Background Document – Grey Literature Annotated Bibliography:

Women Fleeing Domestic Violence and Housing and Homelessness, with a Focus on Aboriginal Women

Background Document for March 11, 2015 Dialogue

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Background

The Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research ("The Centre") has been working in partnership with the Inter-agency Council on Homelessness (IAC) to implement the Housing and Homelessness Research Strategy for Alberta. (http://humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/housing-and-homelessness-research-strategy.pdf).

The IAC and the Government of Alberta have identified housing and homelessness issues for **women fleeing domestic violence, with a special interest in Aboriginal women** as a top priority for research. A meeting was hosted on March 11, 2015 in Calgary to bring together stakeholders to discuss ideas for policy-relevant, applied research and evaluation projects with a focus on meaningful outcomes for this population. This annotated bibliography was prepared as background information for this dialogue and ongoing stakeholder exploration of potential research projects. A rapid review of peer reviewed literature was also conducted and is available from The Centre.

Methods

The following reports were identified using the following search strings on Google search engine. The first five pages of hits were reviewed for each Google search.

- ' 'family violence' AND 'housing' AND 'aboriginal' AND 'report'
- "housing" or "shelters" programs for Aboriginal women fleeing violence
- "evaluation reports" AND "aboriginal women's shelter"
- "family violence" AND "homelessness" AND "aboriginal" AND "report
- "housing strategies for women fleeing violence" + "Aboriginal"

A search was also done of the Homeless Hub website using the terms "family violence" AND "housing" AND "Aboriginal" over the last 5 years. The following websites were also searched for relevant reports: Homes for Women, All our Sisters, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Homes, YWCA Canada, Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children (University of Guelph), British Columbia Society of Transition Houses, National Association of Friendship Centres and Northern Society for Domestic Peace.

This annotated bibliography focuses on reports produced between 2005 and 2015. If a report focused broadly on domestic violence and housing and homelessness, but had findings or recommendations specific to Aboriginal populations, it was included in this bibliography. Reports are listed in chronological order from oldest to most recent.

Recommended Citation

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Keywords

Women, housing, shelter, homelessness, domestic violence, Aboriginal

REFERENCE	KEY POINTS & CONCLUSIONS
Bopp, M., Bopp, J., & Lane, P. (2003). ***Aboriginal domestic violence in Canada.*** Ottawa ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation.	**This report focuses on understanding the issue of family violence and abuse in Aboriginal communities and presentation of a comprehensive framework for interventions to address root causes of violence**. *Methodology:* literature review, review of Aboriginal approaches to healing from trauma, consultation with practitioners and experts, development of an intervention. *Focus on Homelessness/housing:* Reviewed 14 community-based or regional programs working to address violence and abuse (majority of programs provided some form of emergency shelter, however programs recognized the need for longer-term support such as second-stage or transition housing but had few resources to offer these services, little-to-no evaluation of programs/services). Safe houses and emergency shelters were identified as one necessary component of a community response intervention to family violence/abuse. No in-depth focus on housing initiatives for women fleeing violence. Report identified a lack of program evaluation: "research and program evaluation often gets lost in the day-to-day…in general programs lacked clear success indicators on which to base monitoring and evaluation activities and few communities have good baseline data to measure progress."
Native Women's Association of Canada. (2004). ***Background document on Aboriginal women and housing for the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable Sectoral Follow-up Session on Housing.*** Ottawa ON: Author.	**A background paper on Aboriginal women and housing.** Housing is one area that disproportionally affects Aboriginal women. Immediate focus on and remediation of the Aboriginal housing crisis is required with special attention to the needs for secure, affordable, non-discriminatory, culturally sensitive housing in sufficient quantity and locations that respond appropriately to Aboriginal women's situations. On-reserve legalities from the Federal government create even greater barriers for women accessing housing and protection from violence. Many areas of jurisdiction, control and governance must be explored before housing for Aboriginal women will be resolved. "Participatory decision-making processes involving women with low incomes from diverse backgrounds should be incorporated at every level of hosing policy and programming from the setting [of] priorities for new housing developments, to the everyday governance of housing complexes."
National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence. (2006). ***Ending Violence in Aboriginal communities: Best practices in Aboriginal shelters and communities.***	**A study of best practices in dealing with family violence in Aboriginal communities based on conversations with directors, staff and clients from 12 shelters across Southern Canada.** The majority of shelters were located on reserve, or off-reserve serving a high level of Aboriginal clients. Lists best practices across a spectrum of topics. *Overall findings:* strategies to address family violence in Aboriginal communities are very limited (lack of awareness of the effects of violence, lack of funding and resources). Women's shelters were found to be the focal point for addressing family violence in the communities examined (little other supports or services to address the issue). Lack of funding to shelters is a serious issues leading to inadequate resources, programs, and staff training. Report identifies a list of barriers and challenges facing shelters.

