur and allow for an individual or family to share their story when they are ready. Reaching Home, in its directive on assessment, notes that an assessment can be completed at a single interview, or completed in phases. This phased approach to assessment is imperative.

Current Assessment Tools Are Framed in Deficit-Based, Western Perspectives and Are Just One Part of the Assessment Process. Rigid assessment tools are not appropriate for the Indigenous community. We heard from community members that only the essential questions should be asked and that immediate needs should be addressed when someone is in crisis. Given that we heard that assessment tools currently in place, such as the VI-SPDAT, can traumatize Indigenous individuals and families and are deficit-based, it is important not to complete an assessment during a time of crisis. When assessment tools must be used, it is important to consider that they only serve one part of the assessment process and that the conversations staff have with clients provide a better gauge of a client's needs.

Recommendation 19.

A strengths-based assessment tool created specifically for Indigenous individuals and families should be developed. Assessment tools can provide an objective indicator of an individual's or family's need, but they only serve as one part of the assessment process. A new tool could be created, or an existing tool could be modified. In order to develop the tool, the Urban Indigenous Reaching Home Caucus should be consulted, and adequate resources should be provided. In developing the tool, it is important to remember that a tool serves as only one part of the assessment process. It is important for Indigenous service providers to form bonds with their Indigenous clients to understand their needs. Reaching Home, in its directives on assessment, note that communities must use a common assessment tool for all population groups, including Indigenous Peoples. The questions and approaches used to conduct the assessment can be adjusted for populations, such as Indigenous clients. The directives also state that engagement with key stakeholder groups can help to inform the assessment questions and approach for the different local population groups.

Confidentiality of Data Collected Through an Assessment Should be Reinforced Throughout the Coordinated Access Process. Community members had concerns with their data remaining anonymous and confidential. As some communities are quite tight knit, the community members we spoke with felt that staff may share their information with others. It will be important for all clients engaged in the coordinated access process to be fully explained the processes and procedures in place to protect their information, including organizational procedures on confidentiality and processes related to data privacy.

Recommendation 20.

As part of an intake procedure, clear information on the confidentiality of the data that a client can take for their records should be made available. Clients should be provided with clear and concise information about the confidentiality of the coordinated access process. This includes developing a fact sheet of the confidentiality processes the agency involved in coordinated access and the confidentiality processes of the agency that stores the data, if those two agencies are different.

Prioritization Based Upon Indigenous Values and Traditions. Indigenous communities must be able to dictate who is prioritized for services based upon their community's culture, knowledge, and traditions. For Hamilton, children/youth, families, women, and Elders/Seniors were identified as priority groups. These groups were identified based upon Indigenous values, rather than assessment scores. Vulnerability was also described as a factor that should be considered, particularly around issues of mental health, addictions and domestic violence. This may include men and women who are experiencing mental health challenges, alcohol and/or substance abuse, or domestic violence. The Reaching Home directives related to prioritization indicate that communities can choose between maintaining a single priority list or having separate lists by sub-populations, including Indigenous Peoples. The directives also state that beyond the assessment sore, other prioritizing factors, such as Indigenous status, should be considered and that the priorities for one population group will be different than priorities for other population groups.

Recommendation 21.

For communities that have a separate list for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, the Indigenous Community Entity, in collaboration with the Indigenous Community Advisory Board, must be given authority to determine prioritization procedures. Indigenous Community Entities have the right to develop meaningful prioritization procedures that fit the needs of their community. Prioritization criteria will potentially differ depending upon the community, so flexibility will be required.
For communities that choose to maintain a single priority list, Indigenous individuals and families should be prioritized and the Indigenous community must be given authority to determine their own prioritization procedures. As per the Reaching Home directives, Indigenous individuals and families should be prioritized within these lists and prioritization priorities for Indigenous individuals and families should be decided by Indigenous communities.

There Needs to Be Housing Available for Coordinated Access to Work. Coordinated access is only useful if there is affordable, quality housing available. This includes private market housing and permanent supportive housing for individuals and families with higher needs. Since children/youth, families, women, and Elders/Seniors were suggested as priority groups, housing should meet the needs of these groups. The Reaching Home directives on matching and referrals state that referrals to housing services must consider the specific needs and preferences of the client.

Recommendation 22.

Housing options should meet the needs of each prioritized group. For young people, this could include programs such as Endaayang, an Indigenous Housing First for Youth program operated through the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre. For families, this means that housing with the appropriate number of bedrooms should be available. For Elders/Seniors, this could mean housing with the necessary supports, such as access to Personal Support Workers.

Indigenous Housing Needs to be Available for Matching. Among the housing options provided to Indigenous individuals and families, Indigenous-specific housing options should be provided. In Ontario, this might include collaborating with Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services to develop Indigenous-specific housing, as well as with the private sector. Indigenous-specific housing is crucial since many Indigenous individuals and families encounter racism within the mainstream system, which limits their opportunities for housing. Further, within Indigenous-specific housing spaces, a sense of community can be developed among residents, where culture, traditions, and knowledge can be shared.

Recommendation 23.

Housing for Indigenous people needs to be created and federal, provincial, and municipal funds need to be provided. From the federal perspective, this includes the release of the National Urban, Rural, and Remote Indigenous Housing Strategy. There is a need for affordable, quality housing in all parts of Canada. This also includes the need for housing specific to Indigenous individuals and families. Reaching Home directives recognize that Indigenous housing options should reflect Indigenous values, beliefs, and practices and that this housing should be made available to Indigenous community members. Therefore, the federal government should release the National Urban, Rural, and Northern Housing Strategy, with funds earmarked for the development of Indigenous housing.

Cultural Competency Training Should be Required in All Mainstream Organizations. Mainstream organizations, although valued partners, do not always provide a safe space for Indigenous individuals and families to receive services. To enhance the cultural safety of mainstream organizations, cultural competency training for all staff is key. Further, mainstream agencies should consider how to include Indigenous imagery within their spaces so that Indigenous clients can see the visual representation of their culture within. We heard that cultural competency training can be a large component of the work that Indigenous agencies do, but that this work is time consuming and not always fully financially resourced. We also heard that training should be delivered by local experts who know the local context.

Recommendation 24.

Designated Community Entities must dedicate a proportion of their funding to receive cultural competency training from local agencies and experts, and work with local experts to determine how to meaningfully incorporate Indigenous representations within their spaces. Designated Community Entities should work with local Indigenous stakeholders to identify the types of cultural competency trainings they should take. Mainstream agencies should ensure that all staff members receive this training and that training Further, mainstream agencies should consult with local Indigenous stakeholders on how to include culturally relevant and culturally safe imagery within their spaces. This will create a more inviting space for Indigenous clients.

3. Data Collection and Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Racism Impacts the Time it Takes to Get Housed, Thus Data Reporting Requirements Should be Flexible. Indigenous people face racism on every level. They face structural racism through policies that do not recognize their right to self-determination. They face systemic racism which can be seen in the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in homelessness, the correctional system, and the child welfare system. They face racism in everyday encounters, particularly as it relates to access to housing and social services. Data reporting standards should therefore be adjusted to account for the impacts of facing multiple layers of racism. We heard from key informants that there is a benchmark of housing someone within 90 days from when they enter the system. This benchmark may not be achievable because of the impact of racism within the housing market and does not account for the time it may take to develop a relationship with a client.

Recommendation 25.

Federally mandated benchmarks and data requirements should be co-created with national Indigenous homelessness experts (for example, the new national gathering of members from Indigenous Community Entities and Indigenous Community Advisory Boards). Indigenous communities may not be able to meet federally mandated benchmarks because of the racism encountered within the housing market. By not hitting these benchmarks, it will appear that Indigenous agencies are not meeting practice standards. These benchmarks do not consider the Indigenous experience of homelessness and should therefore be reviewed by the new national gathering of members from Indigenous Community Entities and Indigenous Community Advisory Boards.

Data Collection Processes Need to be Culturally Relevant. A reliance on quantitative data will not adequately capture the stories of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness. Although quantitative data has value and should continue to be collected, there should also be opportunities for Indigenous communities to collect and report on qualitative data, or the stories of their participants.

Recommendation 26.

In collaboration with national Indigenous homelessness experts (for example, new national gathering of members from Indigenous Community Entities and Indigenous Community Advisory Boards), Reaching Home should co-create opportunities for the collection of qualitative data. The use of qualitative and quantitative data will provide a more complete picture of an individual or family's circumstances. Indicators, such as a sense of community and connection to culture, may be more accurately captured through qualitative data. Therefore, qualitative indicators should be co-developed with Indigenous Community Entities and Indigenous Community Advisory Boards.

Feedback Loops Need to be Part of Coordinated Access. Coordinated access systems that address homelessness are new to most communities in Canada. As a result, it will be important to have regular assessments of how the coordinated access system is operating, from the perspectives of clients, front-line staff, and program managers. This will allow for modifications to be made in a timely manner so that it better meets the needs of the community.

Recommendation 27.

Include accessible feedback mechanisms for clients, front-line service providers, and program managers on regular intervals. Clients should be given opportunities to provide feedback on the coordinated access process, including the access points, assessment processes, prioritization procedures, and the matching and referral process. Front-line service providers and program managers should also be able to provide feedback on the implementation of coordinated access. The local body responsible for the implementation of coordinated access should be tasked with regularly analyzing this feedback data and regularly reporting to the community on changes being made to coordinated access based upon this feedback.

Data Sovereignty Needs to Be Further Clarified. Data sovereignty is a vital component of coordinated access, but it requires further investigation. Data sovereignty may be a new concept for some communities, particularly mainstream Designated Community Entities, so providing accurate information on data sovereignty is a critical first step in establishing data sovereignty policies and procedures. Data sovereignty is not currently addressed in Reaching Home's directives on coordinated access.

Recommendation 28.

In collaboration with national Indigenous homelessness experts (for example, new national gathering of members from Indigenous Community Entities and Indigenous Community Advisory Boards), the federal government must co-develop informational materials related to Indigenous data sovereignty. Data sovereignty is critical to coordinated access. In order to ensure that communities are fully aware of best practices related to data sovereignty, the federal government, in collaboration with Indigenous leadership should develop informational materials.

Indigenous Agencies Need to be Included in Data Governance Committees. Data governance committees must include Indigenous representation.. Based upon our results, we heard that Indigenous individuals and families are not comfortable with their data being shared. As per Reaching Home's directives, Community Entities must create a governance structure to oversee the implementation of data collection and storage. This group can address data-related issues regarding privacy, the integrity of data collection, and legal implications. In this directive, the inclusion of Indigenous agencies is not discussed.

Recommendation 29.

The inclusion of Indigenous agencies in data governance committees in Designated

Communities should be a requirement in Reaching Home directives. Indigenous communities must be included in any conversation related to the collection and use of data. Given the negative historical impacts of data collection between the federal government and Indigenous people, there is mistrust from Indigenous communities as to how the federal government will use data collected from Indigenous individuals and families. To ensure transparency and to protect Indigenous data from being misused, Indigenous agencies must be part of data governance committees in Designated Communities.

