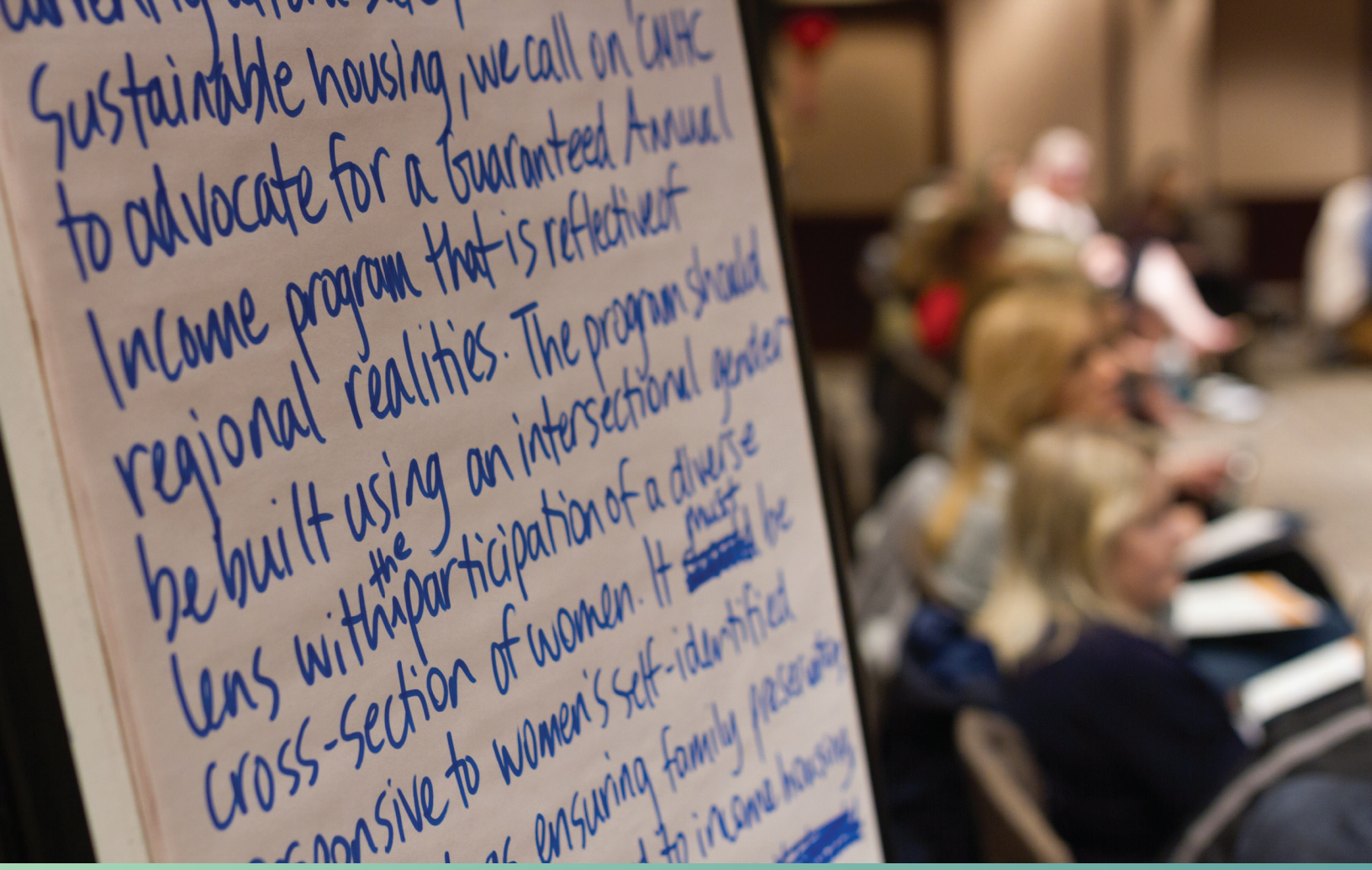

2nd Annual

Pan Canadian Voice for Women's Housing 2018 Symposium

Notes from Small Group Discussions

PAN-CANADIAN VOICE FOR WOMEN'S HOUSING
A SYMPOSIUM

PARLONS FEMMES ET LOGEMENT
UN SYMPOSIUM PANCANADIEN

Oct 25th & 26th, 2018

Metropolitan Hotel | 645 Howe Street, Vancouver, BC

Appendix A

Small Group Work to Develop Calls to Action (post-it notes)

