



Bringing New Voices to the Table

Rethinking On-reserve Housing in Canada



The Public Policy Forum works with all levels of government and the public service, the private sector, labour, post-secondary institutions, NGOs and Indigenous groups to improve policy outcomes for Canadians. As a non-partisan, member-based organization, we work from "inclusion to conclusion," by convening discussions on fundamental policy issues and by identifying new options and paths forward. For 30 years, the Public Policy Forum has broken down barriers among sectors, contributing to meaningful change that builds a better Canada.

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Executive summary

The condition, status, development, maintenance and availability of housing on First Nations reserves in Canada is unacceptable and distressing. In 2011, the housing shortage was around 20,000 units, 21 percent of on-reserve households were crowded and almost 40 percent of on-reserve households lived in dwellings in need of major repair.¹ The programs and mechanisms supporting on-reserve housing infrastructure are broken, despite years of investment from the Government of Canada and its agencies to build new or repair existing housing stock. What is more, is that we know a home is so much more than its infrastructure components. A home is the foundation for countless other aspects of self and community, making the state of disarray in First Nations communities a contributing factor to many of the numerous social challenges facing First Nations.

The challenges and successes of housing on First Nations reserves are incredibly complex and involve numerous collaborators and contributors. This project specifically set out to hear from those living in First Nation communities, those who do not have a specific leadership role within their community and whose perspectives are simply informed by their day-to-day realities. The focus was on identifying Indigenous voices that are often unheard and under-represented and then using a process during the roundtables to enable bottom-up, community-based solutions, as participants shared their first-hand experiences and insights. With an objective to radically rethink First Nations housing, it was important to have the citizen-based perspective take the lead role in shaping and proposing solutions.

The report begins by providing an overview of the outreach conducted to invite community participants and describes the engagement process used during the community roundtables and the technical table. It then outlines key recommendations and themes from the community roundtables, recommendations from the technical table and the five recommendations for “next step” actions:

1. First Nations at the table, all the time – including community members alongside Chief and Council, as well as other First Nations and government representatives.
2. Acknowledge and address the challenges of democracy and politics that confound the relationship within First Nations and between First Nations and government.
3. Build more capacity and flexibility into First Nations initiatives.
4. Review and re-think First Nations housing models and funding, instead of trying to apply a one-size-fits-all approach.
5. Explore the creation of a First Nations-led organization(s) with responsibility for on-reserve housing.

Ultimately, the model and style of conversation that shaped this project should continue, and be developed as a best practice. Dialogue with First Nations needs to include those whose voices

¹ <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1475592613069/1475593624221>

have typically been unheard or under-heard. Communities must be engaged, along with elected leaders, to work together on resolving the unacceptable and distressing on-reserve housing situation in Canada.

Overview

In July 2016, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) engaged with the Public Policy Forum (PPF) to carry out community roundtables with the purpose of encouraging unheard and under-heard voices to rethink on-reserve housing in Canada, while keeping in mind the overall direction set by the Minister that “everything is on the table.” The roundtables organized by the PPF were one part of a larger process including other engagements by INAC, and initiatives by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), and are part of the process to create a National Housing Strategy, which is being led by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Overall, INAC served as the project authority and funding provider for this project. The project approach included a series of check-in meetings between the PPF and the project team at INAC to provide advice, support and direction. In September 2016, the PPF convened a series of five regional community roundtables to engage community members and housing staff on rethinking housing through the lens of their first-hand lived experiences. Efforts were made to engage Indigenous peoples, whose voices often go unheard when formulating solutions, such as women, elders, youth and individuals with disabilities; together with community members with experience in the administration and management of housing in their communities. Through these five roundtables, 63 First Nations members from 52 communities participated and contributed to the recommendations contained within this report. Each participant brought a different perspective to the discussion and the resulting recommendations are inclusive of the diversity of voices intended at the outset of the project.

The project concluded with a technical roundtable in Ottawa, where the recommendations and thematic perspectives from the community roundtables were presented to various government, First Nations and private sector partners. In small groups, consisting of a mix of perspectives and expertise, the technical table participants then further refined and added to the recommendations with the aim of advancing the recommendations to strategic actions.

Included in Appendix 1 is the list of all participating communities and Appendix 2, the recommendations from each community roundtable as well as the results from a brief survey that was conducted during each community roundtable on the current status of housing in their community.

Community roundtable process

Approach

Given the ambitious timeline we were striving towards, and the emphasis that was put on listening to unheard and under-heard voices, we understood that we needed help to gain access to communities and to have a range of First Nations represented at each roundtable. To ensure credibility with and to help gain access to communities, the PPF engaged and worked with Indigenous leaders with experience in participatory community consultation, and with a vast network of contacts in First Nations communities.

The PPF worked with Michelle Sault, Principal Consultant with CornerStone Concepts, to design the process for the roundtables. Ms. Sault also facilitated the roundtables and was supported by PPF Policy Lead, Tanya Gracie. Ms. Sault is of Anishinaabe ancestry and holds status with the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. She brings close to 20 years of experience working with and on behalf of First Nations as well as national, provincial and community-based organizations, on a broad range of topics including justice, program evaluation, public health, reconciliation journalism, missing and murdered women and much more. We are grateful for her ability to connect with people and create a safe space for dialogue, which were key contributing factors to the success of this process.

Through Michelle Sault, we were introduced to Holly Cooper, also Indigenous and well connected through past roles in First Nations organizations throughout Canada. Holly spent three full weeks on the phone, reaching into her network, contacting communities, explaining the types of participants we were looking for and ensuring community members were connected to the PPF for logistics details and arrangements. Because communities were encouraged to send a community member, not Chief and Council, reaching out to the communities was not as simple as a single phone call; it required multiple calls and follow-ups to obtain final confirmation. We regularly received questions from the participants, curious about why they were being asked to contribute to these roundtables. We shared with all participants that they had been identified as an individual who knows their community, is passionate about their community and would be encouraged to translate this passion to see housing from a provincial scope and/or national lens, but above all would be willing to participate in and contribute to a discussion-based format.

Additionally, to simplify logistics arrangements and venue bookings on short notice, three of the five community roundtables were hosted in Ottawa in the boardroom at the Public Policy Forum. The sessions ranged in size from eight to 24 community participants. The participants were all from different communities, with the exception of a few cases where an Elder traveled with a family member, and for the Ontario/Quebec roundtable, there were a few communities with two participants. However, in each of these latter cases, the project funding only covered the travel and accommodation expenses for one person per community. The community roundtable dates and locations were:

- Thursday, Sept. 8 – Ottawa, at the Public Policy Forum, with participants from Atlantic Canada;
- Friday, Sept. 9 – Ottawa, at the Public Policy Forum, with participants from Saskatchewan and Alberta;
- Monday, Sept. 19 – Vancouver, at the Radisson, with participants from British Columbia
- Wednesday, Sept. 21 – Ottawa, at the Public Policy Forum, with participants from Ontario and Quebec;
- Monday, Sept. 26 – Winnipeg, at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, with Manitoba and Northern Ontario participants; and
- Wednesday Sept. 28 - 36 people came together for the full-day technical roundtable at the Canadian Museum of Nature, including seven technical advisor representatives from the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) that serve on their Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure (CCOHI), along with six participants from the community roundtables.