Indigenous Agencies Have the Right to Decide How Their Data is Stored and Analysed. How data collected from Indigenous individuals and families is stored needs to be determined by Indigenous stakeholders. Some communities may choose to use HIFIS, while other communities may choose to use a different HMIS. In the directives from Reaching Home, the ability of Indigenous Community Entities to control their own databases is not discussed.

Recommendation 30.

Indigenous Community Entities should be given the autonomy to choose the data management system that fits their needs and provided adequate, sustainable funding to manage their coordinated access system and analyse their data. A data management system is an essential component of coordinated access. Indigenous Community Entities should be given the right and adequate resources to choose a data management system that works best for them. This could include modifying existing databases and/or creating new databases. The maintenance and operation of the database will require funded positions. It should also include funds for Indigenous Community Entities to hire their own data analysis position to ensure that the data is being analysed in a culturally meaningful way. See Appendix D for greater detail on data management system options.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Indigenous Homelessness: Literature Summary

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This section provides an overview of Indigenous homelessness in Canada. It is important to ground this report on the impact of colonization and the oppressive, discriminatory, and racist practices that have been created by settlers and are still in place today.

1. Indigenous Homelessness and its History

When considering how Indigenous peoples experience homelessness today, it is important to understand that colonial processes of control and oppression have been at work for hundreds of years through policy, institutions, and in social environments. Throughout Canada, Indigenous peoples are dramatically overrepresented among individuals and families experiencing homelessness. In 2016, Indigenous people in Canada accounted for 4.9 percent of the population (Statistics Canada, 2017). Approximately 79.7 percent of Indigenous people in Canada live in urban, rural and remote communities (Statistics Canada, 2018). It is estimated that approximately 30 percent of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Canada are Indigenous (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018). Further, data on the housing conditions of Indigenous peoples in Canada reveals that both Indigenous individuals living on and off-reserve experience a greater amount of housing issues, and significantly higher levels of absolute homelessness than non-Indigenous people in Canada (Donnan, 2016). Urban Indigenous peoples have also been shown to experience housing strain and housing precarity at an overrepresented level and are more likely to move between homes at a greater frequency than the non-Indigenous population (Smylie et al., 2011; Peters, 2006).

The direct cause of this overrepresentation can be traced back to colonialism, oppression, discrimination and racism that is represented in the settler states policies, institutions, and social environments (Peters, 2006; Christensen, 2013; Thistle, 2017). This includes the cultural abuse and trauma experienced through residential schools the exploitation of Indigenous lands and communities, and the destruction of Indigenous families through child welfare system placements (Donnan, 2016). Though homelessness is a serious issue experienced by Indigenous peoples today, it is important to understand that the overrepresentation has many historical influences and contributing factors.

Indigenous communities in Canada have experienced many pressures from the settler state, which, among many other detrimental factors, have caused a disruption of the home, and displacement from traditional lands. To further colonial efforts of gaining access and control of land and resources, the settler state established large settlements, expanded across the continent, and began signing Treaty agreements to legally and physically occupy the land of Indigenous peoples. Such processes worked to reinforce colonial narratives of superiority and control, as well as negatively affect the connection to culture, spirituality, and land for Indigenous communities (Belanger, Head & Awasoga, 2012). The introduction of settler policies such as the *Bagot Report, the Gradual Civilization Act, and The Indian Act* all worked to control and essentialize Indigenous identities and declared which spaces Indigenous individuals could occupy (De Leeuw & Greenwood, 2011).

The Bagot Report, 1845, was one of the first settler documents which attempted to define Indigenous identities and represented the sum of British imperial conceptions of dominance (De Leeuw & Greenwood, 2011). This document considered Indigenous peoples as a dying race that required state management to expedite their assimilation efforts (De Leeuw & Greenwood, 2011). To do so required legal definitions of who is considered "Indian" to legitimate state intervention and control. The language used in the *Bagot Report* was applied in the documents to follow and is still present in discourses today.

The Gradual Civilization Act, 1869, furthered the efforts of the *Bagot Repor*t in defining Indigenous identities and introduced new methods of denying Indigenous peoples legal status recognized by the province of Canada. One method of controlling Indigenous identities, which the state applied within the *Bagot Report* was enfranchisement. Enfranchisement describes the process of an Indigenous individual losing their "Indian" status and therefore, from the states' perspective joining civil society. It was a process the settler state employed to decrease the amount of funding to be allocated to Indigenous communities, and a further method of gaining greater control of land and resources. The *Gradual Civilization Act* also introduced gender differences in their definition of Indigenous identity; using enfranchisement processes to remove the status of Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men. The application of enfranchisement as a method of denying Indigenous peoples status worked to deny individuals access to their home reserves, culture, and community, and had a dramatic effect on the well-being of Indigenous peoples that has spanned generations.

The Indian Act, 1876, widely expanded upon the efforts of the previous policies and was purposefully designed to assimilate all Indigenous peoples into the dominant settler society (De Leeuw, Greenwood & Cameron, 2010). This policy outlined, among many other oppressive procedures, how and when Indigenous peoples could leave their home reserves, prohibited the gathering of more than three Indigenous individuals in one space while off reserve, prohibited the practice of cultural ceremonies, and introduced mandatory attendance to residential schools (De Leeuw & Greenwood, 2015). Residential schools were

government-sponsored religious schools that were established to assimilate Indigenous children into Canadian culture. In 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples made clear that mandatory attendance into residential schools has created the most influential negative impact on the well-being of Indigenous peoples in Canada, which still produces harmful intergenerational effects today (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

Dominant colonial narratives and processes work to create a system in which Indigenous peoples are over-represented in homeless populations and experience a form of homelessness that is experientially different when compared to non-Indigenous peoples (Christensen, 2016). These colonial narratives have also been shown to be present in important systems in Canada that are meant to improve and positively affect the well-being of those who access their services. The healthcare system in Canada has been shown to regularly treat Indigenous patients with oppressive and harmful behaviour, which has caused Indigenous patients to avoid seeking healthcare services rather than being exposed to a harmful environment (Allan & Smylie, 2015). These racist views have also been shown to be present in healthcare workers prior to their joining the work force, which makes clear an entrenched colonial ideology in the health care system (Ly & Crowshoe, 2015). Education for Indigenous communities has long been underfunded affecting many aspects of well-being and long-term outcomes for students (De Leeuw, Greenwood & Cameron, 2010). Moreover, even less funding has been allocated towards the promotion and advancement of Indigenous knowledges in schools, the state has instead largely focused on promoting western knowledges and epistemologies (De Leeuw, Greenwood & Cameron, 2010). The criminal justice system has also long been critiqued for its over-representation of Indigenous offenders, and for its lack of response to Indigenous issues such as the high amount of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (Roberts & Melchers, 2003; Cesaroni, Grol & Fredericks; Scribe 2018). What these institutional examples express is entrenched colonial ideologies that influence how institutions operate and interact with Indigenous peoples and how workers within institutions hold harmful colonial ideologies. The harmful colonial narratives that were present in policies like the *Bagot Report* still exist today and continue to affect the well-being of Indigenous peoples. Institutional issues such as these also contribute to how and why Indigenous individuals experience high rates of homelessness, and work to create additive obstacles to responding to and finding solutions to high rates of homelessness.

2. Defining Indigenous Homelessness

More than just a lack of a physical space to call home Indigenous experiences of homelessness and home are concerned with a lack of a stable connection to Indigenous culture and community (Thistle, 2017; Christensen, 2016; Alaazi et al., 2015). For many Indigenous cultures and individuals, a sense of home is developed through a connection to spirituality, land, community, and culture. The home is a space where all these important resources can be accessed, thereby having a positive effect on the social determinants of Indigenous health and creating a more developed experience of well-being. When considering how Indigenous peoples have been and continue to be displaced from their home communities, and within and between urban environments (Peters, 2006; Smylie et al., 2016) it is important to understand how a sense of home is affected. For Indigenous individuals who are experiencing homelessness this sense of home can be even more negatively affected because they may no longer have opportunities to access culture and spirituality. This means that for homeless Indigenous individuals it is possible for there to be additive stressors to well-being to be present, more than the health issues directly related to homelessness. Making their experience of homelessness experientially different than non-Indigenous homeless individuals (Christensen, 2016).

A helpful framework to better understanding Indigenous experiences of homelessness is *The 12 Dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness* (Thistle, 2017). This framework describes the many interacting ways that homelessness can be experienced by Indigenous peoples. The 12 Dimensions outlines historical, structural, as well as social and personal causes and experiences of Indigenous homelessness and how each dimension interacts with the others (Thistle, 2017). More than describing each dimension as existing in independent silos, the 12 dimensions are additive and are better conceptualized through their interactions with each other, rather than through compartmentalized definitions (Thistle, 2017). The 12 dimensions can be applied to help conceptualize the severity of homelessness that individuals are experiencing and assist in identifying structural and social barriers that inhibit responses to homelessness. Importantly, the 12 dimensions help to identify the many complex ways in which Indigenous peoples can experience homelessness and make clear the many causes of Indigenous homelessness and how they are a result of oppressive colonial ideologies, policies, and institutional practices. By better understanding the complexities of homelessness as experienced by Indigenous peoples, community leaders can better identify solutions and supports.

3. Public Health Implications

As a result of the harmful colonial policies and inequitable access to resources and institutional supports, research has revealed that there are significant health disparities between Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous populations. Indigenous communities in Canada do not have equitable access to basic needs, such as clean drinking water, housing and food, employment opportunities, and education (Alaazi, Masuda, Evans, Distasio, 2015). These health inequalities represent distal health factors that are created through colonial policies, political agendas and institutional racism that all work to disparage Indigenous communities and individuals.

To effectively respond to issues of homelessness that are being experienced by Indigenous peoples it is important that community leaders, researchers and health systems recognize the diversity of Indigenous cultures, circumstances, and needs that are present across Indigenous communities in Canada. A catch-all solution or method to responding to issues of Indigenous homelessness is harmful and works to further past colonial methods of pan-Indigenizing Indigenous identities. Many national documents which promote furthering the well-being and self-determination of Indigenous peoples and communities suggest (*Honouring Our Strengths, The Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission*) that there should be both a preventative based program as well as an intervention-based program that are communally and culturally led by Indigenous communities, for Indigenous communities. However, institutions in Canada still require significant improvements to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Canadian service systems have been shown to not only provide inadequate access and services to Indigenous communities, but also consistently provide differential treatment to Indigenous clients (Smylie & Allan, 2015). In rural and reserve communities there still is a severe lack of resources available to Indigenous communities. Many Indigenous individuals need to travel great distances to receive needed medical services. To respond to experiences of Indigenous homelessness in rural communities, and to all health concerns, there needs to be an increase in access to services, and better coordination of the services that are available (Honouring Our Strengths, 2010). A further issue of equitable access across Canada pertains to the level of differential treatment that Indigenous patients receive from healthcare workers. This has been shown to be significant enough that Indigenous patients will avoid seeking out health care services altogether, rather than experiencing racism and discrimination in a healthcare setting (Smylie & Allan, 2015). This creates issues of accessing adequate health services even in urban areas, where health services may be available but are still therefore inaccessible. This can create a sense of institutional resentment and can increase the difficulty for healthcare workers in adequately responding to issues of homelessness being experienced by Indigenous peoples (Thistle, 2017).