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Housing

- Truth and Reconciliation: housing meets the 94 'calls to action' for the harm caused by residential schools and to move forward with reconciliation.
- Culturally appropriate housing is one piece of responding to Reconciliation
- The government of Canada must take immediate steps to reverse the policy that excludes Inuit from accessing federal shelter funding through the Family Violence Prevention Program, Indigenous Services Canada.
- Federal recognition of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women and children who are in urban centres, off reserve, and making sure funding reflects this
- Actions must respond to reconciliation, be culturally appropriate, be accessible and inclusive of transgender and two spirit folx

Consultation

- Build space within government for storytelling; stories teach and provide urgency
- Be purposeful, empowering, accountable
- Admit when you don't know and be clear that you need to listen and learn
- We are not agents of government; we need to feel safe disagreeing with government
- Be accountable and transparent on the progress of the many federal strategies, and be specific and give details
- Involve women who are affected and women's organizations in the design of policies/programs; engage the Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing
- Ensure national strategies are speaking to each other, that they overlap
- Consult with women-serving agencies across the spectrum, and not just national and umbrella organizations, but different and different-sized organizations

Policy/UN Convention

- National Housing Strategy
  - 25% to be spent on women's housing to be spent at the front instead of the back end
  - Include women of diverse, lived experiences at the policy table and in policy decisions
- Create new tools that inform policy that are trauma-informed and intersectional; tweaking old tools won't work
- Housing Partnering Strategy: stop using invasive assessment tools such as the Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT) and the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT) to ascertain needs – they disadvantage women. Recognize that women's and child/ren's housing and homelessness is different than men's
- The definition of homelessness used needs to reflect women's experiences of homelessness
- Increase secondary supports in community
- Major investments in stamping out violence against women should be prioritized (not accepted as inevitable) - No more violence against women/ gender based violence!
- All policies, programs, services should be designed with a gender-based intersectional lens
- Services for women by women, and all voices represented
- Access to feminist intersectional counselling
- Count housing in all your programs
- Diversification of services
- Tie policy conversations to UN/UNDRIP
- Don't take tools made for men and adapt them for women. Make tools for women informed by women and include women with lived expertise
- In developing a national definition of women's homelessness, must include women with lived expertise
- Women in Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters, institutions, other systems and or couch surfing are homeless! Let's count them in the statistics!
- Statistics must be disaggregated

Funding Infrastructure

- One modular housing project complete in each four regions of Inuit/Nunangat by end of fiscal year, focused on women and children
- There is a need to act fast because we're uncertain the current government will be re-elected
- At least 50% of funding allocations should be for women
- Greater flexibility and funding unique to the needs of the community, by the community
- Tie federal funding transfers to prioritizing women's homelessness
- Stop building jails, put money towards building housing
- Look into flexible funding mechanisms; more funding to providers instead of cities/provinces
- Federal money has to reach rural and remote areas
- Flexible funding coast to coast, north to south! 30% rural and 70% urban
- Funding should only be on non-repayable terms, not a loan
- Funding for women's ownership of their homes – asset based loans
- Prioritize housing for women in federal budget that is culturally appropriate
- Stop building inaccessible housing
- Policy around greater accessibility
- Tie new funding or building to universal design
- All federally funded housing must employ universal design to accommodate disabilities and accessibility
- Funding and policy that ensures rural and remote areas are taken into account
- Reinstate the shelter enhancement program with more flexibility for different kinds of housing for women (25% of total funding); gives women's orgs direct access to funding