Participants did not receive an agenda for the session; rather, Ms. Sault invoked a facilitator-led process. As the topic focused around rethinking housing and encouraging participants to share their perspectives and contribute new ideas, an agenda was both too formal and tied too closely to a “business as usual” approach. Each roundtable was a full day, and the time was needed to allow participants to explore and articulate the current state of affairs in their communities and then to be able to discuss and develop ideas and recommendations for solutions. The day began with an opening by an Elder and an acknowledgement of the land. The morning used dialogue and activities to allow participants to get to know one another and to explore the current context of First Nations housing. Each participant gave an introduction of themselves by way of sharing the name of the community they were from and something about their name, either their spirit name, if they had one, or their given name. In the majority of the roundtables this exercise led to the sharing of incredible personal stories of success, struggle, survival and how participants were genuinely honoured by the responsibility to represent their community and to contribute to this topic they feel so strongly about. At every roundtable, participants said they “were so excited and honoured to be here,” because “housing is the biggest and most important issue, and also the most challenging to address,” however, “no one had ever asked for their input or opinion before.”

Highlights of the process

The diversity of each roundtable contributed to the uniqueness of this project. Participants included five residential school survivors; parents and caregivers of persons with disabilities; some new and young council members; past chiefs; people with building, maintenance, construction, public works and health and safety experience; entrepreneurs; artists, health care workers and educators. There were also a number of housing managers or administrators and several Elders, many of whom travelled to Ottawa for the first time. The diversity of the voices around the table ensured the conversations and recommendations included a variety of needs and perspectives.

Following the introductions, the morning continued with various activities. The first was an activity done in silence in pairs, where together on a piece of paper each pair drew their dream home. At the end of the activity, each pair described the elements of their dream home to the group. Elements of the presentation focused on some of the structures of the home, namely elements such as good heating and water systems, windows allowing natural light and a bed for everyone in the home. The majority of the presentations, however, included the intangibles – a safe place, most often for grandchildren and the whole family to gather, and a space for sharing meals and stories. These presentations were not a list of material possessions, fancy appliances and finishings: rather, they were about the way that the basic structure of the house contributes to the creation of a home.

This activity then set the stage for a conversation where in two groups, the participants discussed and listed on flip-chart paper the things that make a house a home – more of the emotional and intangible elements. From there, in a group discussion focused on why many First Nations do not have healthy houses and healthy homes, participants identified the main gaps and challenges with on-reserve housing.

During the afternoon, participants worked in small groups to sort the existing gaps under one of eight categories:

1. Employment/skilled labour;
2. Funding;
3. Culture and spirituality;
4. Infrastructure;
5. Structure and materials;
6. Education and training;
7. Politics; and
8. Social and emotional.

Upon completion of the categorization, teams then worked to develop recommendations and share ideas on ways that the issues raised could be addressed. The conversations were frank and constructive. Participants named and called attention to the experiences they had and the things they saw.

Limitations

While efforts were made to ensure a representative sample, there were limitations in the selection process, and time was the primary limiting factor. It was not feasible to recruit a representative from all First Nation communities. The PPF began by compiling the list of publically listed partners of the First Nations Market Housing Fund. Ms. Cooper reached out to many of these communities, but she also reached out to communities she had worked with in the past, communities that had been in the news for successes or challenges related to housing, and in many cases communities made referrals to others upon learning about the objectives of this project. The means to recruit representatives was a very organic process and relied as much on the timeliness of the response from a community as it did in the outreach. There were quite a few cases for each of the roundtables where we were confirming participants and their travel arrangements less than 48 hours before the roundtable. Holding three of the five community roundtables at the Public Policy Forum helped to mitigate this challenge, because we did not have the same accountability deadlines and requirements that come with a rented venue. From another perspective, with more time we could have worked to hold the roundtables in First Nations communities, with the possibility of holding a few roundtables in some provinces, thereby giving an opportunity to have more communities represented through the process.

Community roundtable outcomes

Each roundtable was grounded in the concepts of house and home – a house being the brick and mortar, the infrastructure, and a home being the people and intangibles that transform the space into something more. After participants identified challenges, deficits or needs within their communities into one of the eight bundles, they then discussed and presented their recommendations back to the group. The bundles, like the recommendations, reflect the constant interplay of the relationship between house and home, illustrating how they are intrinsically linked.

There was incredible symmetry and consistency that came out of the recommendations from each of the roundtables, and while there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to rethinking the

current context, there are certainly similar challenges and gaps. Here are the key perspectives that emerged from the community roundtables:

Employment and skilled labour

Given the limited job and training opportunities in many communities, there is an opportunity for workforce development and training, particularly related to trades that support housing.

“Job creation is the best social program,” stated the participants from the Alberta/ Saskatchewan roundtable. Overwhelmingly, communities recommended more support and access to training programs for the trades and apprenticeship programs, with the intention of making better use of the current and potential workforce on- and off-reserve. Currently, many on-reserve services are contracted to off-reserve companies, and communities expressed the desire to bring more of those services on-reserve, establish First Nations workforces that could serve multiple communities and set standards for the inclusion of First Nations employees within construction and trades companies.

Recognizing that job-shadowing and work-experience programs are important for the development of young people in the community, participants recommended that the age of eligibility for funded or subsidized positions be increased, so there are more opportunities for individuals over the age of 30. The rationale for this is many young people leave the reserve and choose to return as they get older.

Funding

There is an opportunity to work more closely with communities, to strengthen the funding relationship and increase self-sufficiency and on-reserve economies, and to revise the terms and conditions of existing funding programs.

Overall, there was a resounding call for more financial resources. This was not just a blanket statement. Participants had many specific suggestions, and in each roundtable at least a couple of participants expressed great concern about possible corruption or misuse of funds within some communities. Some of the funding challenges are complicated by timelines and parameters around the allocation of government funds, caused by such factors as the lag time between application and receiving the money, and differences between communities in the north and the south, where often communities in the north of the province do not receive their funding in line with the supply and transportation season. Some participants shared that funding challenges come from the lack of self-sufficiency and an on-reserve economy, so when timelines are tight to meet funding requirements there is not a readily available workforce.

In many roundtables there was broad support to replace CMHC’s oversight of housing with a national First Nations-led housing commission or authority. This recommendation surfaced regularly in each of the roundtable discussions. They recommended that, whatever the entity, it is critical that it be First Nations-led, but also arm’s length from the existing Chief and Council or Assembly of First Nations structures. Participants believed that a *national* First Nations-led housing commission or authority, with regional outreach, would minimize opportunities for misuse and avoid the experiences many shared in which they have been subject to power struggles and “look what I did for you” tactics. Participants expressed their excitement about the

number of spin-offs and related opportunities that could be met through a First Nations-led organization, including:

- The elimination or revamping of the Section 95 housing program;
- The elimination of CMHC's modesty criteria, which places parameters on size of units, amenities available, finishes and construction materials, systems or techniques used in housing construction or repair; and
- An examination of the inconsistencies and discriminatory nature of the differences between on- and off-reserve funding models. Some of the British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario participants shared examples of differences in elder care and the care of persons with disabilities. They compared the inconsistencies to the differences in funding available for education on- and off-reserve.

While some communities have established housing policies for the determination and allocation of housing, many roundtable participants noted that the current point system used in many communities to determine housing allocation is incredibly problematic. This is because the determining criteria is limited and often not appropriate to reflect different family sizes and needs. Roundtable participants shared that the current system used in many communities does not appropriately factor in income, and the primary weighting is based on the number of children, so participants raised concerns that "kids are having kids" to increase their prospects of getting a house. Also highlighted by participants were challenges in some communities where no rent is paid by community members or where the amount of rent paid is insufficient given ongoing costs for maintaining a home. Still other communities are dealing with issues of land title.