To address the presence of institutional racism in service settings, there needs to be a major effort to increase the representation of Indigenous workers and decision makers (Ly & Crowshoe, 2015), and a more widespread application of cultural safety training in these settings. Moreover, there is a severe lack in the availability of traditional methods of healing, particularly in urban environments (Thistle, 2017). Currently, the dominant model of health reflects western-colonial conceptions of physical and mental health, and biomedical interventions. Such ideologies do not accurately represent Indigenous concepts of well-being and the importance that spirituality and culture have in producing a well-developed sense of well-being (Thistle, 2017). Increasing access to traditional healing methods and to cultural practices, both in rural and urban environments, as well as increased coordination and internal responses to institutional racism is needed to effectively respond to issues of homelessness that is experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada.

4. Methods to Address Indigenous Homelessness

As briefly outlined above, because the Indigenous definition of homelessness is different than the dominant settler state definition, it is important that the approaches to addressing Indigenous homelessness are culturally specific to the health, lifestyle and spiritual preferences of Indigenous communities. For example, in a multi-institutional study of a Housing First program in Winnipeg, where the Indigenous population comprise about 70% of the total homeless population, researchers found that though Indigenous individuals involved with the study were relatively satisfied with the methods of the program, their feeling of belonging in the city was not connected to their housing experiences (Alaazi, Masuda, Evans, Distasio, 2015). Further, it was found that structural factors, especially the lack of affordable housing and the active systemic erasure of Indigeneity from the city's sociocultural and political world has impacted Indigenous peoples' ability to feel a sense of home (Alaazi, Masuda, Evans, Distasio, 2015). The Housing First program is largely based in a western understanding of privacy, and individualistic ideologies that reflect western lifestyle and culture. This does not reflect the Indigenous therapeutic home experience which is a healthy blend of domestic spiritual and ceremonial spaces that encourage a sense of belonging and one-ness with culture and community (Alaazi, Masuda, Evans, Distasio, 2015).

Other studies have demonstrated the importance of delivering culturally responsive services as part of Housing First programs working with Indigenous peoples. Bodor et al. (2011) conducted a small study of 25 Indigenous individuals receiving Housing First services in Edmonton. The study highlighted that the program works with their clients to reclaim their Indigenous identity. This includes having Indigenous staff work in the program, offering ceremony to clients through smudging, and providing connections to Elders.

5. Suggestions for Future Approaches to Addressing Indigenous homelessness.

Indigenous homelessness in Canada is complex and has many contributing factors, which can be traced back to colonial roots in Canadian society. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples have been historically displaced and often experience marginalization (Donnan, 2016). Through policy and dominant public discourse, a system of oppression and differential treatment has become entrenched in institutional access, procedures and service delivery. Examples of this can be seen via child welfare programs, health care services, policing, surveillance and mass incarceration, as well as many other forms of discrimination and oppression. Many scholars argue that Indigenous experiences of homelessness must be addressed in a "nation-to-nation negotiation" between the multiple levels of Canadian government and Indigenous communities (Donnan, 2016) working with Indigenous communities at every level of response. This will require the coordination of every level of government and many different institutions. The overall goal will not only be to increase access to adequate and affordable homes, but to also find ways to address how Indigenous homelessness is experienced, through spiritual and communal displacement, rather than the lack of a brick and mortar homes (Donnan, 2016; Ackee & Feir, 2018). As Indigenous definitions of homelessness are understood in ways that are culturally specific, programs must design their interventions (Donnan, 2016; Alaazi, Masuda, Evans, Distasio, 2015).

Institutions in Canada currently do not provide equal access or service delivery to Indigenous communities and peoples; to effectively provide a systems-based approach in responding to Indigenous homelessness there needs to be a fundamental restructuring of major institutions in Canada. *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and the Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* all call for significant changes into how the Canadian state provides access to institutions such as healthcare, criminal justice, and education, as well as changes in how those institutions interact with Indigenous peoples. A systems-based approach will not be effective if these institutions continue to be harmful, inequitable, and inaccessible to Indigenous peoples. As stated above the presence of institutional racism and differential treatment (Smylie & Allen, 2015) can cause resentment and avoidance of these services, making responses to homelessness more difficult. To effectively address issues of Indigenous homelessness these important institutions will require a more equitable and respectful relationship with Indigenous communities, one that is reflected in policy.

In responding to issues of Indigenous homelessness Canadian policy will need to outline how institutions will undergo systemic changes and articulate how institutions can be held accountable for causing harm. Using the health care system as an example; *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission* describes many ways in which steps can be taken towards addressing institutional change, including an increase in the amount of Indigenous students

and workers in health related fields, making cultural safety training mandatory for all healthcare workers, and increasing the amount of traditional healing centres (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Recommendations such as these not only advocate for an increased access to resources and services, but also a fundamental change in how services are delivered. Canadian policy needs to be put into place to make such changes possible if issues of Indigenous homelessness are to be addressed.

Appendix B: Coordinated Access: Literature Summary

Prepared by John Ecker and Anika Mifsud

This section provides an overview of coordinated access. It is largely taken from western-based research and does not represent Indigenous culture, knowledge, and tradition.

1. Defining Coordinated Access

Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness across Canada. The program is part of the Employment and Social Development (ESDC) department of the Government of Canada. Reaching Home provides funding to urban, Indigenous, rural and remote communities to help them address their local homelessness needs.

As part of the directives of Reaching Home, coordinated access must be implemented in all designated communities across Canada by March 31, 2022. Reaching Home defines a "coordinated access system" as a:

> **process by which individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness are directed to community-level access points where trained workers use a common assessment tool to evaluate the individual or family's depth of need, prioritize them for housing support services and then help them to match to available housing focused interventions (Reaching Home, Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019).**

Given that it is to be implemented across Canada, it is important to review the evidence on the implementation and effectiveness of coordinated access systems.

2. Processes Involved in Coordinated Access – Reaching Home

Coordinated access systems have several features (Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy Directives, Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019), which are outlined below:

a. **A centralized database** that collects and displays **real-time data** on clients and available housing and supports. Examples include Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) (developed by the Government of Canada) and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) (developed by private companies).

b. **A clear access point(s) of entry**, also known as the engagement point for the individual or family experiencing a housing crisis. An access point may include emergency shelters, mobile outreach teams, day centres, other community-based organizations and hotlines.

   Access points can be centralized, decentralized, or a combination thereof.

   - **Centralized model**: Uses one entry location where people at risk of or experiencing homelessness are assessed to determine the best resources for their specific needs. Can be by telephone or physical location.
   - **Decentralized model**: Uses multiple coordinated locations (physical, virtual, or both) throughout the community that offer assessments and referrals. Also known as a "no wrong door" approach.
   - **Hybrid model**: Uses elements of both the centralized and decentralized model. Could include a dedicated phone number as first point of entry to screen calls and then referrals to a lead agency for further assessments and referrals.

c. **Common assessment tools and standardized protocols.** This involves the process of gathering information about an individual or family accessing the crisis system using assessment tools and standardized protocols.

d. **A prioritization process.** This is the process of determining the individual's or family's priority for housing based on information gathered through assessment.

e. **A matching and referral process.** This is the process whereby the individual or family is matched to and offered housing based on project-specific eligibility, needs, and preferences.

f. **Resources.** Resources focused on ensuring that people can connect with appropriate housing and housing supports in an efficient manner.

Reaching Home recognizes that coordinated access is not a "one size fits all" process. Coordinated access should be a community-led initiative that meets local needs.

Reaching Home Directives on Coordinated Access and Indigenous Homelessness Stream

For communities that receive funding from both the Designated Communities[4] and Indigenous Homelessness[5] streams, there must be collaboration between the two streams on the design and use of coordinated access. Individuals and families must have equitable access to coordinated access sites.

Communities are mandated to use a common assessment tool for all population groups (e.g., youth, women fleeing violence, Indigenous peoples) so that there is a shared approach to understanding people's need. However, the questions and approaches used to conduct the assessment can be adjusted. In the Reaching Home directives, it is written that a conversational approach rather than an interview-like approach may be more appropriate for Indigenous service users. In addition to this, assessments with households that are conducted by an assessor who is part of the same population group could lead to higher quality information sharing and to a more positive experience overall.

The Reaching Home directives also state that Indigenous identity should be considered when establishing prioritization criteria. It is acknowledged that the priorities established for one population group will likely differ from the properties established for other population groups. Communities can maintain a single priority list with all known households experiencing homelessness, or having separate lists by sub-population (e.g., youth, Indigenous Peoples, families). From there, referrals to housing services must be made based on prioritization guidelines, project-specific eligibility requirements (e.g., age restrictions, geographic location) and the specific needs and preferences of the service user(s).

In order to manage privacy, data sharing, and client consent, Community Entities must develop a set of local agreements in compliance to municipal, provincial, and federal laws. Community Entities that operate with a data management system, such as HIFIS, are required to sign a Data Provision Agreement and an End-user License Agreement with ESDC. Community Entities that operate with an equivalent Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) are required to sign a Data Sharing Agreement with ESDC. Data sovereignty is not discussed within the Reaching Home directives.

4. Communities that have significant homelessness challenges that are selected by ESDC to receive ongoing support to address the issue.

5. Provides funding to organizations that provide supports to meet the unique needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The intent is that the funding be provided to Indigenous organizations located in urban centres. The program promotes social inclusion and cultural connections within communities and aims to ensure that culturally appropriate supports are available for Indigenous Peoples who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness in urban centres. Indigenous Peoples are not limited to accessing only the services that are funded by the Indigenous homelessness stream; they may also access services and supports from organizations that are funded by the program's other regional streams.

3. Facilitators and Outcomes of Coordinated Access

The academic literature on coordinated access is summarized below. It is important to note that there are few published articles on coordinated access.

According to LeMoine (2016), there are 10 activities that facilitate effective service coordination between multiple service providers. These are: (1) seamless pathways to referrals; (2) working together regularly; (3) regular communication; (4) case meetings; (5) outreach activities; (6) establishing mutual goals and values; (7) communication outside of clients; (8) sharing resources; (9) participation in networks; (10) communities of practice and educational events; and (11) management support.

There are few studies on the effectiveness of coordinated access systems. One study found that individuals and families experiencing homelessness had significantly higher rates of success in maintaining their housing and self-sufficiency when they were connected to a "service home" (i.e., a one-stop community hub with coordinated services) as opposed to those who had to access resources from multiple agencies with different physical locations and points of contact (Streim, 2017). Streim (2017) reported that service users indicated several benefits to integrated services, including feeling less stressed and not having to travel as much. Moss and colleagues (2002) found that when services were coordinated between an emergency department and local community service providers, hospital readmission rates fell significantly.

The remainder of the literature focused on outcomes is taken from evaluations of the Access to Community Care and Effective Services and Supports (ACCESS) program in the United States. ACCESS was a 5-year, 18-site demonstration program that aimed to increase service integration for individuals experiencing homelessness who also had serious mental illness (Rosenheck et al., 1998). Although not necessarily applying a coordinated access framework, the ACCESS evaluations demonstrate the impact of service integration. Results demonstrated that higher service integration was significantly related to improved access to housing services and, through these services, attaining independent housing 12 months after entry into the program (Rosenheck et al., 1998). There were no significant relationships between service integration and use of non-housing services.

