



# From House to Home:



# Safe Spaces for Us



By Cheryl Starr  
Anna McKinnon  
Sarah Cooper



## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our Knowledge Keeper Kathy Mallett and our Steering Committee for their knowledge, guidance and support throughout this project.

Most of all we would like to thank the Interviewees and Survey Participants for sharing their experience and stories with us.

This research was made possible with funding by the Community Housing Transformation Centre's Community Based Tenant Initiative.

We acknowledge that we are on Treaty one territory, the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

We acknowledge that our water comes from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation.

## About the Authors:

Cheryl Starr is an Indigenous woman from Sagkeeng First Nation and is the Coordinator of the Indigenous Input in Local Housing Project.

Sarah Cooper is an Assistant Professor of City Planning at the University of Manitoba.

Anna McKinnon is a Masters student in the Department of City Planning at the University of Manitoba.

## Photos provided by:

Kathy Mallett

Cheryl Starr

Brent Spotted Eagle

Egaowakii

\*Photos have been altered

© Copyright 2022



# Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Context	6
History of Spence	6
Demographics	8
Income	9
Housing in Spence	10
Social housing and rooming houses	12
Methodology	12
Interviews	13
Surveys	14
Indigenous Housing Experience Survey	14
Service Provider Survey	15
Findings	15
Reasons for moving	15
Employment	16
Education	16
Medical	17
Experiences of the move	18
Family	18
Finding home	19
Indigenous representation in the West End	21
A new context	22
Resources	23
Barriers to finding good housing	26
References and identification	28
Money	28
Racism, bias and stereotyping	30
Conclusion	31
Recommendations	32
Resources to plan your move	33
Security deposits	33
Accessing housing	34
Address stereotypes, bias and racism	34
Indigenous representation in West End area and organizations	35
Next Steps	36
References	37



## Executive Summary

The topic of Indigenous mobilization has resulted in decades of studies that show that little has been done to address why Indigenous people are choosing to relocate to urban areas, the continued marginalization of Indigenous people, and the effects of that marginalization and how it lends itself to the complex services needs of Indigenous people when looking for and securing housing in the City of Winnipeg.

Spence Neighbourhood Association provides wraparound support and programming for the underserved inner-city community of Spence. Through information informally and formally collected by our housing department and community partners, we have consistently seen the effects of misinformation or lack of information leading to failed attempts in acquiring safe and reliable housing for Indigenous people moving from their home communities to Winnipeg. In the summer of 2021 Spence Neighbourhood received funding from the Community-based Tenant Initiative (CBTI) to conduct a Participatory Research Project focused on identifying gaps in service for Indigenous people who are transitioning from their home communities to living in the city.

This report finds that Indigenous people move to the city for new employment and educational opportunities, as well as for medical reasons. It also finds that Indigenous people's experience of the transition vary significantly depending on whether they already have family connections in the city. Navigating a new context is made easier with family support. Not only must Indigenous people moving to the city navigate new systems for jobs, transportation, resources, and housing, but they must do so in a new system that often does not recognize or support Indigenous ways of doing things. For this reason, many interviewees and survey respondents highlighted the importance of increasing Indigenous visibility and representation in Winnipeg's West End. This could include places and opportunities for ceremonies and gatherings, as well as businesses, organizations and housing resources that are led by Indigenous people.

The report concludes with recommendations to address these gaps and barriers. In the next phase of the project, the findings from this report will be used to develop community-led and managed resources and tools, particularly in relation to good quality housing.

## Introduction

Housing is a basic need. Good quality, safe housing allows people to raise families, pursue their goals, take care of their health, and build community. For First Nation, Métis and Inuit people moving to Winnipeg, finding housing is often a first priority. However, there are also many challenges and barriers to finding good quality housing.

In 2005, the Eagle Urban Transition Centre (EUTC) was established in recognition of the barriers that Indigenous people moving to Winnipeg were experiencing. The EUTC primarily provides referrals for housing and medical services, in addition to offering employment training, and assistance in accessing identification documents (Brandon & Peters, 2014). Likewise, Tunngasugit Inuit Resource Centre provides services and resources to the Inuit community in Winnipeg, including transition services as people move to southern Canada (Tunngasugit Inc., 2021).

Past research on the topic of urban Indigenous experiences highlights ongoing disparities in access to essential services such as education, employment, housing, and medical care as major reasons that people move to the city from their home community. Those who move to the city for the first time may lack experience in many aspects of urban living such as navigating the housing market, accessing tax information, securing credit checks, applying for social assistance, and using public transportation. While services exist to assist with many of these tasks, service providers and those with lived experience of relocating to the city have indicated that many Indigenous people are unaware of where to access the transition services they require (Distasio et al, 2004; Snyder et al, 2015). The legacy of colonialism, poverty, discrimination, and a lack of affordable and suitable housing options are additional structural barriers that impact people's experiences upon arriving in the city (Brandon & Peters, 2014; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019).

In 2021, the Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) identified the need for additional transition supports for Indigenous people moving to the neighbourhood, especially in relation to housing. This report is the first step in addressing this need: through surveys and interviews with local organizations and community members who moved to Winnipeg since 2011, it identifies the challenges and opportunities that Indigenous people experience as they move to

the city. It lays the groundwork for the next step. This next step is to develop community-led and managed resources and tools, particularly in relation to good quality housing, to support Indigenous people as they move to Spence neighbourhood.

In this report, we have chosen to use the term “Indigenous” to represent all groups - First Nations, Status, Non-Status, Inuit and Métis. Indigenous, in this case, means originating in a particular place or land. First Nations have lived on these lands since time immemorial, and these lands are also the homeland of the Métis Nation. We have chosen not to use the term “migration” or “migrant”, in recognition that these are the Traditional Territories of the people of these nations, and their ancestors are of this land since time immemorial. While not all Indigenous people in Winnipeg are living on their ancestral lands—some may have come from northern Manitoba or Nunavut, for example—and while many have lived in the city for generations, all have distinct rights as Indigenous people (United Nations, 2007).

The report begins with an overview of Spence neighbourhood to highlight the historical and demographic factors that shape housing in the community. It then describes the methods used in the research before diving into the findings. The findings illustrate the opportunities and challenges faced by Indigenous people as they move to the city from the perspectives of both individuals with lived experience and local organizations. Finally it concludes with some analysis and recommendations to improve the transition experience.

### **Further reading about Indigenous experiences in moving to urban centres**

*Moving to the City: Housing and Aboriginal Migration to Winnipeg.* Josh Brandon, & Evelyn Peters. Available at [policyalternatives.ca](http://policyalternatives.ca)

*Displacement, Housing and Homelessness in Northern Manitoba Communities.* C. LeeAnn Deegan & Marleny Bonnycastle. Available at [policyalternatives.ca](http://policyalternatives.ca)

*Reclaiming Power and Place: The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.* National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Available at [www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report](http://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report)



## Context

Great diversity in incomes and culture exist across the five neighbourhoods that make up Winnipeg's West End area. Of the five neighbourhoods, Spence is the most economically disadvantaged, with the highest rate of households living in poverty and core housing need. Moving west from Spence, median household income levels rise to be almost on par with the city of Winnipeg in Minto and Sargent Park (Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2016a; 2016b), and levels of core housing need decline (Manitoba Community Data Portal & Statistics Canada, 2019). Cultural differences also exist throughout the five neighbourhoods, with the largest concentration of Indigenous residents living in and around Spence neighbourhood. Service providers in the West End are concentrated most heavily within and around Spence, where the need for services is greatest. Given these factors, we have chosen to focus on Spence for the purposes of this report while recognizing that people's lives often are connected to amenities, services, and community ties that extend beyond Spence's boundaries into the other West End neighbourhoods.

## History of Spence

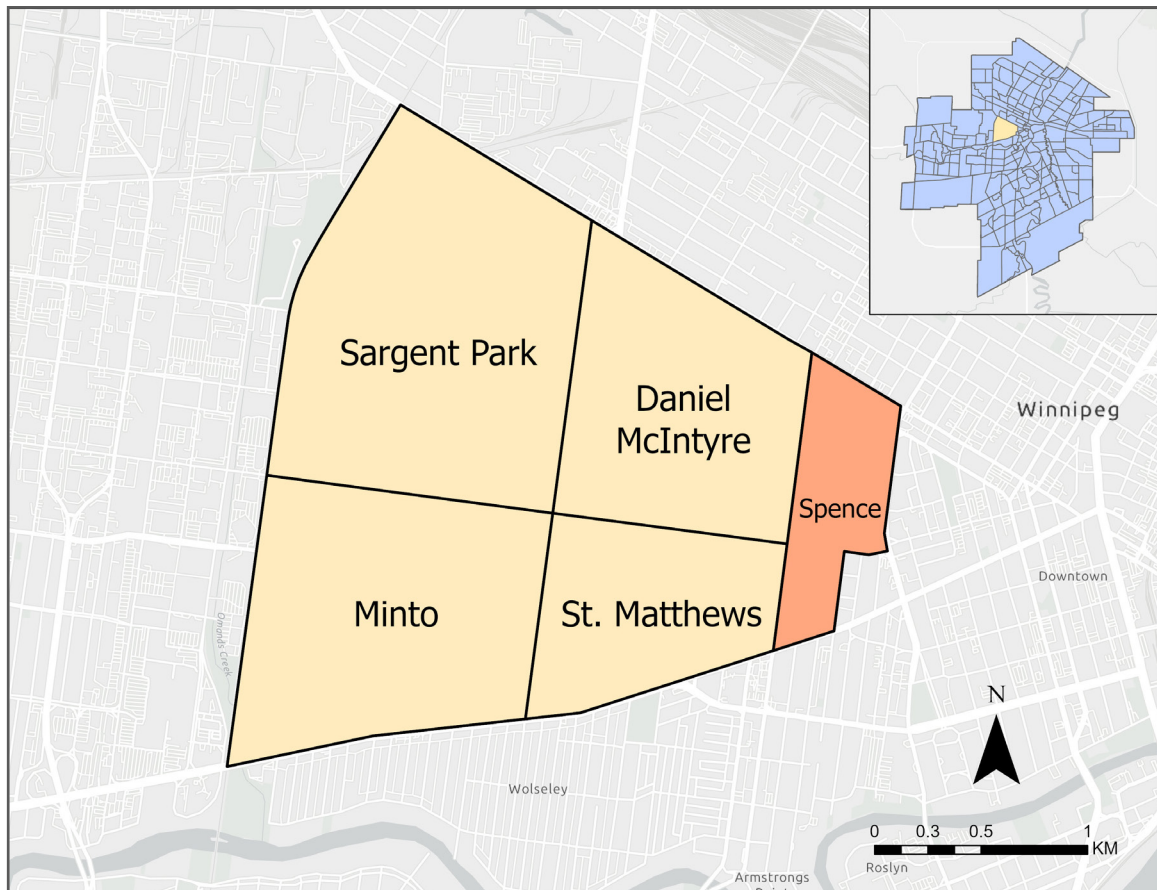
Spence neighbourhood is located on Anishnaabe, Nehiyawak, Dakota, Nakota, and Dene lands, and the homeland of the Manitoba Métis nation. Spence has long been home to a large Indigenous community, and it is said that it was the willingness of the local Indigenous population to share their winter survival skills with settlers that led to the original settlement of the area (Toews, 2010). Much of the housing in the neighbourhood was built in the first decade of the 20th century, as working-class European immigrants settled in the area (Toews, 2010). Later in the 20th century, Spence became home to many Indigenous people moving to the city for the first time. During the 1940s and 1950s, the blocks of Young, Spence, and Furby Street north of Portage Avenue were where many people transitioning to life in the city found housing (Toews, 2018). Today, more than a quarter of neighbourhood residents are Indigenous (Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2016c).