Another key recommendation from roundtable participants was to provide funding for each community to have at least one housing staff person. The capacity to support their professional development is also essential. Roundtable participants with experience managing or administering housing programs shared that they had been forced to simply learn by doing, as there were minimal resources available to help them understand the number of programs available or the ways in which to best serve community members.

Many participants emphasized that financial assistance or "welfare cheques" do not create self-sufficiency, and identified the lack of an on-reserve economy in many communities. Building the financial capacity of communities to be able to invest in businesses, economic development opportunities and technology for their community is important. Some participants from Atlantic Canada and British Columbia shared examples of community renewable energy investments, such as wind or solar projects. Participants identified that resource revenue-sharing and impact-benefit agreements for a sale, and development and extraction of natural resources from Indigenous lands would also be helpful in building financial capacity and achieving self-sufficiency. Forestry was given as an example where resource-revenue should be considered between companies, government and First Nations communities.

Given the limitations of financial equity for many First Nations people, participants said there needs to be a broader consideration for the forms of equity that can be used toward housing. Suggestions included tools such as revolving loan funds, or even being able to contribute sweat equity into the building or purchasing of a home.

Culture and spirituality

Ensuring First Nations culture and spirituality are intentionally thought of and integrated into the design of homes and communities.

Culture and spirituality are fundamental to First Nations identity and ways of living. Participants recommended that more links be created between community and school programs and housing programs, recognizing the interconnected nature of these spaces. They also emphasized the importance of finding ways to support Elders to remain in their own communities. This often requires modified housing and the integration of health and home care services.

Education through the integration of culture and traditional spirituality practices was shared as the primary way that First Nations can contribute to the intangibles of healthy homes. Participants also recommended that First Nations education programs be included in schools and made available to adults in professional settings throughout Canada. This supports a specific call to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, that awareness and exposure to First Nations culture and history is important understanding for all Canadians on- and off-reserve. This is important for people on reserve to be able to learn about, celebrate and integrate their culture into their daily lives, but also to create more cultural awareness off-reserve and for guests, service providers, officials, etc. coming into First Nations communities.

Infrastructure

The need for long-term land-use plans and opportunities for education, training and job creation, for communities to be more self-sufficient in conducting such procedures as water and septic tests.

In the same way that house and home cannot be separated, the relationship between housing and other infrastructure is also intrinsically linked. Recommendations in this area include the need for roads, water and septic systems, and fire planning, all supported through long-term land-use and community plans. It was noted that public works regularly seems to be the area in which resources are cut back when they get tight. This leaves too much reactive work to be done and results in not enough planning or proactive maintenance taking place. In particular, participants recommended that communities be allowed to train residents to conduct their own water and septic testing, as it currently takes a considerable amount of resources to have this performed by off-reserve providers.

Structure and materials

Ensure the National Building Code is enforced for all buildings on-reserve. Implement opportunities for the bulk buying of materials and for regional distribution centres, with First Nations trades people working together in communities near one another.

There was a lot of consistency in the recommendation regarding structure and building materials, and one recommendation in particular came up in each roundtable – the need to enforce the National Building Code on-reserve. A couple of the roundtables recommended creating and implementing opportunities for bulk buying of materials and for regional distribution centres, and to have First Nations trades people work together in communities near one another, instead of

having to rely on off-reserve contractors. Participants also expressed that there is an opportunity for innovation, through the integration of energy-efficient materials and practices as well as opportunities to incorporate traditional and modern construction practices while using locally-sourced materials wherever possible.

Education and training

Prioritize education and ongoing training for housing staff and related services, community education specific to housing and general education opportunities, particularly regarding the trades.

Participants made three categories of recommendations regarding education and training:

1. *Education and ongoing training for housing staff and related services*

Funding is needed to create a First Nations Housing Managers organization, with regional annual gatherings or housing forums for housing practitioners to share best practices. This could lead to the professionalization of the role of First Nations housing staff, including certification for housing managers. Regional networks could also facilitate training between and amongst First Nations communities, for a range of topics from governance to bed bug extermination.

2. *Community education specific to housing*

Some participants recommended a program that ties housing to education and training. One idea shared was a program for single parents to be able to rent a house and, while doing so, they would be expected to enroll in an education program for a certain number of years to qualify for assistance in building a home. Participants also recommended a school-based program on home ownership to teach young students about home ownership and maintenance.

3. *General education opportunities*

Roundtable participants regularly expressed the need for technical training for the trades so First Nations can provide services for which they are currently paying others. This includes health and safety training, which helps to ensure a more sustainable workforce. Many participants also expressed a need for training and support to develop good governance practices and election codes for their communities. Best practices in this regard could also be shared between communities.

Politics

The federal government and its agencies develop a nation-to-nation relationship with First Nations. First Nations governance should separate the administration of housing programs from the role of Chief and Council, providing First Nations with more control and empowerment over housing.

Recommendations within the political bundle from the community roundtables addressed the relationship between First Nations communities and the federal government and its agencies, as well as governance structures within First Nations.

There is still much work to be done to repair and develop a new relationship between the federal government, its agencies and First Nations communities. In each roundtable, participants

recommended that any staff at INAC or CMHC working with First Nations, overseeing programs and signing off on funding be required to, at a minimum, make an annual visit to the community: "...the current systems keep people oppressed; come and see, experience our community before signing off on a form." It was suggested that it would be even better for staff in these roles to spend some time living in the community. The recommendation for the length of time in community ranged from a couple of weeks to a year, but the sentiment was the same: it is important to build a relationship with the communities through first-hand experience and through a partnership approach, rather than just administering funds and programs from a distance. Participants emphasized the importance of developing relationships and building trust between communities and the government.

The second area of political recommendations focused on the challenges within many First Nations, especially the highly politicized governance structures within many communities. While participants were not advocating that the government or federal agencies get involved in First Nations governance, there was a call for an overall reform of the model and, more specifically, the need to separate the administration of housing programs from the role of Chief and Council. In some ways we only scratched the surface of this topic, given our time constraints, but we consistently heard people say that the Chief and Council in some communities – but certainly not all – are not always representing the people in the community, and the politics within some communities are "corrupt and broken." Some of the roundtables recommended that communities get out of band-owned housing altogether. These recommendations are directly related to the earlier recommendation to create a separate First Nations housing authority. Participants shared that, in too many communities, housing has become a political commodity and a source of nepotism, in which family and friends receive perks or housing in exchange for election votes. The planning and allocation process needs to be revised, so that it is transparent, consistently implemented and outlives the election cycle of Chief and Council, which is additionally problematic where two-year term cycles are in effect or where there are no term limits.

The participants made recommendations for which they thought First Nations people needed to take on a bigger role, more responsibility and ownership, and they made other recommendations focused at the community, regional and federal levels. Many direct statements were expressed during the roundtable discussions, such as, "not everyone is able to fight the fight with the band council, and when you are emotionally damaged, this is the case, whether you are living in a shack or in a castle," or when an Elder helped to ground and give perspective to a group by saying, "our rights are derived from our responsibilities" and there is a need to shift away from the feelings of entitlement that come when people say things like, "it's my Treaty right." There were also calls to action for First Nations to be "innovators of housing, because the current structures and institutions are designed to keep people oppressed and set communities up to fail." Therefore, the only way real change will come about is if "solutions are not tied to and determined by Chief and Council" and if "First Nations people are at the table, and not just once, but through continued conversations."

Social and emotional

Increase the variety of housing to properly meet the needs of different individual and family compositions.