4. Strengths of Coordinated Access

Several strengths of coordinated access have been identified in the literature. Coordinated access encourages agencies to work alongside each other with mutual language, processes, assessment tools and policies. Integrating services is ideal so that service users can utilize them as a "one-stop shop", without having to engage with several agencies (Backer, Howard & Moran, 2007). Creating a more consistent and harmonious cross-sectoral process, regardless of the context of the individual's system of care entry, eases clients' access to services (Calgary Homeless Foundation, 2013; Cocozza et al., 2000). As a result, coordinated access eliminates a common issue found in agency-centric care systems, in which clients apply to multiple programs at the same time, leading to an overburdened system with numerous waitlists and no method to determine if the same client is on multiple lists (Calgary Homelessness Foundation, 2013).

Coordinated access also necessitates increased communication between different organizations, leading to a more transparent system. When services are coordinated across different systems, boundaries come down and increased inter-agency communication is promoted (Backer, Howard & Moran, 2007). Erickson and colleagues (1995) found that coordinated access supported inter-agency communication, as it allowed organizations to foster linkages and better understand the activities of each organization. This increased understanding between different organizations may lead to a more functional system overall, as homeless-serving systems rely on extensive cross-systems collaboration to promote stability and remove barriers that prolong homelessness (Burt & Spellman, 2007; Culhane, Park, & Metraux, 2011; Schiff, 2013). These aspects are necessary to allow for service providers to be able to better work together to prioritize the people who need help the most.

Moreover, when service user data is accessible, person-specific and maintained in real-time, communities can triage services based on their shifting needs and resources (Culhane, 2016; Zetino & Mendoza, 2019). This means that getting help will be more effective, faster, tailored to service users and based on their choice. With coordinated access, referrals to services are faster, more tailored and more efficient (Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2010). When services are coordinated and integrated, communities may find it easier to refer service users with multiple needs. In this way, referral networks can allow for quicker access to a wide range of supports, which is useful for the homeless population, which may have complex, layered needs (Cornes, Joly, Manthorpe, O'Halloran, & Smyth, 2011; Ungar, Liebenberg, & Ikeda, 2014).

Coordinated access networks also allow services to have the flexibility to expand and contract when shifts in demand occur (Burt & Spellman, 2007; Culhane, Park, & Metraux, 2011; Morrissey et al., 2002). For example, coordinated access allows for information to be shared more easily and resources to respond more quickly when there is greater need, for instance, if a large influx of refugee families accessed the housing and homelessness sector within short period

of time. With coordinated access, organizations can avoid hierarchical approval processes; instead, decision making is distributed across service providers fairly, which potentially speeds up resource allocations (Provan & Kenis, 2008).

5. Challenges of Coordinated Access

While there are several strengths of coordinated access, there are also some difficulties and challenges to maintaining such a system. A major challenge to coordinated access is that it does not address the environmental factors that contribute to homelessness. For example, high population growth, high rental expenses, and low housing vacancy are not addressed through coordinated access (Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2010). Thus, a coordinated access system is only beneficial when there are adequate housing options that households can be referred to.

There are multiple challenges to coordinating efforts in community. While it was highlighted that a key success to coordinated access is increased collaboration amongst different service providers, this success depends on partnerships already being in place with local service providers, as well as agreements on data sharing and privacy. These requirements may be time consuming and difficult to initiate and maintain (Backer, Howard & Moran, 2007). Maintaining long-term relationships with different service providers is also challenging, as Erickson and colleagues (1995) found that certain relationships with networks could "wilt away" over time. Poor communication between multiple agencies may compound the issues faced by service users (Davies, 1993). Coordinating services to act as an integrated system might be accepted by service providers as a concept. However, when practiced, many agencies may lack an understanding of the different services offered by different organizations (Easthope & Lynch, 1992).

Differing philosophies and mandates may have a large impact on how positive relationships and linkages between different services are made. For example, if one service provider does not fully grasp the guiding philosophy of another agency, disagreements may occur on the limitations of services provided (Erickson, Chong, Anderson & Stevens, 1995). In addition to this, when service providers are unaware of all the supports available by other service providers in their coordinated system, disagreements may occur. For example, relationship breakdowns between different service providers can occur when conflict emerges as a result of differing mandates between agencies (e.g., harm reduction-focused compared to abstinence based) (Erickson, Chong, Anderson & Stevens, 1995). Provision of services in a coordinated system may also raise additional concerns around one's responsibilities. In one community implementing coordinated access, service providers eliminated referrals to their job help service because they believed another service provider could provide this service instead (Erickson, Chong, Anderson & Stevens, 1995).

6. Summary

The literature has demonstrated that coordinated access can serve an important purpose. Coordinated access limits the number of interactions with the homelessness systems, reducing the need for households to share their stories with multiple service providers. It also brings service providers together in a systematic manner and can lead to a more integrated system. The challenge with coordinated access is that it has only been examined within Western-based systems of care. In taking a "one size fits all" approach, it may neglect the unique needs of households with intersecting identities (e.g., gender, Indigenous identity, race/ethnic identity). There is also limited evidence on best practices related to data collection and storage. Therefore, more empirical evidence is required on the impact of coordinated access in Canada.

Appendix C: Data Sovereignty: Literature Summary

Prepared by Victoria Bomberry and John Ecker

An important component of coordinated access is collecting data on the profiles and needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. This data is often stored in HIFIS or HMIS. Missing from discussions on data and coordinated access is how data is stored and who has control or ownership of the data.

1. Data Sovereignty Background

Data sovereignty refers to the management of information in a manner that is legally consistent with the practices and policies in the nation and or state that it is located (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). It addresses the legal and ethical aspects of the storage, use, ownership, consent, practicality and intellectual property of Indigenous data. (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). It is aligned with the concept of "sovereignty", that recognizes a nation's or state's recognized right and legitimacy to self-govern, with freedom from interference (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). For Indigenous communities, all data that is produced is understood to be controlled by the Indigenous communities involved, even if outside researchers have gathered and compiled the data (Carroll, Rodriguez-Lonebear & Martinez, 2019).

Indigenous data sovereignty is a process that empowers Indigenous communities and decision makers to have control of valuable information, which influences important decisions, affecting the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples and communities. The right to self-determine and make decisions which affect the lives of Indigenous peoples, lands, communities, and resources is an inherit right outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which Canada is a signatory (Carroll, Rodriguez-Lonebear & Martinez, 2019). Ensuring Indigenous data sovereignty is a process of respecting Indigenous knowledges and procedures, an important aspect of building reciprocal relationships, and a way to help empower Indigenous communities to make important and informed decisions.

2. Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge is based on thousands of years of observations, experiences, and information relating to the land, and passed down from generation to generation (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). In their paper on Indigenous data sovereignty in Canada, the First Nations Information Governance Centre (2019) write, "Since time immemorial, First Nations people had the ability to determine all their needs and how to best meet those needs using plants, herbs, animals, and the environment to survive, heal,

and maintain balance". Epistemologies and ways of knowing commonly held by Indigenous cultures and peoples represent a holistic worldview, which differs from and has largely been ignored by western researchers and institutions, which has caused harm to Indigenous peoples and communities (Smith, 1999).

Indigenous knowledge has not been adequately captured in Western-based research and policies. Much of the literature on Indigenous peoples has been written from a colonial perspective, by settler researchers. Often western institutions and researchers apply an approach to research in which outside researchers extract Indigenous knowledges from communities and leave without providing any benefits to the community (Smith, 1999). This process has created a contentious relationship between Indigenous communities and researchers wherein researchers are largely the only party that benefitted (Smith, 1999). Although some of this research has shed light on the health status and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples, many Indigenous communities have been subject to unethical research practices (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). For example, data collected through government agencies was used to identify families during the residential schools' era and the '60's scoop (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). A second common example is how western researchers use the personal information of Indigenous communities as data for multiple studies while only receiving consent for the original project (NCAI, 2012). As a result of these unethical and harmful practices, Indigenous communities can rightfully have a negative opinion and a strong mistrust in research and information sharing with non-Indigenous researchers, institutions, and governments (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). Therefore, "First Nations sovereignty over information and data is a crucial step toward changing the research paradigm, as well as achieving respective nations' self-governance aspirations and exercise of self-determination" (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019).

Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Data sovereignty has a critical role in informing how Indigenous peoples' make decisions for self-governance and self-determination. Currently, Indigenous peoples in Canada are engaged in a process to reclaim their identities, "through the control of information and the ability and authority to telling one's own stories with data through an Indigenous lens" (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). As a next step in the process, Indigenous communities are reclaiming traditional systems by "building information governance capacity, enacting [their] own laws, entering into data sharing and licence-to-use contracts, creating regional data centres and repatriating [their] data" (Taylor & Kukutai, 2016). Therefore, data sovereignty policies and procedures are necessary for the self-determination of Indigenous peoples.

One perspective on achieving data sovereignty in research and academic settings in Canada is through the integration of the Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP)® principles. While OCAP® is just one prominent example of data sovereignty principles, it must be acknowledged that it is not the benchmark for all matters related to Indigenous data sovereignty. The OCAP® principles outline how data from First Nations should be collected, protected, used, or shared. Below, each of the principles is defined using direct quotations from the First Nations Information Governance Centre.

- **Ownership**
  Refers to the relationship of First Nations to their cultural knowledge, data, and information. A community or group owns information collectively in the same way that an individual owns his or her personal information.

- **Control**
  First Nations, their communities, and representative bodies are within their rights in seeking to control over all aspects of research and information management processes that impact them. First Nations control of research can include all stages of a research project – from start to finish. The principle extends to the control of resources and review processes, the planning process, management of the information and so on.

- **Access**
  First Nations must have access to information and data about themselves and their communities regardless of where it is held. The principle of access also refers to the right of First Nations communities and organizations to manage and make decisions regarding access to their collective information. This may be achieved, in practice, through standardized, formal protocols.

- **Possession**
  This refers to the physical control of data. Possession is the mechanism by which ownership can be asserted and protected.

Although the OCAP® principles are specific to First Nations, other Indigenous Peoples have utilized similar guidelines to protect their data.

3. Data Governance Structure

Developing systems to organize the data that is collected is another important consideration. Data governance is defined as the "processes, policies, standards, organization, and technologies required to manage and ensure the availability, quality, consistency, auditability, and security of data in an organization" (Panian, 2010, p. 939). A data governance framework has four considerations (Panian, 2010):

1. Developing and implementing standards, such as definitions, technical standards, and data models.
2. Creating policies and processes around the monitoring and management of data.
3. Setting out the roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities of organizations involved.
4. Putting in place a suitable technological infrastructure to work with the data that is collected.