As an inner-city community, Spence's history is connected to the broader changes that took place in Winnipeg's core during the later half of the 20th century. As Winnipeg's suburban neighbourhoods grew, central neighbourhoods saw a large decline in population as people moved outwards to the newly developed suburbs. In



Spence from 1971 to 2001, the population declined from 6,230 to 3,750 people, a decline of 39.8 percent (Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2016c). The migration of people from the inner city to the suburbs coincided with deteriorating housing conditions, as owners chose to let their properties fall into disarray rather than renovate as property values declined (Toews, 2010). There was a change in housing tenure from ownership to rental, and a growth in poverty levels through the 1980s and 1990s. Indigenous poverty was particularly high in Spence, with 9 out of 10 Indigenous households living below the low-income cut off in 1996 (Toews, 2010). This era also saw many single-family homes converted into rooming houses, which remain an important housing fixture in Spence into the present day (Maunder & Burley, 2008).

In the 1990s, community members in Spence began to organize to address concerns around housing and safety in the neighbourhood. The Bear Clan, an Indigenous-led community patrol group, began walking in the West End in the 1990s to address safety concerns in the area. The Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) also has its origins in this era, as community members came together



**Figure 1: Map of West End Neighbourhoods (City of Winnipeg, 2022; created in ArcGIS)**

to improve housing conditions in the neighbourhood. Today, SNA offers programming spanning a wide variety of areas including community economic development, increasing employment, improving access to food and green spaces, and continuing to address housing concerns in the neighbourhood (SNA, 2016).

### Demographics

As of 2016, Spence was home to 4,415 people. The neighbourhood has a young population, with more youth under the age of 29 and

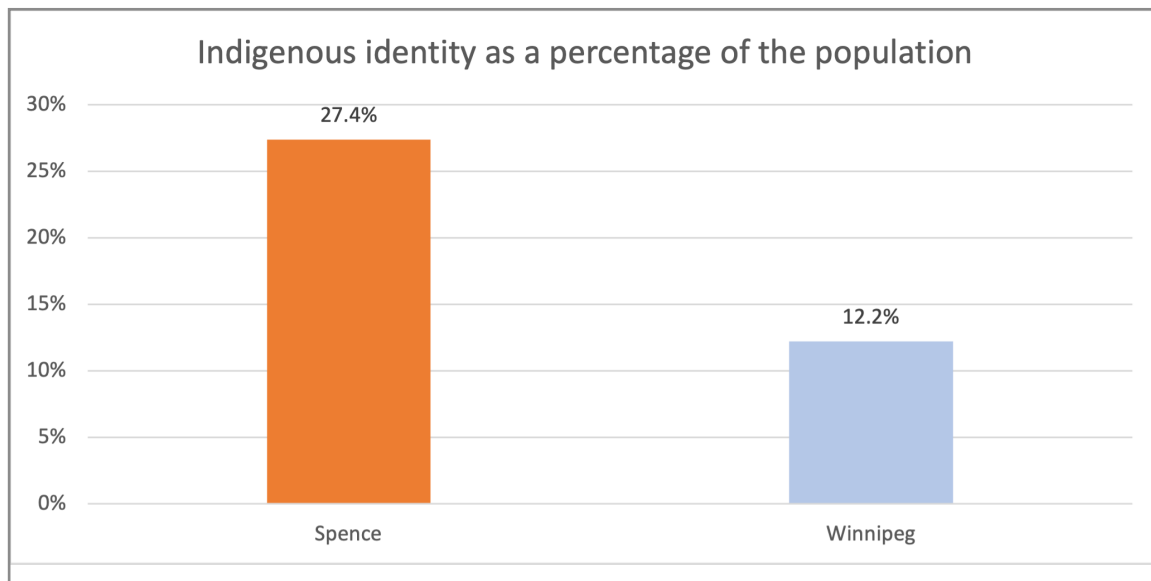


Figure 2. Indigenous identity as a percentage of the population (Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2016c).

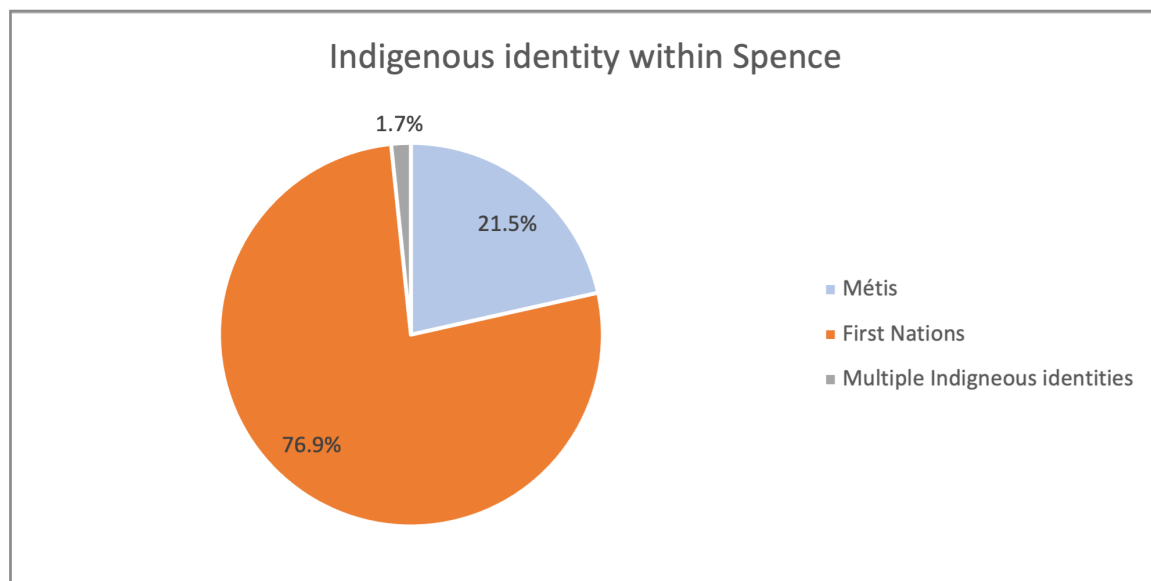


Figure 3. Indigenous identity within Spence (Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2016c).

fewer senior citizens relative to the rest of the city (Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2016c).

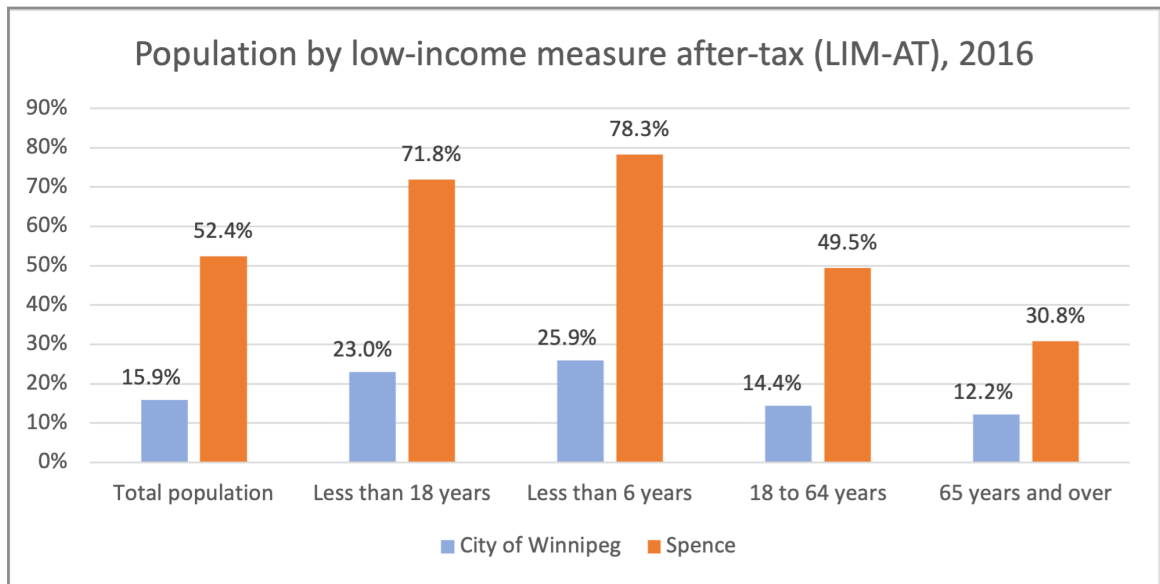
Spence has long been a neighbourhood where newcomers to Canada choose to settle, something that remains true today. As of 2016:

- 38.8 percent of residents in Spence knew languages other than English or French
- 41 percent of residents were born outside of Canada
- 16.2 percent of residents had immigrated to Canada between 2011 to 2016 (Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2016c).

The 2016 Census found that 27.4 percent of residents in Spence are Indigenous. Of those who are Indigenous 76.9 percent are First Nations (Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2016c). Although the Census did not count any Inuit living in Spence neighbourhood, the nearby presence of Tunngasugit Inuit Resource Centre indicates an Inuit presence that is not reflected in census data.