The recommendations which participants made in the “social and emotional” category address many issues that continue to affect First Nations, from the continued impacts of residential schools, to drugs, alcoholism, domestic and family violence, and suicides. Participants at one roundtable recommended the establishment of partnerships with health, police and other social service providers to offer more preventative programs and services. The most common recommendation expressed within this bundle is to increase the variety of housing to properly meet the needs of different individual and family compositions, including persons with disabilities, and to allow for transition housing as families either grow or downsize. The variety in housing often related to comments and stories about domestic and family violence. Overcrowding, and multiple families or extended family living in one home without sufficient space, particularly bedrooms, was seen by the participants as catalysts for much of the domestic and family violence they see and experience within their communities. Some participants also shared examples of the often undiscussed hidden homeless within their communities, who go from home to home within a community, but do not have a place to live.

When we began the community roundtables, we encouraged participants to be bold, to move beyond temporary fixes and tinkering with what already exists. Participants were encouraged to take a holistic approach to address the core issues compounding and contributing to the housing challenges in their communities, and in doing so, to propose new and innovative solutions. In some ways the recommendations that emerged are not radically different. At their core, they centre around building healthy relationships and supporting First Nations to take an active role in shaping their housing. Or maybe it is actually bold and radical, because First Nations members are not often at the table for these discussions and decisions, so ensuring they are consistently at the table would in fact be quite radical.

Technical table process

The final engagement step in this process was to hold a technical roundtable, attended by some of the participants from the community roundtables, together with government, business, housing and other First Nations leaders. The technical table, also designed and facilitated by Michelle Sault, was solutions-focused and action-oriented. The objective of the technical roundtable was to honour and bring the perspectives of the community roundtable participants to a technical and professional audience working in First Nations housing, and then to have the technical table review and refine those ideas. A key outcome of the community roundtables was the level of knowledge and the consistency of recommendations coming from community members. Convening the technical roundtable was the opportunity to showcase those voices and viewpoints. Another key objective that shaped the technical roundtable was to situate the idea of a radical re-think within the larger theme of reconciliation, to illustrate that house and home are more than program elements, but a key component in the reconciliation process with First Nations.

Participants were divided into five tables, each consisting of a mix of expertise and included First Nation citizen stakeholders, First Nation political stakeholders, government stakeholders, subject-matter experts and allies. Michelle led each group through a process to determine a group dialogue leader and then each group was tasked with working from the outcomes of one of the five community roundtables to discuss and present actionable recommendations. Four of the five groups rounded out the community themes and recommendations by building on and providing additional details that could support next steps. The fifth group focused on shaping preliminary ideas for a First Nations-led organization.

Technical roundtable outcomes

The first observation made by the technical tables was that many of the ideas or initiatives recommended from the community roundtables already exist, which subsequently led to a recommendation on the need for communication with and amongst First Nations and across geographic regions. To address this issue, it was recommended that a national housing centre of excellence be created to aid housing staff in raising their awareness of and being able to access the numerous First Nations housing programs that currently exist. An initiative like this would require core funding, yet has the potential to have a larger impact than its operating costs. There were differing opinions on whether such a centre should be staffed or virtual, but the prevailing view was that a centre of excellence should be staffed with a virtual component, thus providing staff resources to research best practices, evaluate them and explain the context of the information, providing the greatest benefit back to the end user – the communities themselves.

While it came up in each community roundtable, and subsequently in each of the technical table discussion groups, one group developed and shared an action plan for the creation of a First Nations-led housing authority or some type of First Nations-led organization, the details of which are outlined below, and includes the relevant inputs from the other groups specific to this topic:

At the outset, such an initiative would require the government to recognize the capacity of First Nations communities, and their ability to manage the landscape of change. Fundamentally there is a need to transform the role of government and transform First Nations capacity for human resources, learning and training institutions. Both the government and First Nations will have to take responsibilities in changing the relationship and how they work together. This recommendation would essentially replace government agencies and departments with a First Nations-led and driven organization where all First Nations authority is centralized in one organization. To begin the process, it would require a political mandate from the AFN and it was suggested that garnering support at the national level for this process could begin as early as the AFN housing conference in early November 2016. A working group could be established at that time, with leadership from First Nations, and including representatives from the government agencies, the AFN Executive Committee, universities and international scholars. Most importantly, any working group must include representation, and possible majority representation, from community members and community housing staff. Including the community perspective and involvement in researching and developing a First Nations-led organization is critical to addressing long-standing governance challenges and will contribute to repairing and developing a new relationship between the federal

government, its agencies and First Nations communities. This initiative could be supported by an exchange program for government officials, providing government the opportunity to experience first-hand First Nations communities, through such means as annual on-reserve visits and the co-creation of programs and services. Time and time again, it was stated how important it is for everyone to better understand one another, if the goal is radically rethinking on-reserve housing.

The aim of a First Nations-led organization would be for First Nations to have control over on-reserve housing, allowing for more timely responses to community housing demands, and to put a stop to building homes limited by funding parameters set by government agencies. Such an organization would ideally lead to the emergence of regional and provincial housing institutions and, over time, to repatriation and people coming home to their communities and addressing many of the social problems that currently exist.

Some of the objectives and measures of success in establishing a First Nations housing organization (and an overall First Nations housing strategy) would include:

- Reducing waiting lists;
- Reducing overcrowding;
- Streamlining the housing approval process;
- Improving economic benefits;
- Improving infrastructure procurement;
- Reducing the prevalence of social problems; and
- Improving relations between Chief and Council and community members.

The creation of a First Nations-led organization supports the objectives of a radical rethink and reflects the recommendations that were presented at the community roundtable discussions. It moves from tampering with existing housing programs and gives control to First Nations communities. Some of the other key components of a First Nations-led organization could include:

- Looking at access to provincial programs and working to make them available to First Nations;
- Developing accreditation standards for workmanship, to set standards and ensure the quality of housing, from design and layout, to materials used;
- Mentorship was identified as an initiative that could directly contribute to housing, through supporting the development of skilled labour at the community level;
- The need for short- and long-term funding with better understanding and planning for the use of available resources within communities;
- Financial management is an essential function and needs to be a standard, professional designation, supported by regular development and recognition; and
- Maintaining cultural awareness is also important. Programs like *My Home is My Teepee*, a program for kindergarten to grade 12 students on life skills and understanding a home, could be modernized and integrated into the curriculum in all First Nation schools.

Over time, the spinoff implications from such actions being taken could be significant, integrating the relationship between house and home, as well as economic and infrastructure developments.

Additionally, the discussion groups reinforced what had come out of the community roundtables and emphasized recommendations such as:

- Working to change the perception of housing on-reserve to include the responsibility and pride of housing and ownership, over housing being a program offering;
- Ensuring funding is not proposal driven, but based on community needs, planning and engagement with the community. Further to this, that housing programs, support, financing and development be adapted to the uniqueness of each community;
- Considering the role and ways that existing First Nations organizations can play in addressing next steps from the recommendations, including but not limited to such organizations as the First Nations Financial Management Board, AFOA Canada, First Nations Market Housing Fund and the First Nations National Building Officers Association; and
- Recognizing the need to address the current First Nations governance situation and that the solution exists on a continuum including self administration, self determination and self-government.

Recommendations and next steps

Through the course of the five community roundtables and the technical roundtable there are five recommendations, together with key next steps, which are priorities for addressing and re-thinking on-reserve housing in Canada. The recommendations cut across the discussion themes and require a new and constructive approach to First Nations housing and, more broadly, to First Nations relations. As presented at the technical table by the First Nations Financial Management Board, the problems of on-reserve housing are rooted in the view and approach to housing as a program – “we empower others to keep us in poverty when we think of ourselves as a program” – so the key to breaking the spider-web of challenges with on-reserve housing in Canada is to elevate housing to a nation-to-nation conversation. This requires an acceptance of responsibility for growth, for success, for change and for a lot less finger-pointing on the part of both central agencies and First Nations.