In cases where multiple agencies are involved in the collection of data, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) are important to create. The MOU should state the ownership of the data resides with the Indigenous community it was retrieved from, and that researchers cannot share, analyse, or release the data without the community's leadership's consent (Carroll, Rodriguez-Lonebear & Martinez, 2019). It should be clearly stated how researchers intend to store, share, and return the data (NCAI, 2012). It can also be beneficial to state that the community involved with the project will be named as co-authors (Carroll, Rodriguez-Lonebear & Martinez, 2019). Researchers and Indigenous communities can also develop a partnership agreement together that outlines the partnerships goals, values, and principles to help align each parties vision and responsibilities, as well as to direct the research being conducted (Carroll, Rodriguez-Lonebear & Martinez, 2019). Clear and honest communication and collaboration at every stage of the research process is essential.

4. Considerations when Collecting Data Within Coordinated Access Systems

Implicit in the discussion on Indigenous data sovereignty is ensuring that ethical data collection standards are met. Prior to collecting Indigenous data through coordinated access, several considerations must be made:

- **Consider who data is being collected from.** Using settler-defined, colonial practices will not accurately reflect the traditions, values, and practices of Indigenous communities (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016; Moodie, 2010). Researchers need to critically and reflexively consider their social position of privilege as a researcher and how that position can affect a working relationship with Indigenous community partners. The relationship between researchers and Indigenous communities has been and continues to be contentious

because of past harms committed by western researchers (Smith, 1999). Applying this coordinated access, it is important that data collecting procedures and the data itself is representative of and meaningful to the Indigenous community partners involved. Significant collaboration between Designated Community Entities and Indigenous communities is needed to ensure that data collection and production procedures are conducted in a way that is appropriate.

- **Once it has been established whom the data are being obtained from, one must consider the intention behind the collection of the data.** Whether the data is being collected by Indigenous communities or non-Indigenous organizations makes a significant difference in the actual content of the data (Moodie, 2010). This is due to the difference in motive. For example, settler states may be motivated by surveillance of Indigenous communities for purposes including law enforcement, military, and social services. However, researchers within Indigenous communities may be motivated by a desire to assess the specific needs of their communities to help in the planning of community development projects. (Moodie, 2010; Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). Researchers must understand that there can be a contentious relationship between researchers and Indigenous communities. Applying this to coordinated access, Designated Community Entities must be aware of this, and how it will influence their efforts to build relationships, and therefore need to align their motives with the community partners. Asking questions like "who will benefit from collecting this data?" and "what will the community gain from this?" can be useful. For Designated Community Entities, being constantly critical and reflexive of their own positionality and biases is one way to be more respectful in collecting data. More importantly, Indigenous partners need to be involved in the decision-making procedures when deciding how and why data will be collected.
- **Confidentiality and privacy.** Privacy refers to the collection of the information while confidentiality refers to the ways that the data are managed post collection. Information that is "private" tends to include personal financial or health information. In Indigenous communities, this could extend to other activities including hunting and gathering practices ceremonial and religious participation, or the support of projects for community development. This information may be invaluable to Indigenous communities, and the collection of said information could be intrusive (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). Moreover, if it is agreed that this information will be used as data, researchers must guarantee that this data will never be used in later studies or released without approval from the Indigenous community it was collected from. Applying this to coordinated access, Designated Community Entities must always attain approval from the Indigenous community when discussing how data is managed post collection.

As researchers and Indigenous communities are often coming from different social locations and may have different methods of interpreting and presenting knowledge, a useful method to align research goals can be the application of the Two-eyed Seeing framework. Two-eyed Seeing describes a process which embraces a diversity of perspectives and epistemologies, where both western and Indigenous ways of knowing are respected and drawn from to improve our understanding of the world (Bartlett, Marshall & Marshall, 2012). As western science continues to dominate research fields, it is also essential to understand that the Two-eyed Seeing framework is designed to develop an acceptance of multiple epistemologies by being self-critical of our own perspectives (Martin, 2012). Through this reflective process researchers can work to be more critical of their biases, more accepting of Indigenous ways of knowing, and interpret research projects from multiple perspectives by seeing through two eyes. The Two-eyed Seeing framework can be useful for researchers who have been trained in western institutions to be more self-critical and who are not familiar with Indigenous methodologies and approaches to research. By adopting this framework researchers can take necessary steps to be more respectful and understanding of why Indigenous data sovereignty it important and needed.

When working in partnership with Indigenous communities it is important for outside researchers to consider how Indigenous cultural practices and knowledges relate to Indigenous data sovereignty and to research. Researcher must understand how research has negatively affected Indigenous communities across Canada, and how it has affected the community or communities they are partnering with (NCAI, 2012). Even if individual researchers or organizations have not had problematic relationships with Indigenous communities in the past, researchers still occupy a social location of privilege which will influence how they are perceived and will affect their ability to foster meaningful relationships. Ensuring that Indigenous data sovereignty is guaranteed is one method of decolonizing research, empowering Indigenous communities to improve their self-determination capabilities, and developing meaningful relationships that are needed to conduct research with Indigenous communities. Most importantly, researchers need to understand that working to ensure Indigenous data sovereignty is not a simple process that can be applied and replicated in the same manner for all Indigenous communities. Researchers need to genuinely listen to the concerns of Indigenous communities and adapt to community needs to find a method of achieving data sovereignty that is most appropriate for the community that researchers are partnering with.

5. Relationship Building

For researchers, working with, and developing an equitable long-term relationship with, Indigenous communities requires researchers to possess and express a genuine desire to commit to an on-going process of learning, respect, and efforts to positively affect the wellbeing of Indigenous community partners. By committing to ensuring Indigenous data sovereignty researchers make clear their intentions of furthering Indigenous communities' goals to improve their knowledge and decision-making abilities, as well as intentions of fostering long-term mutually beneficial relationships. One method of working to ensure that Indigenous data sovereignty is protected and to cultivate a positive relationship is adopting the concepts of the 4 R's; Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility.

- **Respect**
  When decolonizing a research project the concept of respect describes how researchers need to make genuine efforts to establish long-lasting relationships with Indigenous communities, have a collaborative working relationship with community partners, and work in a way that is respectful of community member's schedules (Stanton, 2013). Working in partnership with Indigenous communities in this way is an example of how outside researchers can express their willingness to work with Indigenous communities on their terms and is based in a desire to achieve shared long-term goals.

- **Relevance**
  Describes how researchers should align their research goals with those of the Indigenous community they are working with. The research methodologies and procedures, the presentation of final reports or products, and how the results are applied should all be meaningful to the community involved with the project (Stanton, 2013). How the research is conducted, why the research is needed, and what is ultimately done with the research and data should all be relevant to the community involved.

- **Reciprocity**
  Is a fundamental aspect to working in partnership with Indigenous communities and should be considered in every stage of the project. When considering how researchers have benefited, and continue to benefit from working with Indigenous communities, while coming from a position of privilege it is vital that researchers ensure that Indigenous communities also benefit from research endeavours. The research process should provide opportunities to all community members involved to learn and heal, the final results should provide valuable insights to community decision makers, and the data needs to be controlled by Indigenous communities to further decision making abilities and self-determination (Stanton, 2013).

- **Responsibility**
  Describes how outside researchers need to make necessary efforts to make the research project culturally appropriate for the community involved, and to use research designs that match community protocols (Stanton, 2013). It is also the responsibility of the researchers to ensure that data and the final report is controlled by the Indigenous community involved (Stanton, 2013).

It is also important to understand that relationship building and working to ensure that Indigenous data sovereignty is achievable are not a simple one-size-fits-all procedure that can be recycled and replicated with every new community relationship. There is a great diversity of Indigenous communities, cultures, and procedures all of which requires researchers to contribute a significant amount of effort to better understand important intricacies and how to best meet the needs of each community. To understand how data sovereignty can be achieved and to build equitable relationships requires a large amount of collaboration and cannot be achieved from behind a desk or from phone calls (NCAI, 2012).

6. Examples of Indigenous-Led Data Sovereignty Practices

Below are three examples of Indigenous-led data sovereignty practices from sectors outside of homelessness and housing.

Regional Health Survey

In the early and mid-1990s, several large-scale initiatives were developed by Indigenous communities across Canada to assert control of data collection, management, and dissemination (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). One of the largest initiatives was the first Regional Health Survey (RHS). The survey, originally called the First Nations and Inuit Regional Longitudinal Health Survey, took place in 1997. It resulted from the exclusion of Indigenous Peoples living on reserve and the small sample size of off-reserve Indigenous Peoples in several national, federally-mandated, large-scale surveys (e.g., the National Population Health Survey, the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, and the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics). Challenges in the implementation of the RHS included: (1) balancing national and regional objectives; (2) developing questions that were comparable with existing surveys, but also meeting the needs of Indigenous communities across Canada; and (3) defining who has control of the data at national and local levels. The solution to these challenges was restructuring the frame of the survey from one national survey, to a collection of regional surveys that could provide a level of cross-Canada data, but also allowing for regional priorities to be addressed in the survey.

The Tui'kn Partnership – A System for Health Information Management

The Tui'kn partnership involves five First Nations communities on Cape Breton Island – Eskasoni, Membertou, Potlotek, Wagmatcook, and Waycobah (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). This collaborative developed partnerships with several health authorities, including the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness, Health Canada, and Dalhousie university. The Tui'kn partners retain ownership, access, and control over their communities' health data, while working with the health authorities to improve community health services and policy (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). The Tuk'in communities have developed privacy policies and procedures and offer privacy training opportunities for health centre personnel (Tuk'in Partnership, n.d.).

Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES) – Data Governance Agreement with the Chiefs of Ontario, Métis Nation of Ontario, and Tungasuvvingat Inuit

The Chiefs of Ontario is a coordinating body for 133 First Nations communities in Ontario (The First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2019). They have a Data Government Agree with the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences to conduct health-related analyses for the Chiefs of Ontario and the First Nations communities. Proposals to use the data to conduct Ontario-level analyses are vetted and approved by a First Nations Data Governance Committee that has members appointed by the Ontario Chiefs' Committee on Health (Pyper et al., 2018). Similar relationships with the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences have developed with the Métis Nation of Ontario and Tungasuvvingat Inuit (Pyper et al., 2018).

7. Barriers and Facilitators of Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Several barriers to Indigenous data sovereignty have been identified in the literature. These include legal barriers, knowledge and capacity barriers, and institutional barriers (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2014). Legal barriers include legislative obstacles at the federal level. The data collected by the federal government on First Nations people is regulated by the *Privacy Act* (Government of Canada, 1985b), the *Access to Information Act* (Government of Canada, 1985a), and the *Library Archives of Canada Act* (LACA). The *Access to Information Act* is particularly challenging to the OCAP® principles, since it can provide access to government information via an Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) request. Although ATIP requests can be withheld from disclosure due to certain restrictions (e.g., personal information), it would not necessarily protect aggregated data from First Nations being shared (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2014). Further, LACA mandates that all records in the control of federal departments or institutions be transferred to the Archives when the department or institution no longer uses or needs them. Once transferred to the Archives, the *Privacy Act* does not protect the privacy of personal information if the person has been deceased for more than 20 years.