### Income

Poverty has long been a significant challenge in Spence. As of 2016, the median household income in the neighbourhood was \$29,675 per household, less than half that of the city median of \$68,331 (Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2016c). The after-tax low-income measure (LIM-AT) counts the number of residents with 50 percent or less of the median household income for the area, adjusting for household size (Statistics Canada, 2016). As indicated



**Figure 4: Population by low-income measure after-tax, 2016 (Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2016c).**

in Figure 4, more than half of residents living in Spence are low-income using the LIM-AT indicator, and nearly 75 percent of youth and children under the age of 18 are living in low-income households. It should be noted that census data does not include those who do not have a fixed residence in the area. This means that census numbers do not capture information about those who are experiencing the most severe forms of poverty, such as those who are unhoused or experiencing hidden homelessness.

## **Housing in Spence**

Housing has long been recognized by residents in Spence as a critical issue (SNA, 2016). The neighbourhood is home to a diverse array of housing types, and although single-detached housing takes up the bulk of the landmass, 49.5 percent of housing units in the neighbourhood are in apartment buildings less than five storeys high (Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2016c). This style of housing reflects the era in which it was built, and while the age of Spence's housing stock offers it much of its character, it also presents serious challenges for maintenance. 55 percent of the housing was built prior to the 1960s, and the 2016 census indicates that 12.2 percent of dwellings in the area need major repairs (Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2016c).

As of 2016, 82.5 percent of Spence residents rented, compared to 35.1 percent across Winnipeg as a whole (Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2016c). This high proportion of renters coupled with the large number of low-income households living in Spence means that housing affordability is a major concern in the neighbourhood.

Core housing need is the measure commonly used to assess whether housing is meeting a community's needs. Households are deemed to be in core housing need if their housing needs major repairs, if they are spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs, or if their household has too many occupants for the number of bedrooms as per the National Occupancy Standards (Statistics Canada, 2017b). Living in housing need is associated with a host of negative social and health implications. As more of a household's budget is spent on housing costs, it is more likely that spending on other necessities such as food, utilities, transportation, or clothing costs will be reduced. Overcrowding is also known to put strain on familial relationships, as well as negatively impact education, childhood development, and physical and emotional health (Reynolds & Robinson, 2015).

Households in Spence experience core housing need at a much higher rate relative to the rest of Winnipeg. In 2016, 40.5 percent of households in Spence were living in core housing need, compared with 12.8 percent for the City of Winnipeg as a whole (CMHC, 2022). Core housing need disproportionately impacts Indigenous households in Spence, with 52.9 percent of Indigenous households living in core housing need, compared with 35.8 percent of non-Indigenous households (CMHC, 2022).

A further housing challenge in Spence has been the rising cost of rent and property values. While still lower than the city averages, both are rising more quickly in Spence than in the rest of the city. From 2010 to 2019, median rents in Spence increased by 36.5 percent, from \$534 to \$729 per month, compared with an increase of 29.6 percent for the city as a whole, from \$731 to \$947 per month (CMHC, 2022). Likewise, between 2006 and 2016, property values increased by 86.1 percent in Spence, compared with 67.3 percent in Winnipeg. Average property values increased from \$98,899 to \$184,011 in Spence, and from \$189,847 to \$317,516 in Winnipeg (Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2006; 2016c). There are zero neighbourhoods in Winnipeg in which a full-time, minimum-wage worker can afford an average one-bedroom apartment (Macdonald, 2019).

While housing affordability is a growing challenge across the city, the relatively low incomes of residents in Spence means that they have less ability to absorb these increases. Concern that residents are being pushed out of the neighbourhood for financial reasons was a challenge highlighted in the housing consultations for Spence’s most recent 5-year neighbourhood plan (SNA, 2016).

**Table 1: Median Rent**

	Spence	Winnipeg
2010	\$534	\$731
2019	\$729	\$947
% increase	36.5%	29.6%

Source: CMHC, 2022.

**Table 2: Property Values**

	Spence	Winnipeg
2006	\$98,899	\$189,847
2016	\$184,011	\$317,516
% increase	86.1%	67.3%

Source: Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg, 2006; 2016.

## **Social housing and rooming houses**

Finding housing is further complicated by an ongoing lack of affordable housing options both in Winnipeg and in other urban centres around Manitoba. While most low-income households find housing in the private market, two low-cost options are social housing and rooming houses. However, the amount of social and rooming housing is decreasing in Winnipeg, and the situation appears poised to become worse in the coming years unless there is substantial reinvestment in housing across all levels of government.

Social housing includes public housing as well as subsidized non-profit and co-operative housing. From 2016-2019, 94 Manitoba Housing properties were sold off by the provincial government (Grabish, 2019). The waitlist for social housing units remains substantial, with the most recent number offered by the government indicating that 4,600 people are waiting for Manitoba Housing units (Froese, 2021). There are also significant challenges ahead for non-profit and co-operative housing providers in Manitoba. The federal operating agreements that have allowed housing providers to offer Rent Geared to Income (RGI) rates for tenants are set to expire in the coming years and may lead to a loss of subsidized units (Cooper, 2018).

While rooming houses have long been an important form of low-cost housing in Spence, the number of rooming houses in operation has dropped dramatically over the past 20 years. Spence has one of the largest concentrations of rooming houses in the city, with a 2014 survey identifying 112 possible and confirmed rooming houses in the neighbourhood. While this number represents a substantial 1081 housing units, it also represents an estimated 40 percent decrease, or loss of 580 units in the neighbourhood since 2002 (Kaufman & Distasio, 2015). The causes of these losses are complex and are attributed by the authors of the study to a range of factors including “market conditions, an aging housing stock, potential gentrification, community renewal efforts, and rooming house fires” (Kaufman & Distasio, 2015, p11). Given the importance of rooming houses as a low-income housing option in Spence, SNA has been working to improve rooming house conditions in terms of maintenance, safety, and building stronger landlord-tenant relationships (SNA, 2016).

## **Methodology**

Given this project’s focus on Indigenous experiences of mobility and transition, it was important that it be Indigenous-led. With the funding from CMHC’s Community-based Tenant Initiative, a



project coordinator was hired, an Indigenous woman from Sagkeeng First Nation. The first step was to bring in an Indigenous Elder or Knowledge Keeper to guide the project in a good way—Mino-Bimaaduziwin. In August 2021, tobacco was passed to Knowledge Keeper Kathy Mallett. Kathy accepted the tobacco and committed to being the guiding Knowledge Keeper for the project. Kathy has a background in housing and research which made her the perfect fit for this project.

In addition, Indigenous community members were invited to sit on a steering committee to guide the project and support the project coordinator. The steering committee is made up of six Indigenous community members, including the Knowledge Keeper, who bring a diversity of experiences and knowledges of the communities in the West End and Winnipeg.

We hosted our first Steering Committee meeting in September 2021, and met monthly for the duration of this phase of the project. The Steering Committee took part in every aspect of the project. It participated in developing the interview questions as well as developing the questions for both the Indigenous Housing Experience and Service Provider surveys. Once the interviews and surveys were completed and the data was compiled, the Committee met at a special strategic planning meeting to make recommendations based on the data collected.

In addition to the steering committee this project was supported by Sarah Cooper, assistant professor of City Planning at the University of Manitoba and research assistant Anna McKinnon. Anna and Sarah provided background research, including the literature review and context section, and contributed to the writing of the final report.

Data was collected through two rounds of interviews with Indigenous people who had moved to Winnipeg between 2011 and 2021, and through surveys distributed to the Spence community and services providers in the West End.

## **Interviews**

The interview questions were developed using a strength-based and trauma-informed approach. The Steering Committee wanted to focus on hearing the positive experiences people had, rather than focusing on the negative experiences. Therefore questions were open-ended and posed to allow participants to speak freely about their experiences.



The Committee determined that we would interview 25 people living in Winnipeg that had transitioned to living in the city from their home community in the past 11 years for the research study. The time frame for our research was determined by the completion dates of previous studies done on this topic as not to overlap and to provide an updated reflection of issues and general evaluation of services for Indigenous people transitioning to living in the City of Winnipeg. A general call-out for community participation was made on our social media and through posters posted throughout the community and community organizations.

Participants were given the choice to participate either in-person, over the phone, or via Zoom. For the most part participants preferred to have in-person or phone interviews, as many people did not have access to a computer or internet to support online interviews. The first interviews were carried out in person during the months of October and November 2021 while COVID health regulations were lessened. In December, we moved to conducting interviews via phone due to the reinstatement of COVID health regulations.

The first round of interviews showed us we needed to add more questions about locating and accessing resources and organizational support, as well as how long people were searching before securing housing. It was decided that we would interview an additional 10 people. The second round of interviews were carried out throughout the month of February 2022.

In the end, a total of 37 people were interviewed. Of the 37 people interviewed: 28 (76%) identified as Status, 4 (10%) identified as Inuit, 3 (8%) identified as Métis and 2 (5%) identified as Non-Status. The age of interviewees ranged from age 20 to age 65. While we heard from a diverse group of individuals, their experiences did not differ based on age, gender or Indigenous identity.

## **Surveys**

### **Indigenous Housing Experience Survey**

To add to and validate the information collected from our interviews, in January 2022 we conducted an Indigenous Housing Experience Survey for Indigenous people living in the West End. The survey was offered online through Survey Monkey and was shared through our social media. The survey consisted of 16 questions pertaining to people's general experience when looking for housing in the Spence area. 74 people took part in the survey, 43 of whom said they lived in the West End. The responses from the 31 people who

lived outside of the West End were disqualified as we were looking for experiences specific to the Spence neighbourhood. Some of the questions included in the survey were:

- How would you rate your overall experience when looking for housing?
- What are some of the barriers you experienced?
- Did you seek help from a community organization to assist you with your housing search?
- Are there any supports related to housing that you would find helpful that do not currently exist?

Of the 43 people who participated in the survey, 75 percent identified as Status, 8 percent identified as Non-status and 8 percent identified as Métis. None identified as Inuit.

### **Service Provider Survey**

We also developed a survey for service providers to gain insight into what resource needs organizations were seeing in terms of Indigenous mobility. The service provider survey was launched at the beginning of January 2022 and ran until the end of January. It was sent to organizations and agencies located in the West End. The purpose of the survey was to identify what housing services were offered in the West End, if Indigenous people who are transitioning to living in Winnipeg are accessing the services, and if housing services have changed over the past 10 years. Of the 24 organizations that took part in the survey, 10 offer housing services, with 4 organizations specifically offering services for Indigenous people transitioning to living in Winnipeg.