Tutty, L. (2006). ***Effective practices in sheltering women leaving violence in intimate relationships.*** Phase II report. Toronto ON: YWCA Canada.	**This study describes the journey of 368 abused women as they entered and left shelters in 10 Canadian smaller city locations (9 of which were YWCA shelters).** *Methodology:* Entry and exit feedback surveys and qualitative interviews with 20 residents 2-6 months after they left the shelter. 46% of respondents were of Aboriginal descent. *Findings:* List of top needs of women from shelters: emotional support/counselling, safe place to stay, information about coping, referrals for housing. Results found that most women were satisfied with their shelter stay and achieved their expressed needs on entering the shelter, and women reported strong support for the effectiveness of shelters in supporting them. On leaving the shelter, women are often faced with inadequate housing and financial support leaving them with a choice between homelessness and returning to the abusive household. Report provides a list of 14 recommendations with #2 focusing on Aboriginal women – "Advocate for the unique needs of residents of Aboriginal background".
Bopp, J. & Four Worlds Centre for Development Learning. (2007). ***You just blink and it can happen. A study of women's homelessness north of 60.*** Cochrane AB: Author.	**Research report about women's homelessness in the North with an aim of informing and improving services, programs, and policy. Three separate studies were conducted in each of the territories following the same methodology; this report combines elements of the other 3 reports.** Data was gathered from women, service providers, and policy makers and program managers. Report describes: characteristics of the North that contribute to women's homelessness, demographic info and estimated incidence rates of homelessness, determinants of homelessness (identified every women as vulnerable and family violence being a determinant), impacts of homelessness, the policy and bureaucratic practice environment related to homelessness, the service environment in the territories designed to reduce homelessness, and relevant best practices. Report concludes with 16 recommendations. Recommendation #1: create a national housing policy inclusive of women.
Webster, A. (2007). ***Sheltering urban Aboriginal homeless people: Assessment of situation and needs.*** Ottawa ON: National Association of Friendship Centres.	**A needs assessment report of urban Aboriginal homeless shelters commissioned by the Housing and Homeless Branch of Human Resources and Social Development Canada.** This report focuses on shelters whose primary objective to the relief of homelessness as opposed to relief from the flight of violence. *Methods:* Case studies of 4 shelters, document reviews, stakeholder interviews, *Findings:* Very few reports/research on the needs of urban shelters. Two key findings relevant to Aboriginal peoples include: #1 The approaches of shelters for Aboriginal people, run by Aboriginal people, differ fundamentally from mainstream shelters these differences make Aboriginal shelters more effective than mainstream shelters in assisting Aboriginal clients (authors identified 28 unique aspects of Aboriginal shelters with varying cost implications). #2 The provision of on-going funding for urban Aboriginal shelters is a necessary role of the federal government.
Native Women's Association of Canada. (2007). ***Aboriginal Women and Homelessness: An Issue Paper.*** Ottawa ON: Author.	**An Issue Paper prepared for the National Aboriginal Women's** Summit (June 2007, NL). There are more women among the Aboriginal homeless population than are found in the non-Aboriginal population. Despite higher proportions of women, services and programs are more oriented towards the male population. Common response to homelessness in urban centres has been to provide temporary shelters and transition houses (often underutilized by women and youth due to structural and cultural barriers). Sub-populations who find it more difficult to find housing: Aboriginal women with mental health or substance issues, Aboriginal women with children in their care, Aboriginal youth, seniors. Unique housing initiatives "Street Patrols" – started by Anishnawbe Health Toronto (1999). Report concludes with 7 recommendations to address homelessness for Aboriginal women (coordinated approach; culturally appropriate services, adequate funding, on-reserve property rights, funding for research).