In order to facilitate Indigenous data sovereignty, the First Nations Information Governance Centre (2014) identify several levers. The first is the development and enactment of legislation. For example, a privacy law that support First Nations in holding its own data could be developed. Ideally, Indigenous organizations should be the data steward. It is also important to educate government staff about Indigenous data sovereignty, its requirements, and how agreements could require amendments to meet the needs of First Nations.

Another mechanism to facilitate the implementation of data sovereignty procedures are the guidelines outlined by the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (Government of Canada, 2018). Chapter 9 of the Guidelines focus on research involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples of Canada. The chapter states that researchers must engage in appropriate community engagement. This means that the diversity among and within community must be respected and that generalized approaches to engagement must not be applied. Further, Article 9.8 states that:

> **Researchers have an obligation to become informed about, and to respect, the relevant customs and codes of research practice that apply in the community or communities affected by their research.**

It is also important to consider the international context as means to model best practices for data sovereignty in Canada. The United Nations Declarations of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) provides a guide for nation states' relationships with Indigenous peoples using a rights-based framework. It is important to note that Canada has not endorsed UNDRIP. UNDRIP states that Indigenous nations have the right to control their own data and that this data is important for the development of Indigenous priorities, needs, and interests.

In **New Zealand**, the **Māori Data Sovereignty Network (Te Mana Raraunga**) was formally developed in 2016. The Network was the result of a meeting of Māori researchers and practitioners focused on data sovereignty for Indigenous Peoples. The Networks has six main goals:

1. Asserting Māori rights and interests in relation to data.
2. Ensuring data for and about Māori can be safeguarded and protected.
3. Requiring the quality and integrity of Māori data and its collection.
4. Advocating for Māori involvement in the governance of data repositories.
5. Supporting the development of Māori data infrastructure and security systems.
6. Supporting the development of sustainable Māori digital businesses and innovations.

These goals are supported by the Te Mana Raraunga Charter.

In **Australia**, the **Maiam nayri Wingara Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty Collective** was formed in 2017. The goal of the Collective is to develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data sovereignty principles and to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategic data assets. Based upon a Summit held on Indigenous Data Sovereignty, it was asserted that in Australia, Indigenous peoples have the right to:

1. Exercise control of the data ecosystem including creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination, and infrastructure.
2. Data that is contextual and disaggregated (available and accessible at individual, community and First Nations levels).
3. Data that is relevant and empowers sustainable self-determination and effective self-governance.
4. Data structures that are accountable to Indigenous peoples and First Nations.
5. Data that is protected and respects our individual and collective interests.

In the **United States**, the **United States Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network** works to ensure that data for and about Indigenous nations and peoples in the United States are utilized to advance Indigenous aspirations for collective and wellbeing. The work largely focuses on providing research and policy advocacy to safeguard the rights and promote the interests of Indigenous nations and peoples in relation to data.

8. Conclusion

In order to decolonize data, Indigenous Peoples must have Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession® of their data. This includes the data collection process and how data is disseminated. Historically, the narrative and overall approach to Indigenous data collection has been inherently oppressive. This colonial past must be considered in all future Indigenous data acquisition in order to obtain data sovereignty (Kukutai, Taylor, 2016). Understanding how past and current research has harmed Indigenous peoples and communities is needed to understand why Indigenous data sovereignty is vital. Working to achieve Indigenous data sovereignty helps to improve the decision-making abilities and self-determination of Indigenous communities and therefore has the potential to improve the health and wellbeing of Indigenous communities. More than that, Indigenous data sovereignty also works to resist dominant colonial narratives of the superiority of western science and knowledge, strengthening the presence of and building upon Indigenous knowledges.

Appendix D: Creating an Indigenous Homelessness Database in Hamilton

Prepared by Aaron Segaert, EX Solutions Inc. with contributions from Victoria Bomberrry and Sara Mayo of the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) on behalf of the Hamilton Aboriginal Community Advisory Board

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1. Background

The goal of this report is to outline possible options to better serve the Indigenous population experiencing homelessness by creating a database containing information about Indigenous people using homelessness services in Hamilton, guided by the principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession® (OCAP https://fnigc.ca/ocap). This would allow the Indigenous community in the Hamilton area to enhance data sovereignty and more easily access and use this information and lead to improved coordination of services for Indigenous people in Hamilton experiencing homelessness.

At present, the City of Hamilton maintains a central (Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) (version 4.0) database containing information from almost all homelessness service providers in Hamilton. HIFIS is a database system developed by the Federal government and used by many cities across Canada. Although the database software was created by the Federal government, each city maintains its own independent installations of HIFIS, and the federal government does not have direct access to any individual data. The City of Hamilton is phasing in a requirement that services that it has funding agreements with to use HIFIS even if they are not federally funded (for example shelter services funded by provincial CHPI dollars). The City periodically provides summary statistics to the federal government on the people who have been entered into HIFIS and the services they have used. Summary data never includes individual information, and includes total number of people in demographic groups including those how many people identified as Indigenous, and other groups by age, gender, veteran status, newcomer status, as well as service data such as length of stay in shelter and reason for leaving shelter.

In addition to requiring participation in HIFIS, the city requires homelessness serving agencies that it has funding agreements with to use the VI-SPDAT assessment tool (Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool), and to participate in the By-Name Priority list (BNL). More information about these related initiatives is included at the end of this document.

Indigenous agencies in Hamilton have not participated in HIFIS due to the current system not being compatible with OCAP principles. Even without participation of Indigenous agencies in the City's HIFIS database, the City is already collecting information about Indigenous individuals who are accessing mainstream homelessness services in Hamilton. This brings responsibilities onto the City to work with Indigenous agencies and communities to improve the ways existing data about Indigenous individuals can be collected and managed in ways that are more compatible with OCAP. As outlined in the City's Urban Indigenous Strategy and the Coming Together to End Framework, the City has acknowledged it wants to increase partnerships and enhance its relationships with the Indigenous community.

In addition, Indigenous agencies are considering the advantages of better coordinating their own data and services to improve outcomes for individuals experiencing homelessness. Advantages to improved data coordination include:

- People not having to tell their story multiple times and reducing the resulting retraumatizing effects. This may be an especially important advantage for Indigenous individuals, given the how intergenerational trauma has impacted Indigenous communities.
- People not "falling through the cracks" and experiencing better coordination of services designed to help them.
- Empowerment of Indigenous communities to advocate for needed solutions by having access to higher quality data about Indigenous homelessness in Hamilton.

2. Collaboration with other Indigenous Communities across Canada

While this document has been developed based on the situation in Hamilton, much of the learnings are applicable to other communities. There would be benefits for partnerships between Indigenous communities to develop common solutions, such as a new Indigenous Assessment Tool, or a common Indigenous HIFIS implementation. Consultations with some Indigenous communities has shown that many are starting similar initiatives.

3. Coordination Role

Regardless of the technical solution that is selected and implemented to improve the collection, coordination and reporting of Indigenous data in Hamilton's homelessness service system, there is a need for a new staff role to be developed to coordinate policies and practices, develop and strengthen relationships, advocate for solutions, and oversee technical implementation of database options chosen. In the longer term, this role could grow into collaborating with other sectors for implementation of OCAP principles across Hamilton (for example with child welfare agencies, income security programs, health services, etc.). This role, Indigenous Data Commissioner or Coordinator, would be a senior role with an Indigenous agency, with commensurate pay. Ideally this role would be filled by a person who has both policy and front line experience, as well as technical knowledge at a high level, enough to be able to coordinate and supervise subcontractors who would do the technical tasks of implementing what ever technical options are chosen.

4. Technical Options

Some data required for better coordination of services and for Indigenous agencies to assert OCAP principles over already exists and does not need to be collected separately but can be exported from the existing database on a daily/weekly/monthly basis. Since the City of Hamilton is a willing partner, the challenge is mainly technical in nature. The most relevant questions concern how the data will be exported, what data fields will be included, and how the data will be stored. Other considerations include cost, reporting and alignment with OCAP principles.

As such, multiple options are presented below

Option 1: Simple List

Initial costs: $0

Ongoing cost: 0.5 to 1 FTE (Basic administrative skills – junior position) $30,000-$40,000/year salary

Timeframe: start right away

OCAP principles:

Ownership: Yes
Control: Yes
Access: Yes
Possession: Partial – a simple client list or "flat" database would not capture the full extent of HIFIS data. Therefore, the Indigenous community would not be in possession of the full extent of data

Security: Depends on the reliability of the administrator. The data would be stored locally in the office, so anyone with access to the physical computer could theoretically gain access. The spreadsheet or database could be password protected, which would make it more secure.

Reporting: Creating reports (e.g. tables and charts) from the data would be simple and could be handled by the administrator, as Microsoft Access and Excel have built-in functions for creating graphs and summary tables.

Description: This would essentially be a by-name list or something similar. The client information would be stored in Microsoft Access database or Excel spreadsheet, which requires only basic office skills. HIFIS can create by-name lists, however I am not sure that the data can be exported in a format that can be easily integrated into Excel or Access. It might be able to export the by-name list to Excel; in which case the task is much easier. If HIFIS does not support this functionality, the clients and their information would have to be added manually. Since there are fewer than 1000 Indigenous people using homelessness services annually, it would be tedious but not impossible to enter the client info manually.

Option 2: Negotiate OCAP principles with City of Hamilton to implement in current Hamilton HIFIS database

Option 3: HIFIS 4

Initial costs: Unknown at this moment. Will potentially include hiring a consult to setup HIFIS 4.

Ongoing cost: 1 FTE (Database administrator) - $40,000- $60,000/year salary and $500-$2000/year for cloud server

Timeframe: six months to one year to implement

OCAP principles:

Ownership: Yes
Control: Yes
Access: Yes
Possession: Yes

Security, reliability and maintenance: A cloud-based database solution is recommended, as it is far more economical than buying a server and necessary software licenses. A cloud solution is also more secure and reliable, as there is no physical computer hardware on-site which could break or be stolen, and cloud storage offers easy backup and recovery of data where the database could be permanently lost if the on-site hardware is damaged or stolen. Storage might cost a bit more for HIFIS, as it requires Microsoft Internet Information Services.

Reporting: HIFIS 4 can generate simple reports. Custom reports are available but would likely be an added cost.

Description: There are two main advantages to this approach. First, HIFIS 4 is the standard tool already in use. Second, this option would ensure the Indigenous community possesses all data related to Indigenous clients.

The main disadvantage of this option is the complexity of HIFIS 4. It is primarily a tool for day-to-day use by service providers and most software features would not be used. In addition, the database is extremely complex, with hundreds of fields, most of which would not be used.

Finally, to my knowledge, there is no built-in mechanism to export data specifically for Indigenous clients. However, HIFIS 4 uses an SQL database, so a query could be developed to obtain the data. This can be done remotely (over the Internet) by logging into Hamilton's HIFIS 4 database and executing SQL queries to obtain the data and insert it into the Indigenous community database. My understanding is this would be like migrating HIFIS data to a new install, the cost of which depends on the complexity of the data collected by the City of Hamilton.