## **Findings**

### **Reasons for moving**

While the reasons individuals choose to move to urban centres are diverse, family, education, and employment have been identified in several studies as the most common reasons that individuals decide to move (Distasio et al., 2004; Environics Institute, 2010). Housing and health care are also noted as reasons people decided to move to the city (Distasio et al., 2004; Anderson, A., 2013).

In this study, the top reasons identified in both the interviews and surveys for moving to an urban setting were: employment, education, family, medical and better housing opportunities.

## Employment

Over one third of the interviewees identified employment as the primary reason they chose to move to the city. However, the majority of interviewees did not have employment lined up before arrival, rather they came seeking employment. As one interviewee noted, there were few opportunities in their home community, and even if they had wanted to stay it would have been difficult to support their family:

*“There’s not much job opportunity here. Only opportunity to do seasonal stuff, building sometimes. Here in the reserve. You don’t, you can’t go any further than how you get paid. Teachers, counselors, working for the store, band office. There’s work at the airport. There are very limited positions to even stay to support the community. So there’s limited jobs.”*

Moving to the city offered more opportunities for employment as well as new kinds of job opportunities.

## Education

Education was also at the top of the list of reasons individuals choose to move to the city. Many of the interviewees talked about the importance of education for themselves or for their children. Some people moved to attend university, while others moved with their children to ensure that their children got a good education. One participant described how her mother saw moving to the city as a

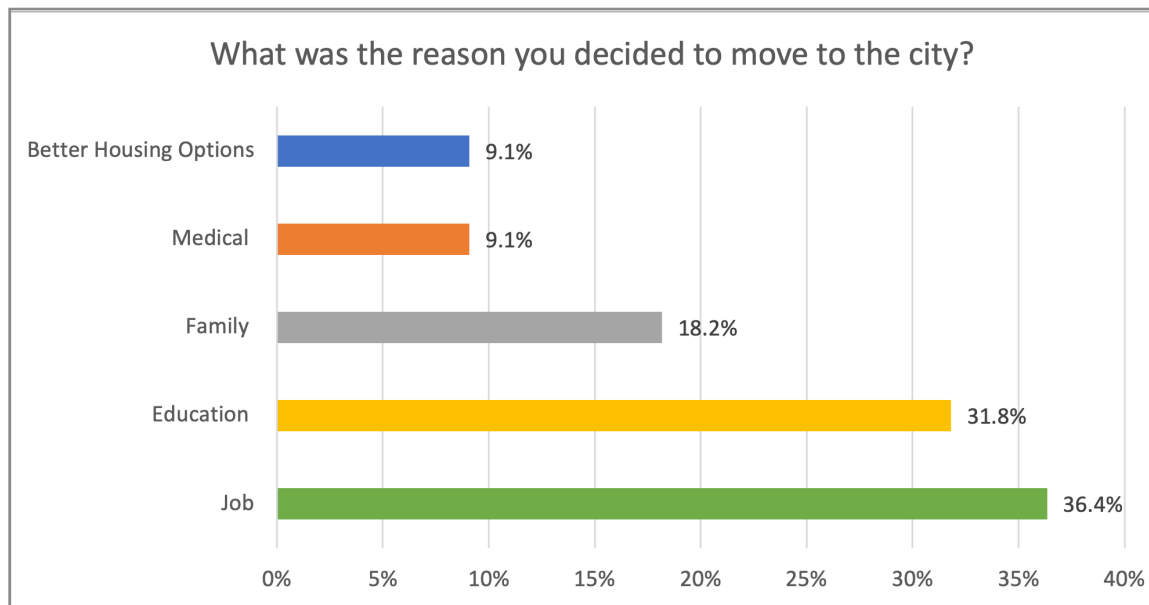


Figure 5: Interviewees’ reasons for moving to the city.

way to increase opportunities for her and her siblings, as well as to break the cycle of poverty caused by residential schools and forced relocation:

*“The reason we left the reserve was for education, because at the time in our community there wasn’t any teachers coming in, and like the water would shut off and stuff. So school was canceled. You couldn’t have school in the community. And my mom didn’t want us to go through that, not have an education we should have. I don’t think she planned ahead. It was probably only a month or so before she was like, okay, we’re going to the city. She was hoping that we would sort of, um, make something of ourselves, like being able to break past everything that was put on us, because of what our community went through, like, relocation from the government of Canada. My mom went to day schools, and my nana went to residential school. So it was really just like—you’re not going to make anything of yourself here. She just really wanted us to go to school. So moving out here she was—okay, you will regularly be going to school because like they won’t be canceling school every day now, so I know it’s a lot, we have to, I have to let you guys know you have the opportunity to make and to do something.”*

As with employment, interviewees said that moving to the city for education was a way to increase opportunities not just for themselves but also for their children.

## **Medical**

While medical care is on the list of reasons individuals are coming to live in the city, it is not necessarily by choice. A past study found that a lack of on-reserve medical services was a primary reason Indigenous seniors are required to move to the city, despite a preference for being able to age in place in their home community (Lange et al. 2010). Many individuals come to the city for specialized or emergency services and end up being stuck in the city due to the need for continued care. As one interviewee noted,

*“Well, actually, we had to come to the hospital and we were here for a while. And I never went home after that.”*

In some cases, interviewees lost their housing on reserve because they have been in the city for so long receiving treatment or care. As

a result, they have to stay in the city, as they no longer have housing to return to.

*“We didn’t decide. We had to be here for medical reasons. So we couldn’t leave, we couldn’t go back at that time. It was already too late to go back because our house was already gone. They took it from us, the band, probably gave it to another family. Because we were stuck out here. They asked first, of course. We said, yes, because we knew we were going to be stuck out here for a long long time. That was seven years ago.”*

The loss of housing in a First Nation while a family is in the city highlights the need for better on-reserve healthcare and housing policy: a lack of housing on-reserve has been identified as a major reason for moving to urban centres, as well as a barrier to moving home again (Nellas, 2021).

Previous research has also identified the need for short-term housing available to those who are in the city for brief medical stays. A lack of short-term housing options may mean that people may end up breaking a lease, or abandoning a suite due to lack of other options once their care is complete and they are returning home, negatively impacting their tenancy record and ability to rent in the future (Brandon & Peters, 2014).

## **Experiences of the move**

### **Family**

The subject of family identified an interesting trend. Through the interviews, we identified that there were two different groups of people moving from their home community to the city: individuals that already had family members living in the city, and individuals that did not have family members living in the city. The family connections individuals had in the city shaped their experience of the move.

The individuals who already had family living in the city found their transition somewhat easier than those who did not. They had a place to stay while they looked for housing, had help finding available resources, and were able to secure housing in a shorter amount of time.

*“We were lucky enough to have family here, so we were able to stay with them while we looked for a place*

*to live. So we were able to find an apartment kind of quickly, like within a month. So, pretty quickly.”*

On the other hand, the individuals who did not already have family support in Winnipeg experienced greater struggles in transitioning to living in the city. Many had to access shelters while they looked for housing, had a harder time finding resources, spent a much longer amount of time securing housing, and experienced depression and isolation.

*“I didn’t find a place right away, I was really struggling and was couchsurfing. Tried staying at Siloam, but the area is really dangerous there. It was really unsafe.”*

*“I had to go through the programs to help fill out forms, applications. I tried for apartments, but I never got any. I was searching for probably two years, three years. But now I am attending school and they offer student housing, but it’s only temporary, it’s not a place where, you know, you can hang up things or you can, you know, can go about your business.”*

*“I came all on my own. My children were all gone up already with minds of their own. When I first moved here it wasn’t a good time. I didn’t feel at home, I was really depressed. I was shy, and I spent my first years here not feeling very powerful, very isolated.”*

These challenges—finding housing, navigating a new city, and dealing with poor mental health—made the move to Winnipeg more difficult. Those who didn’t have family in the city before they arrived had to figure everything out by themselves: where to get housing, how to access resources, and so on. The support provided by family, especially in the first few weeks, was an important factor in making the transition to the city easier.

### **Finding home**

Indigenous people moving to the city have complex service needs. Not only are they learning to navigate a new context, but they also face distinct challenges: difficulty knowing where to go to access resources and supports; a lack of good quality, affordable housing; barriers to accessing housing including a lack of references, money and ID; and racism and discrimination from landlords. These challenges are both created by and exacerbated by the historic and current colonial structures that govern life in Canada, including residential schools and dispossession from land and language.

Colonialism and resulting trauma and poverty are at the root of the vast overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the city of Winnipeg's unhoused population. The 2018 Winnipeg Street census found that 65.9 percent of respondents who were experiencing homelessness were Indigenous. Of this number, 77.9 percent were First Nations, 21.5 percent of whom had moved to Winnipeg within a year or less (Brandon et al, 2018). This number indicates that a significant number of First Nations people are falling into homelessness upon moving to the city.

For many interviewees, making a home in the Spence neighbourhood is not only about a literal access to housing, but about the creation of welcoming spaces that reflect and uphold Indigenous ways of life. Housing need is more than a need for four walls and a roof: it is, as Jesse Thistle wrote in his Definition of Indigenous Homelessness:

*“best understood as the outcome of historically constructed and ongoing settler colonization and racism that have displaced and dispossessed First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples from their traditional governance systems and laws, territories, histories, worldviews, ancestors and stories.” (Thistle, 2017, 6)*

This understanding of home as connected to identity and self-determination highlights the distinct and complex service needs of Indigenous people compared with non-Indigenous low-income people and newcomers to Canada. It expresses the importance of doing things in ways that reflect the political authority, governance practices and worldviews of the Indigenous nations of these territories.