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2008). ***Aboriginal women and family violence.*** Ottawa ON: National Clearinghouse on Family Violence.	**This is a condensed version of a research report originally prepared for INAC that examined the opinions of Aboriginal women, and professionals who work with them on the issue of family violence.** *Methodology:* 8 focus groups held across Canada with Aboriginal women, 15 telephone interviews with professionals. *Findings:* report details women's experiences and opinions of family violence. Shelters were identified as a key resources for victims of violence, however many barriers exist to accessing shelters (low awareness, their location, lack of privacy, judgment from non-Aboriginal staff). *Recommendations (related to housing):* short-term and long-term housing for victims (more than just shelters).
Pharand, S., & Rousseau, J. (2008). ***Domestic violence support services in response to Native women's needs.*** Montreal QU: Ishkuteu Project.	**Report on the results of the first phase of the Ishkuteu Project, where the goal was to consult with shelter workers employed by Native and non-Native shelter networks to identify their training needs.** The Ishkuteu Project is a partnership project that aims at improving access to services meeting the needs of Quebec Native women facing domestic violence and other related issues. Methods: 40 non-Native and 7 Native shelters participated (160 workers completed a survey, 37 key informant interviews). Findings: There is an over-representation of Native women in the province's shelters. Native women fleeing violence have unique needs. Funding and training are limited to both shelter networks. Lack of program/intervention evaluation. Report provides separate recommendations list of: training needs, hopes for collaborative relationships, and other measures needed to improve services from Native women's shelter workers and non-Native women's shelter workers.
Woodman, K., & Alberta Council of Women's Shelters. (2008). ***Second Stage Shelters: Closing the Gap.*** Edmonton, AB: Alberta Council of Women's Shelters.	**Report on second stage shelters and a practical guide for planning second stage shelters.** Family violence is a pervasive problem in Alberta. Emergency shelters can only provide support up to 21 days. Second Stage shelters can provide safe accommodation for six months of more. 10 Second Stage shelters exist in AB (5 in Edmonton and Calgary, 3 in small cities, 2 on FN reserves) offering too little capacity for the need. There is a severe lack of funding to Second Stage housing programs. Aboriginal women have a more difficult time accessing second stage housing than non-aboriginal women. Report then presents a practical guide for Alberta communities on planning a second stage shelter.
Cross, P. (2009*). Life beyond shelter: toward coordinated public policies for women's safety and violence prevention.* Phase III. Toronto ON: YWCA.	**Report on community consultations at all government levels to identify areas of change and policy recommendations.** Recommendation highlights: **implement coordinated policies through a coordinated response.** The report identifies broad positive initiatives that should be expanded. These include: women's advocates, violence awareness and prevention programs, and professional education on violence against women.