In Minister Bennett’s mandate letter, Prime Minister Trudeau stated that the overarching goal of her work is to review the relationship with First Nations people: “This renewal must be a nation-to-nation relationship, based on recognition, rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.” While there are still questions surrounding the concept of ‘nation-to-nation,’ what we heard from participants in this project time and time again, is a need and a desire for First Nations people to be at the table for any First Nations topic, and certainly to be part of the conversation in rethinking on-reserve housing.

Recommendation 1: First Nations at the table, all the time

For radical re-thinking and reconciliation to occur, First Nations people, and a diversity of their voices, need to be at the table all the time, from setting the stage right through to conclusions. The practice of simply presenting outcomes and new programs to First Nations must be a thing of the past for Canada to resolve on-reserve housing. While change will not occur overnight, steps can be taken in the short term to better include First Nations. In particular, the approach taken for this project can be modelled and applied for future initiatives, namely engaging with

communities to have citizens participate in discussions and in the recommendation of solutions and next steps. Through our roundtables on housing, we came across such a great diversity of people with different experiences and backgrounds, meaning that future conversations on housing can be richer because of this diversity. There are also lots of people to draw on for expertise and insight into any number of other topics. This process of including citizen engagement, in addition to Chief and Council and other elected representatives, will be a great catalyst for change. It takes time to reach into and engage with communities in this way, but over time it will become easier, and people are certainly honoured by the responsibility and opportunity to contribute in this way.

Recommendation 2: Acknowledge and address the challenges of democracy and politics that confound the relationship within First Nations and between First Nations and government.

Both First Nations and governments have been and are part of the problem, and therefore both need to be part of the solution. The size and complexity of this recommendation is not to be underestimated as there are very real and significant governance, democratic and political challenges within First Nations. A number of participants at the community roundtables shared that they are past council members and some are former Chiefs, many of whom decided not to seek re-election because of the political challenges and toxic governance environments that surrounded them. This is corroborated by the number of communities we heard from that do not feel their elected leadership is always working in their best interests.

In fact, the process for this project was impacted along the way by the heavy politics of First Nations governance, which led a participant at the technical table to say, “we are our own worst enemy and we need to own the issues as much as we expect to own the solutions.” While it may seem oversimplified, all parties must work to keep the bigger aim in mind, to reduce the conflicts of interest and work in the best interests of community prosperity. To the greatest extent possible, work must be done to separate the day-to-day administration and delivery of programs and services on-reserve from the governance/politics aspect of Chief and Council. There is a significant need for governance training, but the need to separate governance and management of First Nations housing further supports the recommendation for a national First Nations-led housing authority. Specifically, for INAC, the emphasis and energy must be placed on working with First Nations to build trust and collaboration to re-think on-reserve housing.

Recommendation 3: Build more capacity and flexibility into First Nations initiatives, instead of trying to apply a one-size-fits-all approach.

As a starting point, efforts must be made to build capacity in each First Nation for at least one full-time (FTE) housing management and administration staff. Many communities will require more than one person to be working in this area, but every community needs to have one FTE, at a minimum. Several community roundtable participants shared that they had learned about housing administration through years on the job, sometimes with some support from someone else in the role, but mostly learning through doing. Given the size, significance and complexity of the housing portfolio, professionalizing the capacity of this role is a necessity. The person in the housing role must have access to information and training about housing programs, and be able to access resources to support them in managing the housing portfolio for their community.

Ideally, regional networks would form to provide further support and opportunities for learning and sharing best practices.

Beyond the housing portfolio, capacity building should be supported for the development of First Nations economies and job creation opportunities, primarily for roles involving the building, repair, maintenance and testing of housing work. Numerous stories were shared of communities incurring additional expenses to use off-reserve service providers, when there is an opportunity to build capacity within and among First Nations. For many communities this is a longer-term initiative, as capacity building will take time through the support of people to enter into the trades and other types of technical vocations, but in the short term an assessment of the under-utilized workforce in First Nations communities could be performed and more flexibility could be given to allow First Nations communities to take on more work themselves. This has a direct relationship with the previous recommendation to depoliticize the management and administration of housing, so intentional steps would have to be taken to ensure that employment opportunities are not determined in a way that perpetuates nepotism or facilitates corruption. Models of best practice may be available by exploring employment structures and processes for cities and municipalities.

Recommendation 4: Review and re-think First Nations housing models and funding.

The state of First Nations housing in Canada is a multi-billion-dollar problem. There are a series of funding programs to support, develop and maintain First Nations housing, each with very detailed parameters and modified applications depending on when and how the funding is provided, all making for a complex system that will ultimately never contain enough transfer payments to sufficiently fund First Nations. This is where a radical re-think is required, because a transfer payment cannot be the means to home ownership and community development cannot occur through waiting lists and point systems that do not and are not able to take the appropriate information into consideration. A one-size-fits-all approach will not work for funding. Part of including First Nations at the table means that the government and agencies working with First Nations need to listen to their voices. As was recommended in every community roundtable, this can begin by having staff working on First Nations housing for the government or agencies go and visit each reserve community, hold community consultations and start a process to work with the communities to develop more customized models and instruments for funding. While there are more than 600 First Nations communities in Canada, engagement with communities and bringing them to the table to discuss and prioritize funding that is supported by community plans are important steps in building a healthy nation-to-nation relationship.

Funding is also intricately linked to capacity building, and the need to explore and support ways for First Nations to be more self-sufficient; through employment, economic participation, investments and sharing in the benefits of resources. The community roundtables showcased a significant range in the capacity and options in funding tools, being used by communities to support their economic self-sufficiency and, while it will take time to achieve more consistency between communities, it is an investment worth making. Funding is also linked to the theme underlying this entire initiative, which is the relationship between house and home – between the bricks and mortar of the physical space and the intangibles that make a house a home.

Recommendation 5: Explore the creation of a First Nations-led organization with responsibility for setting standards and being a centre of expertise for on-reserve housing.

While this is likely a longer-term initiative, a preliminary outline has been provided through the outcomes of the technical roundtable. The aim would ultimately be to have various partners come together to create a First Nations-led organization or entity with control of First Nations housing. The community roundtable highlighted regional diversities across the country. To facilitate better community support, a First Nations-led organization would include a network of regional and provincial housing institutions to better serve communities. Being First Nations-led and including the engagement and participation of community members and housing staff are the most important criteria, as the authority of any such organization(s) would also be an acknowledgement of capacity. The organization could be more timely with responses to housing demands, and address the building and maintenance of homes within current funding parameters set by various government agencies.

Conclusion

Our initiative set out to engage First Nations people to radically re-think on-reserve housing in Canada, and what resulted was first-hand insight into the size and complexity of this issue. While there is no shortage of challenges to name or deplorable examples to turn to, participants came to the roundtables willing to contribute and make meaningful recommendations for actionable change.

A house is so much more than a physical space; it is a central component of self and family. During the roundtables it was impossible to separate these two aspects as they are intimately intertwined. This project is timely, as we have a unique opportunity to influence the future of First Nations housing in Canada. The challenge is to work beyond generations of damaged relationships that lack trust and contain significant power imbalances, to bring a diversity of First Nations voices to the table as partners and leaders in determining new solutions. While the task is significant, if done right, rethinking housing will be integral to advancing the nation-to-nation relationship with First Nations people in Canada and a key component in the reconciliation process.