Eagle Urban Transition Centre and other Indigenous organizations like the Tunngasugit Inuit Resource Centre, Ma Ma Wi Chi Itata Centre and the Manitoba Métis Federation are doing their best to meet the service needs of their respective communities. However it is not enough to meet the needs of the growing Indigenous population. More support is needed from non-Indigenous organizations, but there is not enough understanding among non-Indigenous organizations about the impacts of residential schools, displacement from communities and lands, and ongoing intergenerational trauma that people carry with them to provide the services that are needed. As one service provider noted,

*“Relocation service providers need to know how much support their clients need (i.e. resources, coaching or walking-with) and adapt their service accordingly.”*



*Systemic distrust requires awareness of cultural safety concepts and relationship-building.”*

Another service provider pointed to the need for training for landlords and organizations to be able to serve Indigenous people and meet their needs:

*“More awareness needs to be made to housing agencies about the Traditional ways of living for Indigenous people coming from their communities.”*

Building capacity among non-Indigenous organizations to address the needs of Indigenous people is essential. This will require a deeper understanding of the histories of Indigenous-Canadian relations, as well as the social, spiritual, economic, and environmental practices that shape Indigenous ways of life.

### **Indigenous representation in the West End**

The idea of finding home in the city was also reflected in responses to the Indigenous Housing Experience Survey through an expressed need for increased Indigenous representation in the West End. Survey participants identified the need for more Indigenous visibility in the spaces in which they were accessing services, as well as wanting to see more Indigenous businesses, programs and clubs such as beading, pow wow and sewing clubs in the community. Many also expressed the need for more opportunities to access and participate in ceremony and land-based teaching. This could include both physical places for people to gather together, and opportunities to participate in ceremonies and events organized by Elders and community leaders.

This kind of visibility and representation is important as it creates feelings of safety and belonging. Interviewees suggested ways to increase Indigenous presence:

*“Create an Indigenous housing network or a place that focuses entirely on housing for Indigenous people.”*

*“Make it accessible—bus change, cab fare, kid friendly. Hire Indigenous people to work in the area. Make it safer.”*

*”Safe spaces for us, more food from our culture, ceremonies”*

Representation is especially important for people moving to the city for the first time, as it can help build community and make

the transition to urban life easier. It also is a way to heal some of the trauma resulting from colonialism. These comments reflect a broad vision for the neighbourhood: one that supports Indigenous people and communities not just through culture, but also through self-determination, economic development and Indigenous-led community development.

### **A new context**

Through the interviews we learned that individuals are coming to the city with very little knowledge of what living in the city is like. Life in the city can be very different from life in a First Nation or small town, especially for those from Northern communities. For people moving to the city, finding housing, enrolling in income assistance, and addressing everyday basic needs can be complicated because the systems themselves are complex and very different from the systems on a First Nation or in a northern community. As one interviewee said,

*“It’s not easy or the same as living on the reserve. There are so many more things you are responsible for, rent, utilities, phone, internet. So much to remember.”*

A number of interviewees stated that they were not aware of the additional costs associated with renting in the city such as security deposits and utility costs. In addition many were also not aware of how the transit system works and so were not able to navigate within the city to find necessary resources. One interviewee commented:

*“I wish I knew how to use the bus! I got so lost, it was scary, and where to get resources because it’s so hard to get around here, even to get to Main St!!”*

Not only did their lack of knowledge make it difficult for this person to get around, but they also found it frightening because everything was new. Likewise, another interviewee commented that the difficulties of finding resources and learning how the city works was an isolating experience:

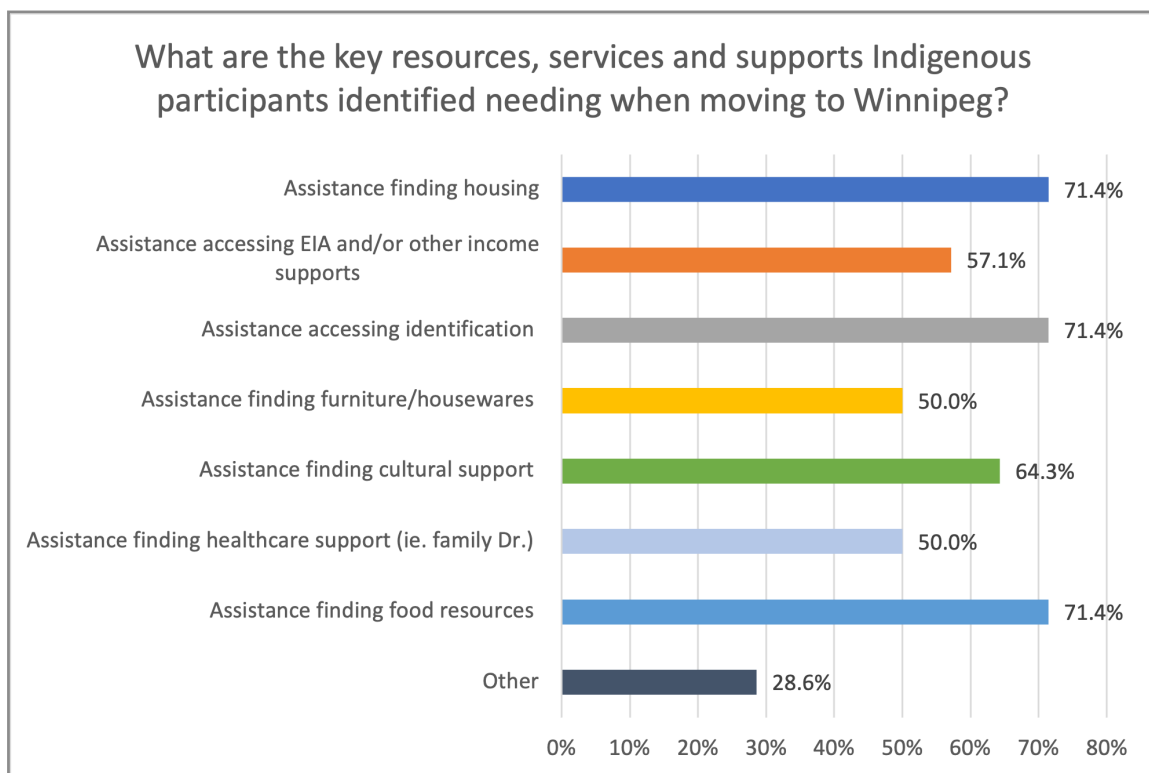
*“It would have been great to have a place to go and talk to other people and how to navigate some of these systems. I wasn’t educated on how the world worked here. It’s very different. I felt so alone.”*

This highlights the importance of having resources in place to support people as they arrive in the city, especially for those who do not have family or connections in the city and so have a harder time navigating the new and unexpected complexities of urban life.

## Resources

Upon arrival in the city, accessing housing is the most critical service need that Indigenous people require. A 2004 study examining the mobility of First Nation and Métis people and Inuit living in Winnipeg found that housing was the most needed service for 70 percent of respondents. It also found that housing remained the most significant issue affecting respondents' lives across the course of the study (Distasio et al., 2004). The complex network of housing services in Winnipeg leads to many Indigenous people having to visit multiple services providers before locating the services that they need. To compensate for the challenges of finding the services that they need, many Indigenous people rely on informal word of mouth networks to receive and share information regarding available services (Distasio et al, 2004; Snyder et al, 2015).

Of the people who did not have existing family support when they moved to the city, the majority stated that they were not aware of what resources were available or where to find them. While there are a number of printed resources available, including a “Guide to Winnipeg for Indigenous Manitobans” put out by the Province of Manitoba, many people are not aware of these materials. Figuring out where to go for what, and dealing with bureaucracy and paperwork, is difficult. The supports offered by neighbourhood organizations in



**Figure 6: Key resources, services and supports needed as identified by service providers.**

navigating these complex systems are essential, as they help people access and advocate for the resources they need to succeed. Despite the need for services to assist with many of these tasks, service providers indicate that many Indigenous people who are moving to the city have difficulty or lack the necessary information to access the services that are available to them upon their arrival to the city (Snyder et al., 2015). As two interviewees commented,

*“I wish I knew more resources or where to find them.”*

*“I wish I knew how hard it was going to be to find a place within your budget. I wish I knew resources before I came here.”*

When combined with the challenges of navigating an entirely new context, and especially for those without family support, the difficulty in finding resources made the transition to Winnipeg especially difficult.

The Service Provider Survey reinforced and supported much of what was heard through the interviews and Indigenous Housing Experience survey in terms of the needs of Indigenous people when looking for and securing housing. Service providers emphasized the complexity of housing need, pointing to the ways that access to housing is shaped by income, especially when people need to apply to Employment and Income Assistance (EIA). In addition to accessing resources for their housing search, individuals also accessed help with filling out applications, advocacy with EIA and landlords, and obtaining identification documents, all of which coincide with barriers faced when looking for and securing housing.

It was important to know if housing services have changed or been adapted over the past 10 years to address the trends of increased rents and decreased numbers of affordable housing units. Of the 10 housing service organizations that responded to the Service Provider Survey, five stated their services have changed over the past 10 years. The changes include:

*“We now offer resources to help find housing, and network with other agencies in the area for help.”*

*“Offering wrap-around supports and connecting people to EIA, banks, WRHA [Winnipeg Regional Health Authority]—general practitioners [family doctors].”*

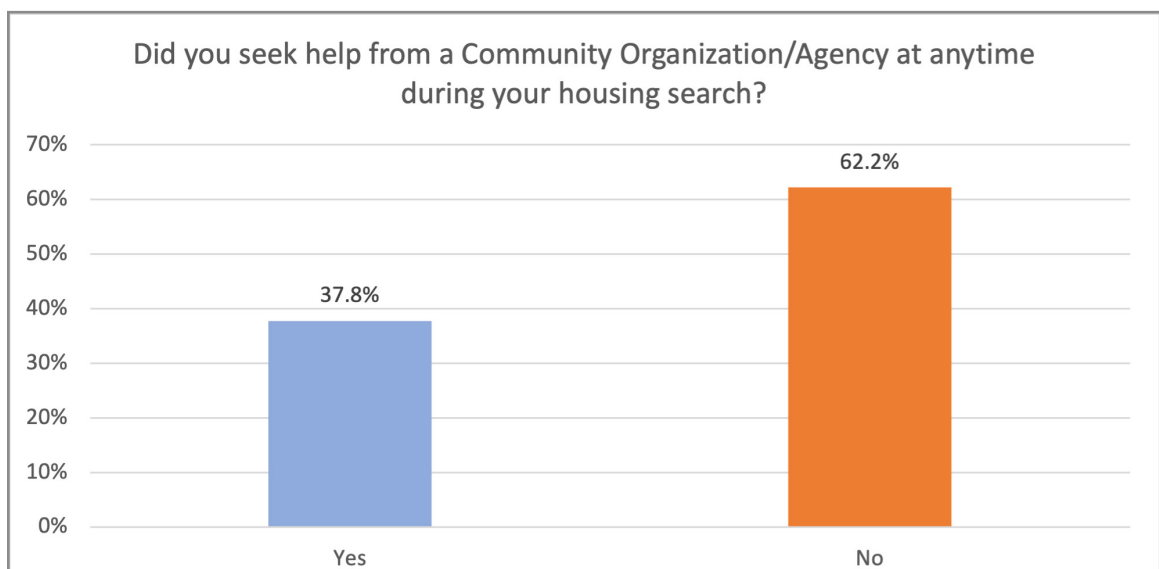
*“We got a Housing First team, we helped get the Winnipeg Rental Network [WRN] up and running so we stopped developing our own list of housing available in*