Cairns, K., Hoffart, I. (2009). *Keeping women alive-assessing the danger*. Edmonton, AB: The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters.	**Report on a collaborative research project examining the utilization of Dr. J. Campbell's 'Danger Assessment (DA) Tool' in Alberta shelters.** Data was collected form 508 women across ten research sites across the province by shelter staff certified in use of the DA tool. DA is a tool for predicting a women's risk of being killed/almost killed by an intimate partner. Aboriginal women were found to have the highest DA scores compared to other cultural groups. Women in second stage housing had higher reported DA scores compared to women in emergency shelters. Completing the DA tool was emotionally difficult for many women, but overall seen as a positive experience that led to positive outcomes (greater awareness of severity and frequency abuse, understanding their level of danger, importance of a safety plan, awareness and intention to use community resources). Concludes with list of 15 practice recommendations. (#13 'There are important differences between Aboriginal women and others that need further exploration and clarification and may require a different approach to assessment.)
Turner, D., Goulet, S., Oelke, N., Thurston, Woodland, A., et al. (2010). *Aboriginal homelessness looking for a place to belong*. Calgary, AB: The Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary.	**Background paper exploring Aboriginal homelessness in Calgary and environmental scan on Calgary-based agencies and gaps in services.** Front line service opportunities include: developing and offering culturally based and holistic interventions; building cultural competence for service providers and policy makers; policy-level interventions. In 2009 an environmental scan was conducted with 15 agencies that provided services to Aboriginal peoples who were homeless in Calgary. "If we are intent on looking at models and services developments that will serve the needs of Aboriginal homeless people, it is important to locate our thinking around what homelessness is- from an Aboriginal worldview." "Responses to homelessness require attention to physical space as well as political and emotional space."
Goudreau, G. (2011). *Aboriginal women's initiative literature review.* Ottawa ON: YMCA Canada.	**Literature review about Aboriginal women, Aboriginal women who've experienced abuse and the needs and gaps in this area (with a focus on Northern Ontario).** Family violence and abuse is a serious issue for many women, and one of the main reasons for women to move off-reserve, and is a pathway into homelessness for many women. Crisis centres and shelters are a key resource for women experiencing violence. One critique of mainstream shelters is they approach issues of violence through a 'justice' lens rather than an emphasis on healing. Long-term support and housing for women fleeing violence is a major gap. Real and lasting solutions to violence against Aboriginal women can be, and should be provided through Aboriginal organizations, run by Aboriginal people. Discusses briefly a Calgary Aboriginal shelter, the benefits of the space to Aboriginal women, but the challenges of this shelter in maintaining adequate funding.
Hoffart, I. (2012). *Walking the Path Together Phase 1 Evaluation: Report to safe communities innovation fund.* Edmonton AB: Alberta Council of Women's Shelters.	**Evaluation report of the Walking the Path Together (WTPT), a shelter-based programmed developed collaboratively (5 on-reserve shelters, ACWS, Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System, and Dr. Campbell), and delivered in 5 on-reserve shelters in AB.** Main program goal: Aboriginal women and children have increased capacity to interrupt the cycle of violence and live thriving lives. Data was collected from a variety of sources and utilized a mixed-methods approach. 67 families were involved, over 70% of families stayed in the program the full two-year duration. Many progress indicators were observed for children in the program (lower rates of exposure to violence, better school attendance). Workers indicated that without the program, 82 out of 196 primary children and their siblings would have gone into government care. A barrier to the success of some families in the program as having their basic needs (housing) met. A project extension was provided until June 2014 for WTPT Phase II. Program established a sustainable computerized data entry system.