The following key areas for action are promising recommendations to rethink on-reserve housing:

- First Nations at the table, all the time;
- Acknowledge and address the challenges of democracy and politics that confound the relationship within First Nations and between First Nations and government;
- Build more capacity and flexibility into First Nations initiatives, instead of trying to apply a one-size-fits-all approach;
- Review and re-think First Nations housing models and funding; and
- Explore the creation of a First Nations-led organization with a responsibility for on-reserve housing.

Ultimately, the conversation with First Nations with respect to on-reserve housing must continue. Dialogue with First Nations needs to include those whose voices have typically been unheard or

under-heard. Communities must be engaged, along with elected leaders, to work together on resolving the unacceptable and distressing on-reserve housing situation in Canada.

Appendix 1: Community Roundtable Participant List

Allan Albert

Norway House Cree Nation

Jeannette Anderson

George Gordon First Nation

John Askoty

Doig First Nation

Christine Atsynia

Cree Nation of Wemindji

Arnold Baptiste

Simpchw First Nation

Jeff Basque

Basque Associates

Barbara Bernard

Abegweit First Nation

Emily Bernard

Lennox Island First Nation

Daniel Brant

Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte

Lyndsay Brisard

Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve

Chantelle Cardinal

Whitefish Lake #128

Charmaine Caldwell

Mohawks of Akwesasne

Roderick Charland

Cold Lake First Nation

Holly Cooper

HJ Cooper Consulting

Rhonda Cooper

Cree First Nation of Waswanipi

Lisa Cowie

Hiawatha First Nation

Darlene Davis

Good Samaritans

Kanani Davis

Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation

Albert Derocher

Flying Dust First Nation

Don Dorion

Opaskwayak Cree Nation

Diana Doxtator

Oneida Nation of the Thames

Richard Dumas

Mathias Colomb Cree Nation

Albert Dumont

Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg

Terry Dunn

West Moberly First Nations

Alma Favel-King

Poundmaker Cree Nation

Wes Fineday

Sweetgrass First Nation

Joyce Fraser

Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc

David Gordon

Lac Seul First Nation

Tanya Gracie
Public Policy Forum

Flora Gull
Cree First Nation of Waswanipi

Carol Harry
Malahat Nation

Karen Harry
Tsartlip First Nation

Anne Headrick
Garden River First Nation

Ken Henry
Roseau River First Nation

Daniel Herman
Athabasca Tribal Council

Marie-Agnes Herman
Athabasca Tribal Council

Raymond Issac
Kahkewistahaw First Nation

Iris Jacobs
Mohawk Council of Kahnawake

Donald Kraus
Coldwater Indian Band

Leo Lawson
Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nation

Daniel Manuel
Upper Nicola Band

Duane Manuel
Neskonlith Band

Jennifer Martin
Membertou First Nation

Candace Mason
Fisher River Cree Nation

Lisa McCormick
Batchewana First Nation

Tina McCorrister
Peguis First Nation

Monica McGregor
Mississauga First Nation Band Office

Kathleen McHugh
Siksika First Nation

Tanya Mckenzie
Kebaowek First Nation

Sky Metallic
Listuguj Mi'gmaq First Nation

Garry Oker
Doig First Nation

Lorne Paul
Millbrook First Nation

Michael Paul
Shubenacadie Band Council

Darryl Peekeekoot
Ahtakakoop Cree Nation

Michelle Pelletier
Serpent River First Nation

Susan Plourde
Eel River Bar First Nation

Helder Ponte
Lower Nicola Indian Band

Michelle Sault
CornerStone Concepts

Bradley Saulteaux
Big River First Nation

Esther Shackelly
Nooaitch Indian Band

Alexis Shackleton
Mohawk Council of Kahnawake

Darlene Solomon
Garden River First Nation

Freddie Starr
Sandy Bay First Nation

Ryan Sutherland
Pine Creek First Nation

Matthew Wapachee
Cree Nation of Mistissini

Jocelyne Wasacase-Merasty
Flying Dust First Nation

Brian Wynne
Whapmagoostui First Nation

Appendix 2: Technical Table Participant List

Andrea Adams

St Clare's Multifaith Housing Society

Daniel Adams

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada

Frank Bighead

Prince Albert Grand Council

Daniel Brant

Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte

Julie Cafley

Public Policy Forum

Harold Calla

First Nations Financial Management Board

Geoff Cole

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada

Dominique Collin

Waterstone Strategies

Rhonda Cooper

Cree First Nation of Waswanipi

Tanya Dazé

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada

Don Dorion

Opaskwayak Cree Nation

Albert Dumont

Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg

Aaron Good

J.W. McConnell Family Foundation
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Tanya Gracie

Public Policy Forum

Roxanne Gravelle

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada

Edward Greenspon

Public Policy Forum

Chief Kimberly Jonathan

Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations

Jared Langdon

Forrest Green Group

Irving Leblanc

Assembly of First Nations

Jennifer Martin

Membertou First Nation

Grace Martineau

Ontario First Nations Technical Services
Corporation

Stefan Matiation

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada

Don McBain

Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services

Nicole McDonald

J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

Sylvia Olsen

Assembly of First Nations, B.C. Region

Darryl Peekeekoot

Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation

Debbie Reid

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

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Fellow

Michelle Sault

CornerStone Concepts

Bradley Saulteaux

Big River First Nation

Geoff Schimmel

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Elena Shkrob

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada

Chief Kevin Tangie

Brunswick House First Nation

Deborah Taylor

First Nations Market Housing Fund

Jayshree Thakar

Habitat for Humanity Canada

Appendix 3: Notes from the Community Roundtables

Winnipeg Housing Roundtable

Employment and Skilled Labour	Funding	Culture and Spirituality	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More training for trades and consider innovative ways to deliver that training – i.e. mobile training units • Trades programs to support community builds • Training for inspectors (privatization) • Have skilled labour but wage rates are unequal to the provincial rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop separate regional deadlines for North and South housing • Collections dept. for each FN, separate and external to Chief and Council/ support communities to develop rental regimes Housing needs to be run as a business, not as a social program • Re-examine section 95 housing – there are multiple versions, criteria, etc. • Provide workshops on section 95 (truth telling to community) • RRAP approvals should be shortened to every 3 years instead of every 15 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education of our children should include life skills and living in a well maintained home with all of the modern amenities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More infrastructure money for FN to develop lots
Structure and Materials	Education and Training	Politics	Social and Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulk buying of materials • Materials have to be up to standards and code should 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone community needs funding to have at least 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a non-partisan FN Housing Authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social programs that support housing

<p>be on community location and conditions, such as weather</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apartments or multiple housing units should be considered in some communities 	<p>housing staff person and provide them with training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal writing training with clarity related to process (too many people thrown into the job) • Training and support for the development of good governance and election codes for communities & share best practices between communities • Fund regional gatherings to share best practices for housing practitioners • Training between first nations (i.e. bed bug extermination) • Providing education and training dollars for housing • Research funding sources for proposals • Provide in-house expertise for government officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with FN, INAC, CMHC to better understand its unique needs – visit at least annually before providing funding • Does the federal government get involved in shutting out certain people from Chief and Council? i.e. if sex offender because it is tax payers’ money • Politicians should know their communities and needs, including FN communities • Have to separate politics from the projects 	
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Ontario – Quebec Housing Roundtable