*the community (we may need to start this again now that WRN has been defunded), services needed to change to respond to the extremely high needs and acuity, housing ID now being integrated as part of our education and training programs.”*

These changes show that, although they start with housing, organizations are also developing programs and resources to help people stay housed and address other related needs. Housing is foundational, and as such can't be separated from other aspects like income and health. One organization noted the complexity that goes into trying to house people:

*“To house an individual, it takes more time and effort for reasons such as filling out applications, gathering the required documentation and the affordable housing market is small, the community has changed and is now one of the poorest postal codes which means a majority of the community is in poverty. When housing issues rise so does mental health, trauma and stigma.”*

This complexity and interconnectedness of mental health and housing is something that many housing workers see. Housing stressors can trigger people's mental health issues and trauma. Many housing workers are not equipped to address people's mental health issues in addition to trying to address their housing needs. This leads to housing workers having to navigate additional systems in order to address their participants' housing needs, often putting additional stress on the housing worker.



**Figure 7: Percentage of Indigenous Housing Survey respondents who accessed services when looking for housing.**

However, despite the high levels of need and the many resources available from local organizations, the Indigenous Housing Experience survey also showed that, much like those who are new to the city, many Indigenous people already living in Winnipeg do not access support when looking for housing or when experiencing barriers. 62.2 percent of survey respondents did not seek help from community organizations in their housing search; however 70 percent of respondents indicated experiencing barriers in their housing search. This may indicate that people are unaware of where to access the supports that exist to help them, or that there are further barriers to accessing these services that are being experienced.

### **Barriers to finding good housing**

The first, and most substantial, barrier to finding good housing in Winnipeg is a lack of good quality, low-cost housing. As noted above, housing costs have increased substantially in Spence neighbourhood and Winnipeg as a whole over the last few decades, while the amount of subsidized and low-cost housing has shrunk. As one service provider commented:

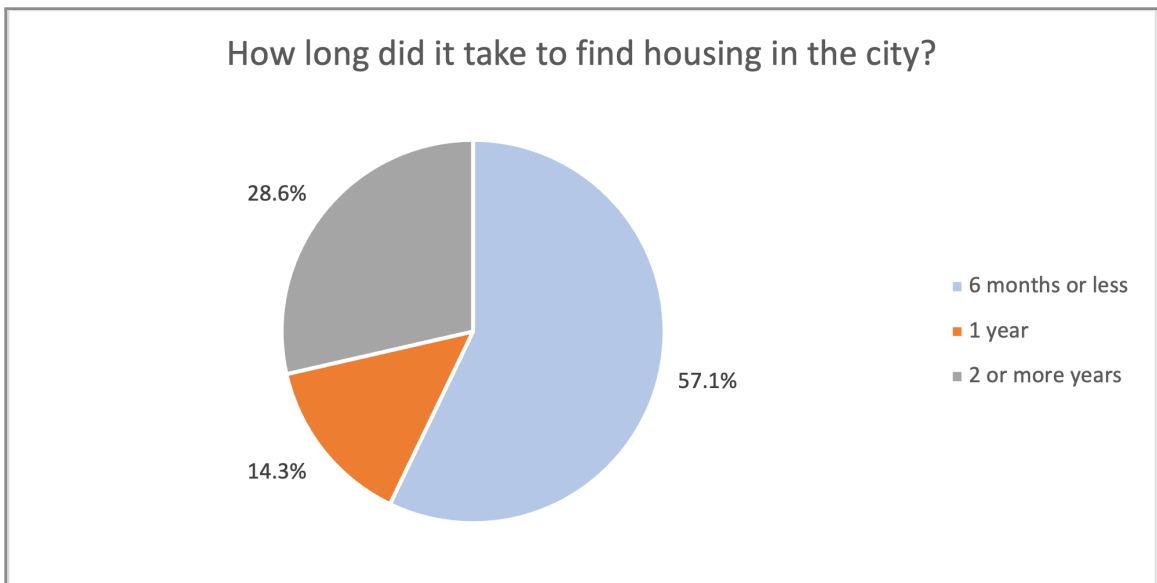
*“We really need inexpensive houses for families who are on disability or welfare who get very minimal amounts [of income].”*

In addition, for the last several years, Winnipeg has had a low vacancy rate, especially at the lower end of the market (Petz, 2021). This gives landlords substantial power in choosing tenants, as well as less incentive to maintain the quality of the housing. The result is that Indigenous people moving to the city, as well as those who have lived in the city for many years, face additional barriers that shape their access to housing.

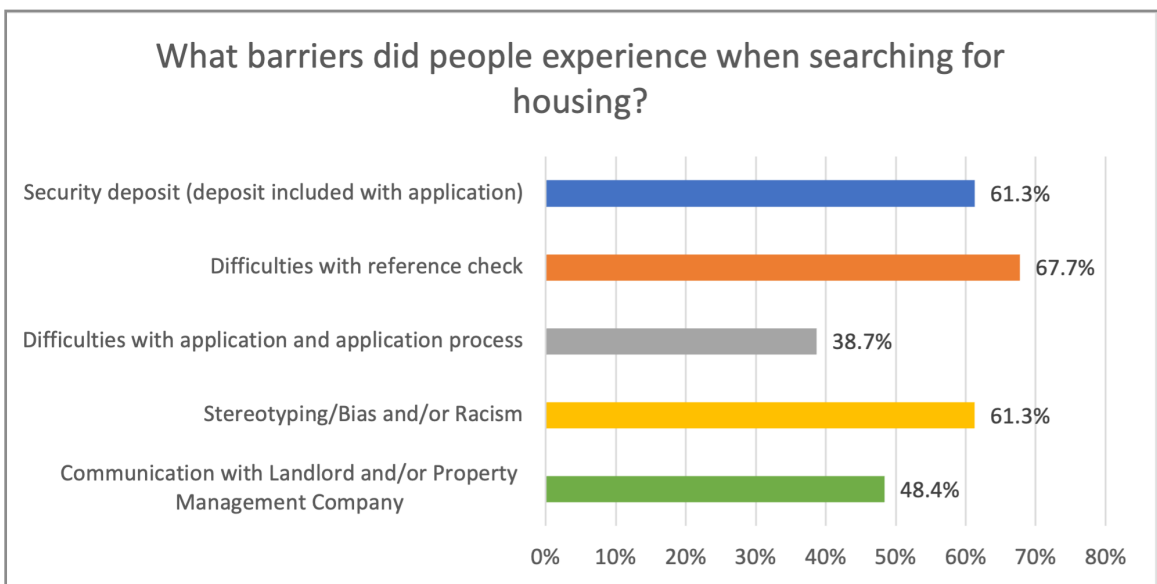
Through both the interviews and the Indigenous Housing Experience survey, we identified a number of barriers Indigenous people face when looking for and securing housing. Over 70 percent of survey respondents said that they had experienced barriers when looking for housing in Winnipeg. These barriers can make it difficult to find housing, especially for those who face multiple barriers while also navigating the new context of the city.

The main barriers identified by interviewees were a lack of references and identification documents, money or income, and discrimination from landlords. These barriers are situational and may not apply to every individual’s situation. For example, individuals who are employed may not necessarily experience the same barriers

that individuals who are low-income or have EIA as income. Nevertheless, these barriers are experienced by both those who have just moved to the city as well as Indigenous renters who are low-income or receive EIA. They are difficult to surmount, because in many cases barriers are interconnected and affect each other. For example, people waiting to be approved for EIA would not be able to find housing because they wouldn't have a security deposit. These issues were further complicated by the pandemic, when offices closed their doors to in-person appointments and required people to either phone or use the internet to access resources.



**Figure 8: How long it took interviewees to find housing in the city.**



**Figure 9: Barriers experienced by interviewees when searching for housing.**



## **References and identification**

References and identification, along with credit checks, were identified as a barrier to applying for housing in both interviews and the Indigenous Housing Experience survey. Many property management companies ask for references, which can be both employment and previous rental references. Individuals who are employed are more likely to have employment references and potentially have better credit, therefore this is not a barrier for them.

However, for individuals who have just moved to the city, and for low-income individuals, a lack of references and rental history is a barrier. Landlords may not want to rent to someone without a rental history. Similarly, low-income Indigenous renters can face the same barriers if they have poor rental history. Poor rental history can be due to various reasons such as evictions or vacating without giving proper notice. For low-income Indigenous renters these things can also contribute to not having security deposits returned, another barrier both first time renters and low-income Indigenous renters face when trying to secure housing.

Credit checks are a relatively new addition to property management applications. Because many Indigenous people living in the inner city have lower incomes, they may feel they do not have a good enough credit to even bother applying and instead shy away from applying to units with these requirements.

Identification, or lack of appropriate identification documents, was also described as a barrier in the interviews and surveys. Many people moving to the city do not have the particular kinds of identification needed to apply for EIA and subsidized housing. When applying for identification, people encounter additional barriers, including the costs associated with obtaining identification, the process of obtaining identification and the length of time it takes to obtain identification. These barriers therefore lengthen the time it takes to obtain and secure housing.

## **Money**

As mentioned above, many Indigenous people move to the city to seek employment. However, often they were not aware that they would need a security deposit to rent housing, and did not come with savings or start-up funds. Security deposits are usually half a month's rent, which is a substantial amount to have on-hand. They therefore have to apply for EIA—at least a six-week process—before receiving monies for a deposit and rent. This lengthens the amount of time to secure housing.

Even once a prospective tenant has received EIA, however, barriers to accessing housing remain. Landlords often do not want to rent to households receiving EIA. While it is against the law to discriminate or refuse renting based on source of income, many individuals do not pursue filing a complaint if they feel they are being discriminated against based on their receiving EIA. Instead, they just move on and continue searching for housing that will accept EIA as an income source.