Option 4: Custom database

Initial costs: $0 if the system is designed and setup by your database administrator OR $15,000 minimum, probably much more (if database design and setup is contracted out)

Ongoing cost: 1 FTE (Database administrator – medium experience) - $40,000- $60,000/year salary, $200-$2000/year for cloud server, and $100-$1000/year for reporting software

Timeframe: 6 months to one year to implement

OCAP principles:

Ownership: Yes
Control: Yes
Access: Yes
Possession: Yes - but to capture all data points collected by HIFIS 4 would be add to costs and complexity

Security: A cloud-based database solution is recommended, as it is far more economical than buying a server and necessary software licenses. A cloud solution is also more secure and reliable, as there is no physical computer hardware on-site which could break or be stolen, and cloud storage offers easy backup and recovery of data where the database could be permanently lost if the on-site hardware is damaged or stolen. A cloud solution could be relatively inexpensive, as reliable, professional grade free software exists for the database and operating system (e.g. Linux server running Apache and MySQL)

Reporting: There are dozens of data visualization software products available for creating tables and charts from a SQL database. These typically cost a few hundred dollars per year for the license. The administrator would be responsible for developing reports. Assuming the database is simpler than a HIFIS 4 database, this would be much easier than creating custom reports for HIFIS.

Description: This option also requires a mechanism to export data from the City of Hamilton's HIFIS 4 database into a custom database. Again, to the best of my knowledge, there is no built-in mechanism to export data specifically for Indigenous clients. An export mechanism could be constructed using SQL to obtain information from Hamilton's HIFIS 4 database.

One slight disadvantage of this option, from the OCAP perspective, is that it would probably not be feasible to fully recreate the HIFIS 4 database in all its complexity. Therefore, you might not be in possession of every bit of information collected by HIFIS. To fully capture HIFIS data would probably be better to use HIFIS and not try to reinvent the wheel.

The advantage of this approach is to avoid all the complexity of HIFIS and only get the information you want. This would make it easier to manage and be much easier for reporting purposes, as the database would be much smaller and simpler. Below is a

Considerations for Implementation

There are three key components to implementing these options:

1. Designing the database

Decisions would need to be made about how much data is to be collected. Due to the complex relational database used by HIFIS, it might not be worthwhile to pull every bit of information from the City of Hamilton database. The first step would be to obtain a list of fields collected in Hamilton, then prioritize the fields to be added to the Indigenous community database. Once the fields are settled, the cloud-based hosting service and software would be chosen, and then the database implemented.

2. Developing an export mechanism

Options 2 and 3 absolutely require an automated mechanism to get data from the City of Hamilton's HIFIS database to the Indigenous community database. Option 1 could also implement a similar mechanism, or it could be more manual in nature. The cost of creating an export mechanism on its own would be at a minimum of approximately $2000 for creating an SQL query to interface with the HIFIS database. Anything beyond pulling a flat file of client information would cost much more, as the developer would need to familiarize themselves with the HIFIS database structure, which is very complex and thus would take considerable time.

3. Reporting and use of information

This would be one of the responsibilities of the database administrator. As this database would not require much maintenance work on a day-to-day basis, the employee would spend time on the technical implementation of reports.

In addition, a legal agreement would be necessary between the City of Hamilton and the organization holding the Indigenous community data. This is beyond my area of expertise but should be straightforward.

Other related initiatives:

- **Assessment tools**: Many cities have starting to use formal assessment tools in the delivery of homelessness services. The reasons include better understanding the needs of individuals participating in services, standardizing who gets prioritized for housing services, and increasing transparency and equity within a system that does not have currently enough capacity to house all people experiencing homelessness within a community,. The Federal government's Reaching Home (RH) program now requires Housing First programs receiving mainstream RH dollars to use formal assessment tools.

  Many cities, including the City of Hamilton, are using the SPDAT (Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool) and the shorter version, the VI (Vulnerability Index)-SPDAT. The SPDAT is a conversational interview tool, which takes in the range of one hour or more to administer. The VI-SPDAT is a short survey tool that takes about 10 minutes to administer. The VI-SPDAT is a free tool, while the SPDAT is technically free but requires training from the copyright holder, Org Code. In part due to its shorter format and no cost, the VI-SPDAT is in the process of being implemented in all mainstream services (including shelters). Another reason the VI-SPDAT is being widely adopted is that the survey uses a quantitative methodology to assign an "acuity score" to each person based on their answers to the survey. High score/higher acuity individuals get prioritized for service within the City of Hamilton's By Name Priority List. In Hamilton a person's acuity score from the VI-SPAT is entered in the HIFIS database, but answers to individual questions on the VI-SPDAT are not recorded in HIFIS.

  Concerns about the VI-SPDAT have been expressed by the Indigenous Community, including that it has not included any Indigenous input into its development. The question of whether the Indigenous community should use VI-SPDAT, an "Indigenized" version of VI-SPDAT, or develop its own assessment tool(s) are not explored in this report, but will be among the many issues the Indigenous Data Coordinator will have to explore and help Indigenous agencies collectively decide on a path forward on this issue.

- City of Hamilton By-name priority list (BNL): In addition to the HIFIS database, the City of Hamilton also maintains a separate By-Name Priority List of persons high acuity (based on their VI-SPDAT score) to help determine who will be given access to limited housing allowances and aid in coordination of services for persons who have previously fallen through the cracks of the homelessness service system. Another goal of By-name priority lists is to increase the understanding of how much additional supportive housing and what types of supportive housing are needed in a community, as often a person who has high acuity has different housing needs than the type of housing more readily available.

APPENDIX A: Suggested data fields to be exported from HIFIS

a. Client info

b. Name or Unique client ID

c. Date of Birth

d. Gender

e. Citizenship

f. Indigenous indicator

g. Veteran status

h. Family role Family head ID

i. Client service use info

j. Reason for service

k. Reason for discharge

l. Book-in date

m. Book-out date

n. Service provider

o. Intervention (Housing First, Rapid Rehousing, Other intervention types)

New fields useful in an Indigenous specific database (not in HIFIS, independently collected)

APPENDIX B: Suggested minimum technical experience for the administrator position

Option 1

a. Experience with a variety of software systems, including Microsoft Office

b. Experience working with databases or management information systems is an asset

Option 2

a. Experience with a variety of software systems, including Microsoft Office

b. Experience working with databases or management information systems, particularly Microsoft IIS and SQL server

c. Experience with business intelligence software

d. Project management experience is an asset

e. Experience with HIFIS or other HMIS is an asset

Option 3

a. Experience with a variety of software systems, including Microsoft Office

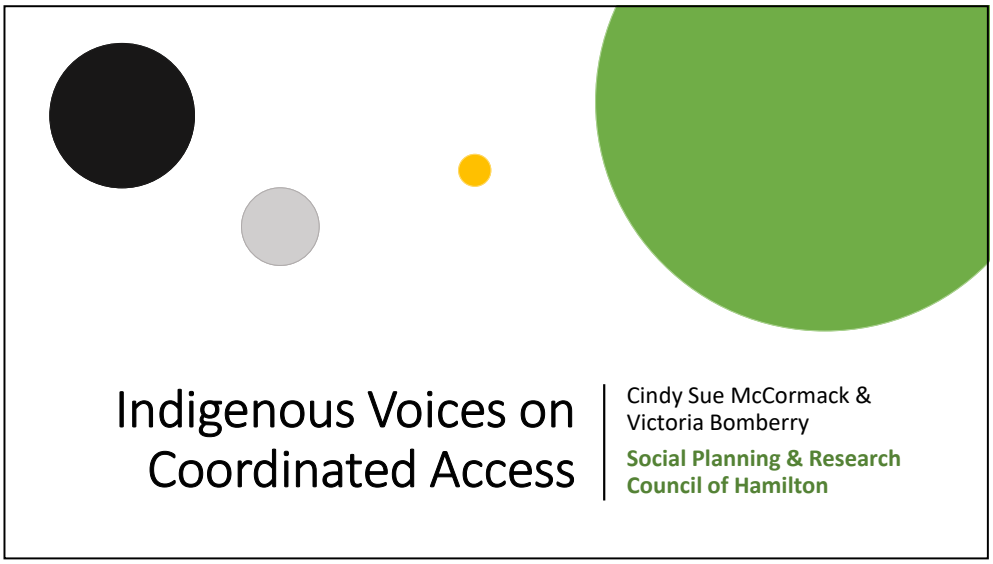
b. Experience working with databases or management information systems, particularly SQL

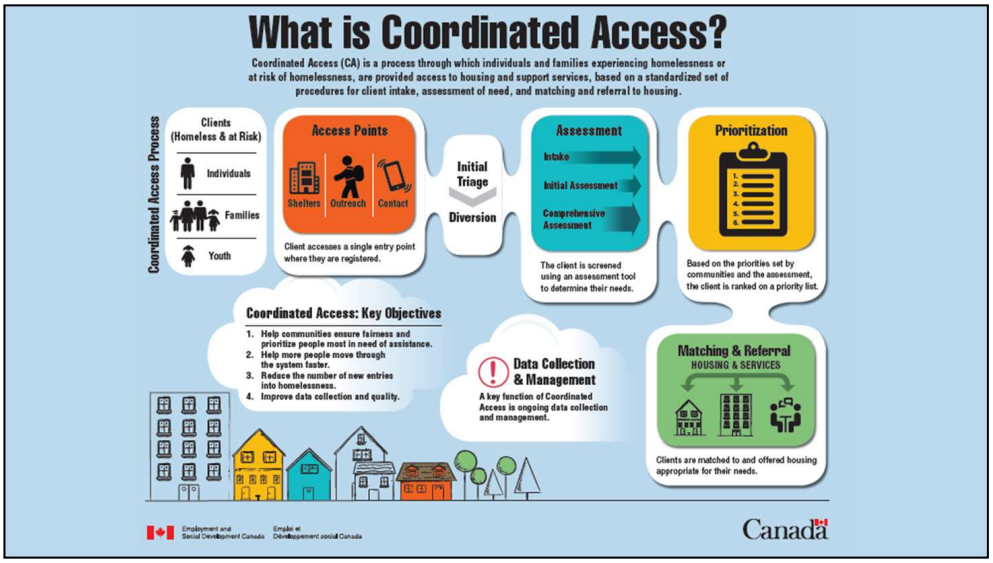
c. Experience with business intelligence software

d. Project management experience is an asset

e. Experience with HIFIS or other HMIS is an asset

Appendix E: Survey of Reaching Home - Indigenous Community Entities

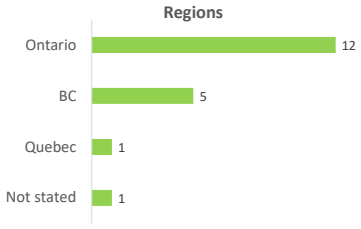


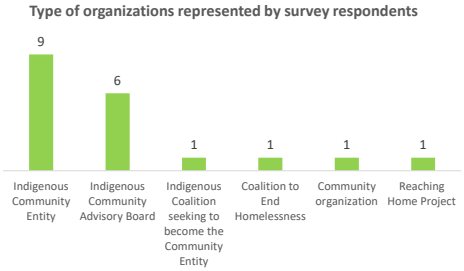


Survey overview

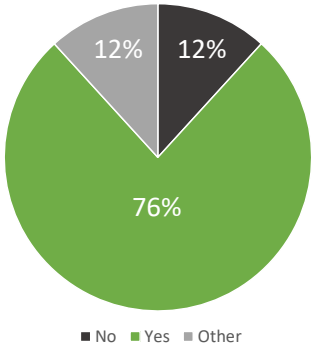
An electronic survey was sent by the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton by email to Indigenous organizations across Canada involved in Reaching Home to gain their views on Coordinated Access.