Wickham, M. (2013). *Critical choices: Rural women, violence, and homelessness.* Smithers BC: Northern Society for Domestic Peace.	**A local (Smithers BC) research study to examine factors influencing rural women, with a focus on Indigenous women, to stay in or leave their communities when fleeing violence and facing homelessness and the supports they require**. *Methods:* 21 interviews with women who had experienced violence, 2 vision board focus groups with women, 17 service provider interviews. *Findings:* Many women in the study relocated due to violence, 73% experienced homelessness after fleeing violence, 59% still considered themselves homeless. Women identified inadequate, unstable, unsafe, unaffordable housing as a longer term consequence of fleeing violence. Women identified transition houses and shelters as one of the most important formal services available while in crisis. The main challenges to women living in rural communities were: lack of housing, lack of accessible resources, lack of transportation, and racism and discrimination. Women identified the need for a series of strategies out of violence and homelessness which the author categorized into steps: 1. Crisis response services; 2. Sustained supports; 3. Breaking the cycle.
Johnson, A., & Kapoor, P. (2013). *The case for a national action plan on violence against women.* Ottawa ON: Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses.	**Report on the Mapping Violence Against Women Policy and Opportunities Project (MVP) which the primary objective was to identify existing federal and provincial/territorial polices, action plans, strategies and legislation that may be affected by or used as the basis for national legislation on violence against women (VAW).** The report offers a starting point for discussion about a comprehensive strategy for developing Canada's first national action plan on VAW**.** Report identifies safe and affordable housing as a critical issue for women fleeing violence. Specifically identified as a critical need for Aboriginal women. Identified housing efforts to support women: Domestic Violence Relief Fund in BC (http://www.bchousing.org/Find/Fleeing_Abuse), the community housing program at Discovery house in Calgary, priority given to victims of family violence in social housing in Ont and YK, and transition houses in Nlfd.
Calgary Domestic Violence Collective. (2013). *Surviving Not Thriving: Barriers to housing for people leaving violence.* Calgary, AB: Author.	**Summary report from a one day workshop for key stakeholders (n=55) in the domestic violence and housing and homeless sectors to begin to explore barriers and build capacity to collectively address issues at this intersection.** Objective of the workshop was to identify priorities for the Calgary Domestic Violence Collective and the Calgary Action Committee on housing and Homelessness and develop recommendations for government efforts. Findings: poverty was identified as the most significant barrier to housing facing those leaving violence, followed by lack of affordable and safe housing and systemic barriers. Report then lists a number of efforts being done to address the barriers described and a description of what else needs to be done to address the barriers. Group identified 4 priority areas in which CDVC and CACHH should focus their efforts (Income and Alberta Works, accessible and affordable housing, greater funding).
Mosher, J. (2013). *Housing first, women second? Gendering housing first a brief from the 'homes for women' campaign.* Toronto ON: Homes for Women.	**A briefing note from *Homes for Women,* a campaign to prevent and end homelessness of women and girls in Canada**. *Homes for Women* is concerned that the existing gender gap in research examining Housing First (HF) models will influence the allocation of almost $600million committed by the federal government in the Budget 2013 to programs on the Housing First model**.** *Homes for Women* recommends the adoption of a series of measure to help ensure implementation of the HF funding reduces the homelessness of women and girls. Some of the measures include: ensuring Housing First does not has no-risk to women, inclusion criteria for HF reflects women's lived experiences (inclusion criteria not solely determined by mental health issues), connect to shelters for abused women, include single-gender programs, adapt to family homelessness, recognize a HF model will not be appropriate for all (e.g. violence survivors still healing), and apply HF to women living with family violence.

Hoffart, I. (2014). Alberta Council of Women's Shelters *Second-stage shelter project: transitioning from domestic violence to stability.* Edmonton AB: ACWS.	*Project by ACWS and 16 of its members organizations to collectively develops strategies that will promote common understanding and support for second-stage shelters in AB and present recent data on the second stage shelters.* There is 12 second-stage shelters in AB (5 in Calgary/Edm, 7 in smaller cities). One issue challenging work of second-stage shelters is lack of clarity on their definition. Identified a list of housing options for domestic violence survivors (short-term housing – emergency shelters; housing first approach – domestic violence housing first approach; transitional housing and second-stage shelters). Researchers call for the continued development of a range of housing options. Authors call for need of increased coordination, cooperation, cross-training and partnerships between two systems (domestic violence and housing/homeless service systems). Housing programs need to develop protocols and tools for collecting, managing and sharing information. Further work with assessment tools (used to select appropriate housing services) to adapt them specifically to women and children fleeing domestic violence. Report includes a list of tools and their description used by some and all second-stage shelters.

In summary, themes that have emerged through this synthesis are:

- the urgency to which violence against women needs to be addressed
- the identification of unique needs of Aboriginal women fleeing violence
- homelessness is less visible for women than men – women often labeled the "invisible homeless"
- In Alberta, more than 50% of women who are admitted to shelters are of Aboriginal ancestry. This proportion is higher in Alberta's Northern regions. Shelters must be responsive to the unique characteristics of Aboriginal women they are serving – Aboriginal women on average have more children, are younger, more often fleeing partner or family violence.
- Domestic violence is one of the main causes of homelessness among Canadian families.

There is a need for:

- Inclusion of women in definitions of 'chronic homelessness'
- Intervention research (second and third stage housing, housing first models- particular to women)
- Evaluation research – Housing First model for families and women
- Housing First models in the North
- Inclusion of Aboriginal women's voices in research (Community Based Participatory Research and Participatory Action Research)
- Needs assessment of Aboriginal women fleeing violence with many children under their care