At times, individuals find themselves in a position where they do not get their deposit back from their landlord when they move out. If a low-income household does not get its deposit back quickly, it can take time to save up an additional deposit. The situation is more complicated for households receiving EIA. EIA only provides one deposit; a second deposit is reflected as an overpayment and monies are subsequently deducted from their monthly budget until the overpayment is paid off. This can be a hardship as this overpayment generally comes out of the living allowance portion of benefits, which is already very low. A solution to this barrier was proposed by an interviewee:

*“Help getting damage deposit, like the Up Shoppe where you can work 34 hours and use the earnings towards [your] damage deposit.”*

These financial barriers limit access to housing, lengthen the amount of time it takes to access housing, and can make everyday access to basic needs beyond housing more difficult.

One outcome of these barriers, including references, identification requirements, and the need for security deposits, is that often people are forced to rent with individual landlords instead of with property management companies until they are able to build their rental history and or credit. Property management companies are often less flexible and have more stringent requirements for prospective tenants than a landlord who may own and manage a few houses alone. Renting with an individual landlord has its ups and downs: some landlords are really great, and are accepting and understanding of people’s situations and needs. However housing workers also see many individual landlords that do not maintain the upkeep of their properties. Many low-cost private rentals are sub-par in quality, space, and upkeep, but at times it is easier for a household to just take what it can get in order to avoid the barriers that come with trying to rent with a property management company. The majority of interviewees stated that they opted to rent with an individual landlord when they first arrived in Winnipeg.

### **Racism, bias and stereotyping**

Experiences of racism and discrimination are frequent for many Indigenous people both in accessing services and in searching for housing. Both the interviewees and the Indigenous Housing Experience survey respondents identified racism, bias and stereotyping experienced during housing searches. Interviewees described several different experiences of discrimination, based on family size, income, and source of income. Landlords made assumptions about prospective tenants, which affected their housing options and in many cases made finding housing more difficult. As three interviewees said:

*“You can hear in the tone that questions are asked that landlords have bias – Are you sure you can afford the rent here?”*

*“How many kids do you have? This is only a 3-bedroom.”*

*“Landlords didn’t see my band funded student income as a stable source of income.”*

In some cases, this discrimination reflects a lack of knowledge about Indigenous ways of life. As one service provider noted, landlords and housing providers may not know about Indigenous ceremonies or practices and there is a need for:

*“More regulations [and] understanding on ceremony and cultural practices that may take place in a rental unit that could affect a tenancy or cause eviction.*

Although this kind of discrimination is illegal, it is still a common experience for many Indigenous people. One service provider commented that there is a need for:

*“Low-income support and discrimination prevention. People are forced into sub-par rentals due to their economic or social background.”*

This finding reflects a common experience that has been noted in previous research on the topic. A study conducted in 2004 regarding housing discrimination found that discrimination was frequently experienced by Indigenous residents in Thompson and Winnipeg. 54.8 percent of those surveyed in Winnipeg and 67 percent of those surveyed in Thompson reported being discriminated against in the housing market within the past 5 years, most commonly by landlords and property managers. Many survey respondents reported being told that previously available suites had been rented upon their arrival to view them or receiving inadequate maintenance

services upon renting a suite (Cohen, 2004). More recent research indicates that experiences of racial discrimination remain a problem for renters. A 2020 study analyzing Manitoba's Rent Assist program found that 90 percent of Indigenous tenants who were interviewed identified discrimination against Indigenous people as a barrier to accessing housing (Cooper et al., 2020). Discrimination has also been identified as a frequent experience of EUTC members, with some experiencing discrimination in housing even when they have a reliable income (Brandon & Peters, 2014).

## Conclusion

First Nation, Inuit and Métis people move to the city for many reasons. These include new opportunities for employment and education, and to create a different life for themselves and their children. In some cases, they move to access medical care, and end up staying for the long term. Interviewees noted that their experience of moving was shaped in large part by whether they already had family connections in the city: those who had family found the transition much easier, as their family could help them access resources, find their way around, and offer a place to stay as they got settled.

This research identified two main challenges facing Indigenous people as they move to Winnipeg. The first relates to the barriers encountered by many low-income households as they establish themselves in the city: budgeting for security deposits and rents, and having the right kind of identification and references, all while navigating a rental market that is increasingly unaffordable. For Indigenous people, these barriers are often worsened as a result of racism and bias from landlords and property managers. Although it is illegal for landlords to discriminate against prospective tenants on the basis of Indigenous identity or source of income, interviewees and survey respondents noted that it continues to be a common experience. These barriers are substantial and often have negative impacts on a household's quality of life when they limit available housing options.

The second main challenge facing Indigenous people in their move to the city is the new, primarily non-Indigenous context. Despite Winnipeg's large Indigenous population and its location on First Nation and Métis lands, it is a city structured by non-Indigenous laws, policies and practices. Not only must Indigenous people moving to the city navigate new systems for jobs, transportation, resources, and housing, but they must do so in a new system that often does not recognize or support Indigenous ways of doing things. For this

reason, many interviewees and survey respondents highlighted the importance of increasing Indigenous visibility and representation in Winnipeg's West End. This could include places and opportunities for ceremonies and gatherings, as well as businesses, organizations and housing resources that are led by Indigenous people.

These findings are important, as it is likely that the number of Indigenous people moving to urban areas will continue to increase as people move to seek employment, education and overall better opportunities for themselves and their families. However, continued marginalization based on discrimination and racism, lack of knowledge of Indigenous histories and the trauma incurred from those histories will continue to affect the service needs of Indigenous people when obtaining housing. There are few Indigenous organizations in the West End, with the main ones being Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre and the Indigenous Student Services at the University of Winnipeg which offers programming to the broader community. The majority of the non-Indigenous organizations offer very little Indigenous-specific programming. Without education and increased knowledge for landlords and service providers, Indigenous renters, including both those who have just moved to the city and those who have been living in the city for many years, will continue to face barriers when it comes to looking for and securing housing.

Indigenous organizations in Winnipeg are already working to reduce these barriers. There is a strong demand for the services that the Eagle Urban Transition Centre offers, with 1,700 families receiving direct services each year, and 8,000 more accessing walk-in services. The EUTC director has stated that these services are also needed in other urban centres such as Brandon and Thompson, and that there is a need for four or five centres like the EUTC across Winnipeg to meet existing demand (Hughes, 2013). As well, programs such as RentSmart can help tenants to understand their rights and responsibilities, communicate effectively with landlords, budget to maintain their housing and other expenses, and look after their home (Winnipeg Rental Network, 2018). Continuing and expanding these kinds of resources, alongside programs to address racism and discrimination and increase representation of Indigenous peoples, will create a neighbourhood and city that welcome and supports Indigenous people.

## **Recommendations**

This report shows that there are distinct barriers that Indigenous people face when moving to Winnipeg from their home communities.

These barriers are complicated by the existing housing challenges in Spence and the West End. We identified several recommendations for community organizations and Canadian governments to address these barriers and challenges. These recommendations fall into five main areas: resources to plan your move, security deposits, accessing housing, addressing stereotypes, bias and racism, and increasing Indigenous representation in the West End.

### **Resources to plan your move**

Many people are arriving in Winnipeg with limited knowledge of where to find information about resources to assist them in their transition. To address these concerns, in the next phase of this project, the project coordinator will:

- Develop strategies in partnership with Northern Renewal Corporations, First Nations communities, the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Province of Manitoba to deliver and promote existing printed resource material to First Nations and Northern communities and community members.
- Develop a navigation toolkit for community organization staff and 211 operators to improve connectivity as system navigators.
- Create resource tutorials for individuals thinking of moving to urban settings around “what to expect and where to find resources” shared through various online platforms, such as Youtube, Tiktok and other social media.

### **Security deposits**

Uncertainty around when a security deposit is required, lack of funds for deposits and the lengthy EIA process to obtain deposits are barriers that can lengthen the amount of time it takes to secure housing. Many survey participants expressed the need for more work programs or programs that matched dollar for dollar to assist with deposits. To address these concerns, the project coordinator will:

- Create a working group that partners with groups such as Right to Housing to petition the Province of Manitoba to develop policy relating to the common requirement to submit a security deposit before the landlord will consider an application, and to clarify rental and RTB procedures using plain language.

In addition:

- Organizations such as West Central Women’s Resource Centre, Resource Assistance for Youth and Spence Neighbourhood Association could expand on existing Social Enterprise initiatives to include a work match program for security



deposits. In addition other organizations could develop new Social Enterprise programs.

### **Accessing housing**

Research participants also identified housing needs for Indigenous people beyond the practical details of references and income (though these are undeniably important). They called for the creation of Indigenous communities through the building of Indigenous-specific housing. In addition there was a call to create EIA- and pet-friendly housing lists. Creating and distributing such lists would potentially decrease some of the biases experienced around EIA as a source of income, as well as save time and energy for tenants applying to places that are ultimately not going to rent to them. The recommendations to address these suggestions are:

- Organizations that offer housing services should create EIA and pet-friendly housing lists to offer to community members.
- Indigenous and community organizations should advocate and collaborate with governments to design, develop and build Indigenous cooperative housing models, and housing that meets the needs identified in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action 1.ii, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry Calls for Justice 1.1, 4.1, 4.6, 4.7 and 16.18, 16.19, 18.24 (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019) and the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry relating to women’s housing, including safety and family reintegration (Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission, 1999).
- Federal, provincial and municipal governments should provide funding and policy support for the development of Indigenous-specific housing.

### **Address stereotypes, bias and racism**

As seen through the interviews and through the Indigenous Housing Experience survey many Indigenous people continue to experience systemic racism and bias in their daily lives. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 57th Call to Action requires that public servants receive education about “the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skill-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p.219). This is important not just for government employees, but for all Canadians,



especially landlords and those working with Indigenous community members. To address these concerns, the project coordinator will work in partnership with Indigenous organizations such as Eagle Urban Transition Centre, Ma Ma Wi Chi Itata Centre, the Tunngasugit Inuit Resource Centre, the Manitoba Métis Federation, Elders and Knowledge Keepers and community members to:

- Create a West End working group comprised of housing coordinators and workers to develop cultural competencies training toolkits for landlords and property management companies.
- Create a West End working group comprised of housing coordinators and workers to create First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultural competencies and history training for organizations.
- Create a West End working group comprised of housing coordinators and workers to assist organizations to develop policies that ensure organizations are reflective of the populations they serve.