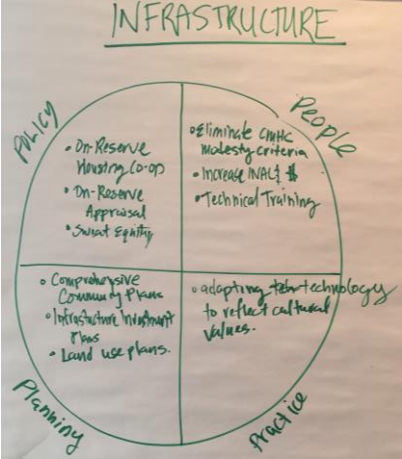
Employment and Skilled Labour	Funding	Culture and Spirituality	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for apprenticeship programs • Funding/partnerships with colleges for economic development programs to partner with employment and training • Partnerships with off-reserve trades programs • Increasing age of eligibility for funding positions (more programs offered to 30+ individuals) • Bylaw for general contractors to hire a % of local labour • Bylaws to ensure more female inclusion as construction employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to address the impacts of wasting money (corruptions) vs getting more just expecting to get more money • Provide funding to help communities to create self-sustaining programs i.e. revolving loan programs • In addition to the funding we receive to build housing, commit to funding, housing staff, capacity development and training and best practices • Fund financial literacy programs • More time for applying/application and less paperwork • Entire revamp of Section 95 • Separate budgets for infrastructure and housing • Funding for staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to assisting FN in preserving their culture and language • Develop and use curriculum in schools across Canada, make them mandatory classes that must be taught and taken in order to graduate (high school and university) • Hire more FN staff that understand their community • Cultural sensitivity training for representatives • More relationship building between advisors, community and administrators • Beautification program, community clean-up programs, community pride programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land use plans • Comprehensive community plans • Money for infrastructure • Settle outstanding land claims • Expedite the land claims process • Provide funding to establish land regimes in FNs and the creation of offices • Create a ‘centre of excellence’ that highlights best practices and housing models • Research and development support • Proper and adequate systems • Need financial and technical support for the development of infrastructure within communities • Maintain ongoing training and upgrading • Proper funding for different geographic areas

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase allocation from INAC, should increase with cost of living • More realistic response times for Section 95 • Bring electricity rates down • More support for more energy efficient homes • Ability to issue capital i.e. similar to the way cities can issue bonds 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water issues need to be addressed and solved • Develop community master plans
Structure and Materials	Education and Training (combined with Emp & labour)	Politics	Social and Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide funding to adopt proper building codes / standards of construction • Provide funding to train individuals to become certified and licensed / capacity development and more staffing • Access to FN owned businesses for materials • Support development of economic sales approach • Partnership with companies • Energy efficient • Permit system based on national building code and enforced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide funding to create a FN Housing Managers organization • Provide funding for capacity development, more staffing and HR • Provide funding to develop a program that ties housing to education and training – example: single parents can rent a house but they have to get an education for a certain number of years for assistance in building their home • Establish ‘housing forums’ to occur on an annual basis, each covering different topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give more money to develop policies and procedures to build capacity • Commit to higher quality consultation with First Nations over housing programming • Money to research our community programs and communities – identify best practices and program options; create programming that reaches the needs • Commit to hiring First Nation citizens at the Government of Canada, especially First Nation citizens who have lived on reserve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding to restructure the First Nation organization • Provide funding for capacity development by way of more staffing • Create forums, offices that allow social institutions, such as housing, mental health, addictions, education, social services to come together, allowing ideas and best practices to be shared. • Establish formal working relationships with health authorities and police locally • Develop a program that ties housing to education and training

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support services grouping for housing managers • Certification for housing managers • Initiate a school based program on home ownership at a young age (middle school and high school) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines for clear roles and responsibilities • Planning needs to be robust enough to outlive Chief and Council or changes in the housing manager • Reconciliation is required within the government, even if it is unnatural within the Westminster style government • Create a housing corporation to separate politics from housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop/amend programming individualized per community • Emergency housing plans • Transition homes • Long-term care facility for elders
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British Columbia Housing Roundtable

Employment and Skilled Labour	Funding	Culture and Spirituality	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need a standard established by FN people, such as sharing resources of best contractors • Unemployment creates dependency, requires investment in skills and trades – programs exist but are deficient in their delivery • Sharing services and crews for building and maintenance between communities, make an employment market out of it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit CMHC oversight and replace with a National FN Housing Commission • Mandate and provide funding for every community to develop 20-year housing plans • Develop a national FN housing strategy and investment fund • Eliminate CMHC modesty criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress the importance of community communications and keeping people informed • Affirm cultural protocols – interacting with neighbours, elders • Finds ways to adopt technology to reflect cultural values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Septic and waste water testing, allow communities to do it internally, because it eats up a lot of FN budget • More internal reserve capacity for code compliance • Comprehensive community plans, infrastructure investment plans, land use plans – actual plans, not just check boxes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a circuit rider for housing (a roving project manager) similar to public works – training who comes into the community and works with housing staff on maintenance and materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase INAC contribution money • Consider creating on-reserve housing co-operatives – generate economic activity, provides a form of ownership and meet housing needs through a business structure that is in an option between band owned housing and individually owned. • Consider a way to value sweat equity as a contribution toward housing construction – make this an incentive vs the barrier it currently is in existing programs • Eliminate the power of CMHC, we fill out their forms but they don't come into our communities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-reserve appraisal for housing, can figure out value and equity <p>One subgroup presented their suggestions and ideas through the medicine wheel:</p> 
<p>Structure and Materials</p>	<p>Education and Training</p>	<p>Politics</p>	<p>Social and Emotional</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “need to be innovators of housing” • Combine traditional and modern design and models • FN Buying Groups with distribution centre, assist better and more inclusive procurement for FN; do bulk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage entrepreneurship, complete with mentorship and role modelling, it provides freedom • Promote and expand existing housing policy toolkit • Technical training so FN can provide services for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INAC housing people should have to live, or at least visit reserves to experience their job firsthand • Political commitment to policy at all levels and policy enforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everything is connected, it's a web, at the centre is culture, spiritual, encouragement; all rooted in community based decision making • Impacts of residential schools requires healing at all levels

<p>buying on a regional basis vs national → creates employment opportunities, there are turn-key opportunities under the ACE brand</p>	<p>themselves that they are currently paying for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing templates of home policy manuals, share amongst bands, don't send from CMHC – use technology for this as well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at establishing a National First Nations Tenancy Act • Get out of band owned housing because it is often very political and there are too many complications. Consider models like Kamloops Sun Rivers 	
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Alberta and Saskatchewan Housing Roundtable

Employment and Skilled Labour	Funding	Culture and Spirituality	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job creation is the best social program • Not competitive with the rest of Canada re: construction contracts are 2 – 3xs off-reserve value vs on-reserve, leads to talent drain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to re-examine the inconsistencies and discriminatory nature of the of on and off-reserve funding models – for example, persons with disabilities have no financial support on-reserve but some money if off-reserve; education is similar • Need a resource revenue sharing agreement – not in the form of a welfare cheque – self-sufficient on-reserve economy • Home ownership – don't have equity in their homes, only debt – this has a trickle-down effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding to keep elders in communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider on-reserve communities for elders, easier for home care • More thought and planning into the proximity of homes to services, such as gas stations and groceries • Lack of funding in water planning and fire – no money for repairs or breakdowns • Public works is usually the first area to lose funding when money gets tight but becomes a priority when there is a problem