From September-October 2019, 19 respondents participated and the results are summarized in the following pages.

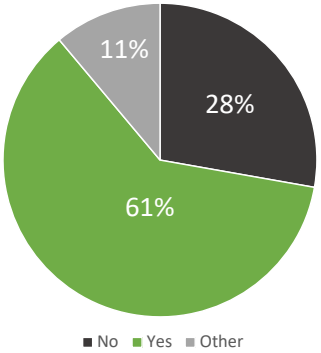




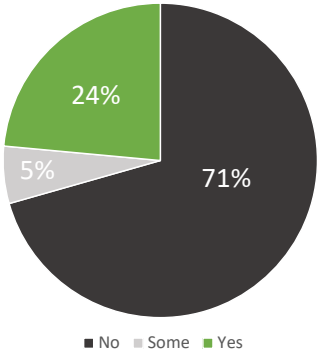
Do you feel you have a good understanding of coordinated access and how it will be implemented to address homelessness?



Has an Indigenous lead (individual or organization) been identified to guide and support the development of Coordinated Access in your community?



Are appropriate resources in place to support the participation of the Indigenous community in the development and implementation of Coordinated Access in your community?

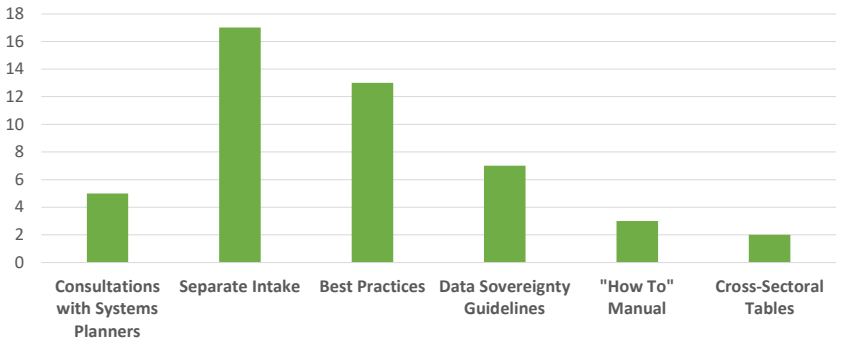


"Core funding is needed to ensure the longevity and leadership of our group at the CA tables."

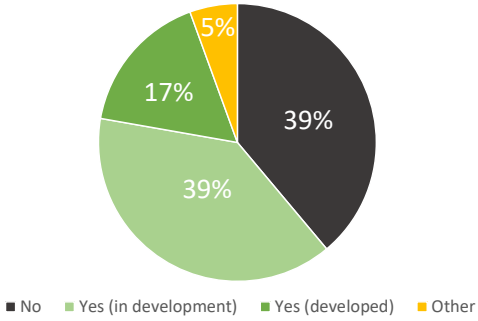
"More time/space to have dialogue with non-indigenous entities."

"Resources were inadequate to hire appropriate qualified staff …The year 1 budget may have been enough to attract better qualified candidates, but as year 2-3, and 4-5 have significant budget reductions, salary allocations have to be based on the lower year 5 budget allowances."

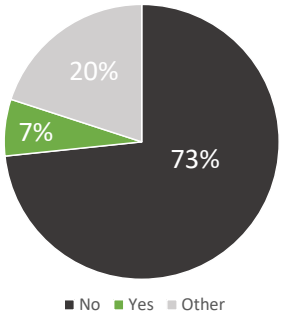
What does your Indigenous community need in order to participate in the Coordinated Access System in your region?



Has a process been developed and put to use in the Indigenous community to quickly determine if an individual at-risk or experiencing homelessness…



Does the Assessment & Referral process reflect the needs and priorities of the Indigenous community?



RESOURCES

"We have spoken with some of our **community entities that are required to undergo this work and they all report that they are being asked to undertake this extensive work with limited funding**, in fact one entity stated that they will have to reallocate funding from other pots to produce a quality product …"

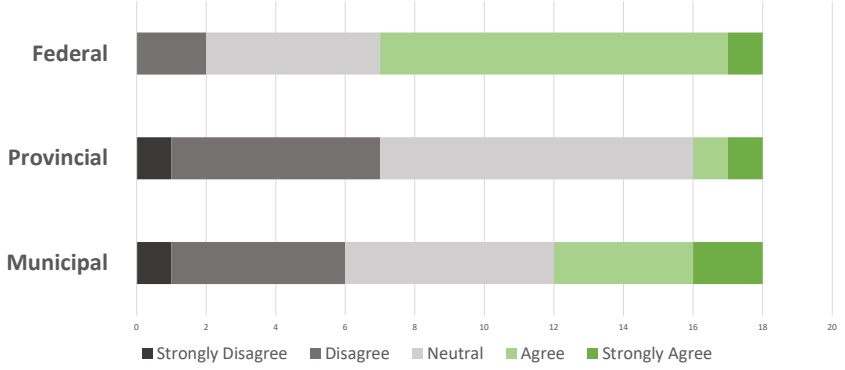
RELATIONSHIPS

"We are encouraged and supportive of the National Housing Strategy, particularly its spirit of reconciliation and self-determination, long term approaches and prioritizing Indigenous, chronic homeless and women. "

"Ending Indigenous homelessness is about relationship first and ongoing – it's different than western models of support."

RELATIONSHIPS: GOVERNMENT

The Indigenous community I work with has a strong and trusting relationship with…



RELATIONSHIPS: COMMENTS

"Development of memorandum of understanding with the [Municipal] housing office."

The Federal government appears to be making and effort to respond."

"Municipal - the Mayor has been a champion for our organization and is supportive of and call for increased focus on Indigenous led solutions, not only to homelessness in our city but decolonized harm reduction practice."

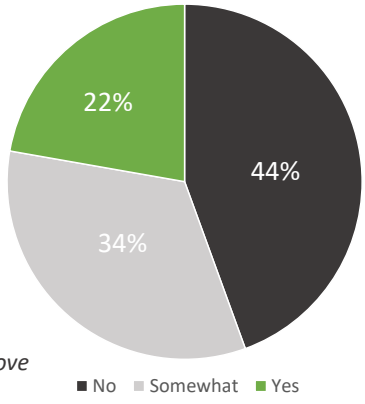
"The municipal, provincial and federal governments need to be less colonial in their need for control of systems and allow the Indigenous community to design, implement and manage coordinated access for our own communities without have to assimilate into theirs."

Do you feel mainstream organizations/stakeholders in your community support Indigenous-led solutions to addressing Indigenous homelessness?

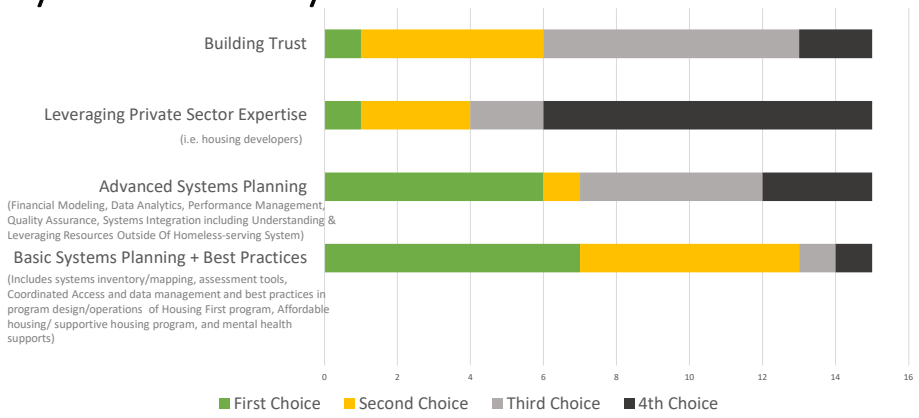
"I have started to work with the Region in regard to coordinated access however, more Indigenous voices are needed to sit at the decision-making tables."

"…Push the mainstream sector to include and fund Coordinated Access in Indigenous agencies, not just with a database, but with resources to support community members where they are....ie. navigator in agencies."

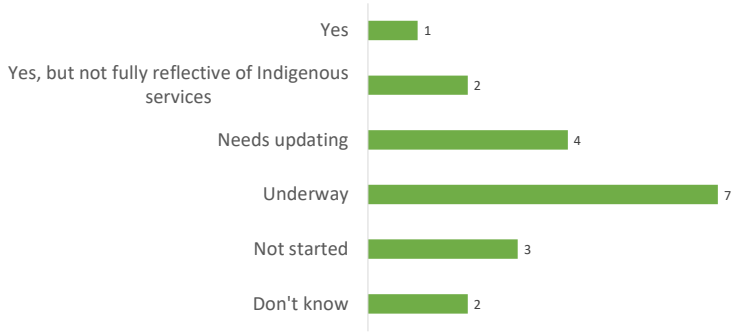
"We often feel like we need to debate our views and prove that our experiences are relevant."



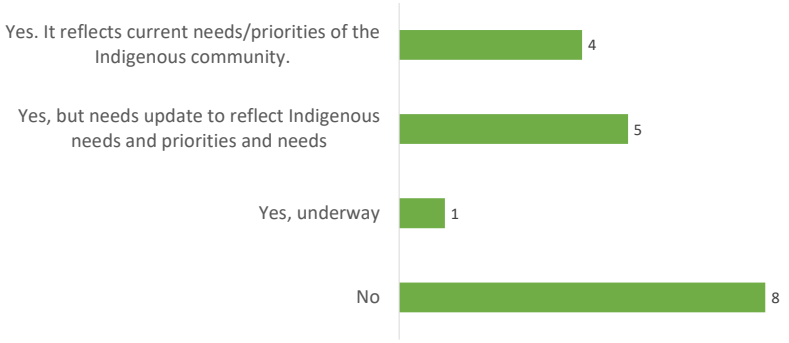
What areas of capacity building are needed in your community?



Is there an up-to-date inventory or "Systems Map" available in your community that outlines programs/services, their funding sources, capacity/occupancy and is relevant to Indigenous homelessness?



Has a work plan with clear deliverables, timelines, and accountabilities been established in your community for Coordinated Access?



ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

"Leaning towards the necessity for an Indigenous CE and CAB in our region."

"Service Canada has not properly worked with communities in building capacity to undertake the expected work of coordinated access."

"Not enough Indigenous resources to implement coordinated access, culturally appropriate intake/assessment tools, Indigenized database, relationship with mainstream organizations."

"Although we continually discuss issues that contribute to homelessness, the need for geared-to-income housing seems to be very low on the priority scale of all 3 levels of Government"

"I fear the further marginalization of our people and not the bigger view of how child welfare, lack of justice, education/employment health are not viewed in this parameter. Homelessness is the symptom, of the colonial violence against our people with tools of oppression in the above noted areas."