#### **Indigenous representation in West End area and organizations**

Communities that reflect their population create a sense of belonging, ownership and pride. Many of the people who took part in the Indigenous Housing Experience survey expressed the need for cultural spaces and opportunities to participate in cultural events and ceremonies, as well as increased representation of Indigenous people and ways of life in the West End. The importance of self-determination for Indigenous peoples is reflected in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 43rd Call to Action, which states "We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p.191). To address these concerns, the project coordinator will:

- Develop and create an Indigenous Housing Hub or Network within the West End that represents all Indigenous populations in partnership with with Indigenous organizations such as: Eagle Urban Transition Centre, Ma Ma Wi Chi Itata Centre, the Tunngasugit Inuit Resource Centre, housing coordinators, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, the Manitoba Métis Federation, First Nations and all levels of Canadian government.

In addition:

- West End organizations should develop and create more cultural programming in partnership and consultation with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers, community members and all levels of government.
- West End organizations should develop and create Indigenous cultural spaces in the West End in partnership and consultation with Indigenous Elders and Knowledge keepers and community members, and all levels of government.

### **Next Steps**

The second phase of this project will focus on implementing the recommendations identified above, with a focus on the creation of an Indigenous housing hub or network in the West End. The Indigenous advisory committee will continue to support the project, and an additional Elder or Knowledge Keeper will be invited to assist us in moving towards a more traditional working structure. An Indigenous tenant committee will be formed to provide additional insights into the everyday experiences of renting in the West End.

Where needed, working groups will be established to design and develop resource toolkits for:

- Landlords and service providers who rent to or work directly with Indigenous people.
- Inclusive governance structure and policies for community organizations based on the unique needs and values of the staff and clients.
- Designing an Indigenous housing program, to be hosted by Spence Neighbourhood Association, which will address the gaps and barriers through innovative and appropriate solutions.

In addition we will:

- Create and distribute an informational video series with community partners regarding where and how to find resources.
- Promote the creation of cultural programming within Spence Neighbourhood Association.
- Develop and implement an Indigenous Housing Hub or Network in the West End.

## References

- Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission. 1999. *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba*. <http://www.ajic.mb.ca/volume.html>
- Anderson, A. (2013). *Home in the city: urban Aboriginal housing and living conditions*. University of Toronto Press.
- Brandon, J. & Peters, E. (2014). *Moving to the City: Housing and Aboriginal Migration to Winnipeg*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba. [https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba%20Office/2014/12/Aboriginal\\_Migration.pdf](https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba%20Office/2014/12/Aboriginal_Migration.pdf)
- Brandon, J., Maes Nino, C., Retzlaff, B., Flett, J., Hepp, B., Shirliffe, R., & Wiebe, A. (2018). *The Winnipeg Street Census 2018: Final Report*. Winnipeg. Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. [https://streetcensuswpg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2018\\_FinalReport\\_Web.pdf](https://streetcensuswpg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2018_FinalReport_Web.pdf)
- City of Winnipeg. (2022). *Neighbourhoods, Open Data Portal*. [Shapefile]. <https://data.winnipeg.ca/City-Planning/Neighbourhood/fen6-iygi>
- CMHC. (2022). *Spence - Housing Market Information Portal*. <https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en#TableMapChart/2680150/6/Spence>
- Cohen, I. (2004). *Housing Discrimination among a Sample of Aboriginal People in Winnipeg and Thompson, Manitoba*. Aboriginal Policy Research Consortium International (APRCi). 113-126. <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/aprci/155>
- Cooper, S. (2018). *Why Protecting Public Housing is Important*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. [https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba%20Office/2018/01/Why\\_Protecting\\_Public\\_Housing\\_Important\\_in\\_MB.pdf](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba%20Office/2018/01/Why_Protecting_Public_Housing_Important_in_MB.pdf)
- Cooper, S., Hajer, J., & Plaut, S. (2020). *Assisting Renters: Manitoba's Rent Assist in the Context of Canada's National Housing Strategy*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba Office. Winnipeg. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba%20Office/2020/04/Assisting%20Renters.pdf>
- Distasio, J., Sylvester, G., Jaccubucci, C., Sargent, K., Mulligan, S. (2004). *Final Report: First Nations/Metis/Inuit Mobility Study*. University of Winnipeg Institute of Urban Studies. <https://winnspace.uwinnipeg.ca/bitstream/handle/10680/310/2004%20Aboriginal%20Mobility%20Study%20Final%20With%20Maps.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y>
- Environics Institute. (2010). *Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Main Report*. [https://www.uaps.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/UAPS-Main-Report\\_Dec.pdf](https://www.uaps.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/UAPS-Main-Report_Dec.pdf)
- Froese, I. (2021). Housing crisis remains dire, even as Manitoba cuts thousands-long wait-list. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-housing-crisis-shortage-wait-list-cut-in-half-1.5968944>

- Grabish, A. (2019). Province has sold off 94 Manitoba Housing properties since 2016, documents show. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-housing-properties-sold-off-1.5381628>
- Hughes, T. (2013). *The Legacy of Phoenix Sinclair: Achieving the Best for All Our Children*. [http://www.phoenixsinclairinquiry.ca/rulings/ps\\_volume2.pdf](http://www.phoenixsinclairinquiry.ca/rulings/ps_volume2.pdf)
- Kaufman, A & Distasio, J. (2015). *In Brief: Rooming Houses*. *Institute of Urban Studies*. <https://winnspace.uwinnipeg.ca/handle/10680/739>
- Lange, L., Skelton, I., & Meade, T. (2010). “I Want to See These Words Turned into Action”: Neoliberalism and Urban Housing for Elderly People of Aboriginal Origin. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 19(1), 71–88.
- Macdonald, D. (2019). *Unaccommodating: Rental Housing Wage in Canada*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. <https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2019/07/Unaccommodating%20-%20Rental%20Wage%20in%20Canada.pdf>
- Manitoba Collaborative Data Portal, and Statistics Canada. (2019). “% Households in Core Housing Need.” *Community Data Map, Winnipeg Health Region 2019*. Accessed April 22, 2022. Available at <http://www.mbcdp.ca/housing-and-homelessness.html>
- Maunder, M., Burley, D. (2008). *The Rooming Houses of Furby Street*. Institute of Urban Studies. <https://winnspace.uwinnipeg.ca/handle/10680/1101>
- National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). *Reclaiming Power and Place: The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>
- Nellas, J. (2021). *Indigenous Housing Management: A Comparative Evaluation of On-Reserve and Off-Nation Housing Programs*. Aboriginal Housing Management Association. Available at <http://www.ahma-bc.org/research-reports>.
- Petz, S. (2021, May 9). Rental vacancy rates in Winnipeg up, but affordable housing is harder to come by. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/rental-vacancy-rate-winnipeg-1.6018660>
- Reynolds, L., Robinson, N. (2015). *Full house? How overcrowded housing affects families*. Shelter. [https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/policy\\_and\\_research/policy\\_library/full\\_house\\_how\\_overcrowded\\_housing\\_affects\\_families](https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_research/policy_library/full_house_how_overcrowded_housing_affects_families)
- Snyder, Wilson, K., & Whitford, J. (2015). Examining the Urban Aboriginal Policy Gap: Impacts on Service Delivery for Mobile Urban Aboriginal Peoples in Winnipeg, Canada. *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.5663/aps.v5i1.23259>
- Statistics Canada. (2016) *Low-income measure after tax (LIM-AT)*. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/ref/dict/fam021-eng.cfm>
- Statistics Canada. (2017a). *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm?indid=14430-1&indgeo=0#archived>

- Statistics Canada. (2017b). *Core housing need, 2016 Census*. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/chn-biml/index-eng.cfm>
- Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg. (2006). *Census Data, Spence*. <https://winnipeg.ca/Census/2006/Community%20Areas/Downtown%20Neighbourhood%20Cluster/Neighbourhoods/Downtown%20East/Downtown%20East%20Neighbourhoods/Spence/Spence.pdf>
- Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg. (2016a). *Census Data, Minto*. <https://winnipeg.ca/Census/2016/Community%20Areas/Downtown%20Neighbourhood%20Cluster/Neighbourhoods/Downtown%20West/Downtown%20West%20Neighbourhoods/Minto/Minto.pdf>
- Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg. (2016b). *Census Data, Sargent Park*. <https://winnipeg.ca/Census/2016/Community%20Areas/Downtown%20Neighbourhood%20Cluster/Neighbourhoods/Downtown%20West/Downtown%20West%20Neighbourhoods/Sargent%20Park/Sargent%20Park.pdf>
- Statistics Canada & City of Winnipeg. (2016c). *Census Data, Spence*. <https://winnipeg.ca/Census/2016/Community%20Areas/Downtown%20Neighbourhood%20Cluster/Neighbourhoods/Downtown%20East/Downtown%20East%20Neighbourhoods/Spence/Spence.pdf>
- Spence Neighbourhood Association. (2016). *Spence Neighbourhood Five-Year Plan: 2016-2021*. <https://spenceneighbourhood.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2016-2021-Full-Plan-5yp.pdf>
- Thistle, J. (2017.) *Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/COHIndigenousHomelessnessDefinition.pdf>
- Toews, O. (2010). *From Revitalization to Revaluation in the Spence Neighbourhood*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. [https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba%20Office/2010/08/MB\\_ChangesSpenceNeighbourhood2010.pdf](https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba%20Office/2010/08/MB_ChangesSpenceNeighbourhood2010.pdf)
- Toews, O. (2018). *Stolen city: Racial capitalism and the making of Winnipeg*. ARP Books.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/>
- Tunngasugit Inc. (2021). *Welcome to Tunngasugit*. <http://tunngasugit.ca>
- United Nations. (2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>
- Winnipeg Rental Network. (2018). *Renters–RentSmart*. <https://www.winnipegrentnet.ca/renters-rent-smart.cfm>



**SPENCE**  
**Neighbourhood**  
**ASSOCIATION**

Treaty 1 Territory, Original Lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree,  
Dakota, Dene, and Homeland of the Metis Nation

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Phone: 204-783-5000 ext. 109

Email: [liaison@spenceneighbourhood.org](mailto:liaison@spenceneighbourhood.org)