Structure and Materials	Education and Training	Politics	Social and Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally relevant housing for elders, singles, persons with disabilities, etc. • Prioritize design that uses locally-sourced materials • Advocate to government to make building code law – Aboriginal Fire Fighters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target education for training on trades and health & safety training – helps to ensure sustainable workforce versus strain on resources • Training facilities for builders and contractors • Need funding for post-training opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall need to re-examine the relationship with the federal government – it is very dysfunctional and has been for so long that it has become the norm First Nations always have a voice, we require our partners to listen – get out of the bureaucracy • Lack of long-term visions with partners, need cultural training and two-way dialogue, free of criticism of FN beliefs • AFN, Chiefs & Council are not the bodies to oversee housing, need an arm’s-length FN housing advocate that is a separate entity and can withstand political changes • Need community development plans → housing plans with a long-term future POV vs short-term use of money focus – housing plans need to include seniors, multi-unit, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solutions come from culture, “the way we walk and the way we govern ourselves” • INAC needs to address the social fallouts that have a real impact – empathy and understanding is required. This needs to be the starting point before anything else can be addressed. • Have to start rebuilding our youth, give kids work to do and responsibilities; and cultural teachings • More financial resources for health centres and access to doctors

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nepotism – re-evaluate the process for size and selection of homes, more appropriate for demographics • Stricter policies on selection policies and committees • Need to revise the imposed governance system of 2-year terms, doesn't allow for learning or long-term planning and visions • It is not merit based leadership, it is a popularity contest, and personal agendas are destructive – need people with appropriate fit and competencies for the job that needs to be done 	
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Atlantic Canada Housing Roundtable

Employment and Skilled Labour	Funding	Culture and Spirituality	Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for trades • Apprenticeship programs • Programs where we teach each other, such as home building • Work experience programs for grades 11 – 12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charge rent to instill pride in home ownership • Financial capacity of the band – invest in businesses, economic development and technology, such as windmills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund mentorship programs, in classrooms and on-reserve, drummers, dancers, early 20s, sober life • After school programs, like Mi'kmag Language and Cultural Centre, funded through NB gov't 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career day for trades with guest speakers, local employers and trades people • Job/work shadowing (unemployment increases because there is a dependence on the social system, lack of skilled people and sub-standard work) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide funding for programs for ages 10 – 12 to prepare them for teenage years • CBC national broadcast specials to promote FN cultures 	
Structure and Materials	Education and Training	Politics	Social and Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important that building be done to code • Pay for a surveyor • Need more support for home inspections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better selection process for housing 	

Appendix 4: Notes from the Technical Roundtable

Group 1 – Working from Saskatchewan/Alberta notes

Reform has to transform, it has to be a transforming action

Governance and nepotism – community responsibility, took it off the table

1. Foundational is solutions are community driven (actually)
2. Core priority – capacity – human resources, building, design; learning and the need to transform the role of government and transform FN capacity for human resources and learning and training institutions, government institutions having to transform → for starters put it all in one place
3. Jobs and economic development – community driven and creating econ benefit to the community, not to a third party. Create a FN economy \$11B
4. Social determinants of housing, wrap around services –
 - a. holistic and addressing it for all FN people versus making a distinction between on or off reserve
 - b. partnerships are also holistic
5. Quit funding based on proposals and start working based on targeted funds
 - a. current situation
 - b. long-term transformative – here have to use more innovative ways to deliver the dollars, and look at different ways to get results, which is not just by giving more dollars
 - i.e. focus resources of the government of Canada, for example bring in reservists to build 100 homes

What if there was no INAC or CMHC, how would the money be used and how would housing be effective for people?

Have to be aware of the election cycle – have 1 year to 18 months to effect change and policy, need to be aware of how this impacts the balance

Group 2 – Ontario and Quebec

- Culturally appropriate – no one size fits all, should fit in with the ways and rhythms of life; and housing should reflect the futures we want to build – go beyond filling basic needs
- Infrastructure – a centre of excellence needs to be created that includes a mix of FN institutions and
- Would need core funding that will create a national virtual platform, or at least (ideally) regional staffing for engagement
- Funding – assist and support FN lenders, inspired by American CDFI model
- Separate politics from housing – commit to a higher consultation with FN, will require on going engagement to create change
- Employment – building capacity within a community; creating economic markets, and opportunity but hard to restrict – there is a restriction to being able to use lumber, it has to be graded first before it can be used to build homes – this creates an obstacle in the process (better to use what is available over purchasing from outside). This is a requirement nationally, not an obstacle specific to FN, but pretty easy to bring in someone to have it stamped and then can use your own wood

- Social and emotional – acknowledge that housing and social issues are inextricable, address through shared offices

Group 3 – Manitoba and Northern Ontario

- Need people who are great proposal writers but there are lots of communities who don't have this capacity but people need to have access to this
- An exchange program for government officials – government to experience first-hand FN communities, everyone needs to understand one another – better understand where each other is coming from; visit at least annually, co-creation of programs and services
- Wage parity – inconceivable but it should start immediately because when you pay minimum wage, you get minimum wage results
- 7 things have to pay for from funding allocations, including insurance, education, fire, only about 13% allocated to housing
- Allocation one year, build the following year and use the winter to do planning – most successful vs trying to do it right away and using it for political gain – all about better planning
- Re-examine section 95 – there are multiple sections – it also requires education on how it impacts communities, including to Chief and Council about the responsibilities of multi-year loan commitments
- Safety must be a priority – building materials must be up to code and have come a long way through the Tribal Council system (don't get rid of tribal councils, they provide a lot of education)
- More infrastructure money for FN to develop lots
- My Home is My Teepee – education for kindergarten to grade 12 on life skills and understanding a home – looking to modernize the curriculum and then create partnerships with FN schools

Group 4 – Working from Atlantic notes

- Looking at access to provincial programs and make them available to FN
- Accreditation standards for workmanship, ensure the quality of housing is there
- Mentorship – use this to support the development of skilled labour at the community level
- Overarching is funding for short and long term funding and available resources

Interwoven themes cutting across all issues:

- Relative needs in communities
- All of the housing products must be on high quality, no excuses
- Inspections including workmanship and not just completion
- FN institutional lead is fundamental to be developed
- Creating an economy of scale to attract and retain FN labour – ways for people to work in different communities
- Revenue – move beyond funding, which keeps a relationship with government – revenue shifts the frame of mind and can include multiple sources and approaches
- Financial management is an essential function and needs to be a standard; professional designation development and recognition
- Government of Canada needs to change behaviour and views to recognize capacity of FN, their ability to manage the landscape of change i.e FMB certification – not just the responsibility of FN to change, government must change as well

- Uniqueness of each FN demands respect – i.e some of the banks have undertaken training in working with FN, similar needs to happen within government
 - Communications – best practices need to be shared
 - Education – teaching young people, and build on the momentum of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission within the general Canadian population
- Communication, revenue, education and standards – main areas of focus from their discussion**

Group 5 – Based on BC notes

Two streams – 1 existing that need tweaking and then a stream of radical rethinking and new ideas

Bundled all of the 3 and the result:

Replace government agencies and departments with a FN housing authority that includes:

Insurance and financing

How and when?

Start at the AFN conference in November

Need a political mandate from the AFN and support the transition

Working group to do this transition – mandate:

Who?

National process, FN driven including FN community members, central agencies must be part of the discussion and AFN executive committee, with international scholars and universities

Expected outcomes:

1. FN control over housing on-reserve
2. More timely response to housing demand
3. Stop building homes limited to funding by agencies
4. This will lead to repatriation and people coming home to their communities
5. Emergence of regional and provincial institutions
6. This will dissolve many social problems

Measures of success:

Reduce waiting lists

Reduce overcrowding

Streamlining approval process

Improve economic benefits

Improved infrastructure procurement

A positive step to reconciliation

Retain young people in communities

Reduce social problems that are inextricable linked to housing conditions

And an improved relationship between Chiefs and Council and communities



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