Operational Funding / Women's Services and Programs

- Invest in more frontline services rather than bureaucratic/ administrative costs i.e. HPS community entities, increased/multiple reporting requirements
- Operational funding for staff and support i.e. workers expected to take less money for more work
- There are funds for new construction but without operational funds you can't sustain new construction
- Flexible funding to meet women where they are at
- Allow for programming that provides support for those who are precariously housed, not just homeless
- Housing initiatives must also include support services
- Core funding for service providers to offer services based on known needs, not pre-set standards
- Take a holistic approach to funding and service delivery that is inter-departmental/ministerial
- Fund women-only spaces and make funding available to all women's organizations and to all regions
- Funding for women's housing flows first/now, before the end of the fiscal year
- Federal government needs to hold provinces accountable to ensure funds make a difference to women's needs

Guaranteed Income

- National housing benefit must be designed through a gender lens
- Ensure women get guaranteed income, we need guaranteed annual income.
- Ensure the housing benefit does not result in increased market rents
- Give women the money
- More rent-geared-to-income housing
- Family preservation programs; keep women and children together
- Invest in families, not the system
- Stop worrying about who "deserves" money
- Address ongoing inadequacy of women's income

Miscellaneous

- Increase immediate availability of services for women in all regions and for all communities, particularly for those underserved
- Need on-demand, 24 hours a day, seven days a week services for housing, detox and mental wellness
- Services established should be low barrier i.e. can have guests, no curfews and access to children
- Model of care and success should be developed by the women we serve, not driven by financial accountability
- Housing models with flexible services must be based on the needs of women and community
- Co-ed spaces must have a ratio i.e. 60% women and 40% men
- Core training network developed with service providers
- Education focused on healthy relationships and the prevention of violence in elementary schools
- Educate the public as there's a lack of information about resources available and a lack of affordable housing
- Empathy, cultural shift and public awareness
- Educate the public on system navigation
- Utilize women with lived expertise
- Switch from outputs to outcomes
- Housing is a right, not a privilege
- Create a diverse/representative women with lived expertise committee

Appendix B

Small Group Work to Develop Calls to Action (flip chart notes)

Day 1 - Session 1

Group 1

- Lack of individualized housing
- More one-to-one support and advocacy
- The system is difficult to navigate
- Education: Women in crisis need to know what resources are out there, re: transition houses and shelters
- More work is needed to reduce/ eliminate systemic barriers
- More flexible with funding and control on how and where funds should be used
- Do not centralize hubs (community entities)
- Core training for service providers, and networking between service providers
- Give women a safe space
- If it is housing first, women should not have to leave the family home
- No women turned away

Group 2

- Need a manifesto for First Nations, Métis and Inuit women: what I want, how I want it and when I want it. With a manifesto we can aspire to achieve it
- What do we see when we look at homelessness?
  - » Secure housing, housing that makes sense for everyone
- Women who are incarcerated need to have their voices heard
  - » More support is needed for incarcerated women
  - » Screening obstacles when attempting to access supports, resources and housing
  - » Indigenous women and women of colour disproportionately affected
- Women with lived expertise must always be the center of focus
  - » Support the different needs of different women; be inclusive
- Organizations need to have safe ways of working with and supporting women
- Government wants easy solutions. The women's sector is not easy
- Meet young Indigenous women where they are at
- Fill gaps in services through funding, such as life skills and parenting
- Support moms who have lost their kids to government care
- Be flexible to support moms
- Women have the right to define what family means to them
- Create programming for women who are forced into high risk lifestyles:
  - » Women who are evicted from their homes and forced to enter shelters
  - » Women who are older (50-60) who have lost their jobs and or are not able to get a job

What We Want:

- Rural (30%) & urban (70%) funding for housing split
- Gendered housing
- Intentionally designed, safe space for children
- Functional homes with dignity and healing
- Housing recognized as a human right NOT a charity
  - » Not institutionalized but integrated into communities
- Do **NOT** segregate housing based on economic status (rich/poor)
- Women define where to build these homes
- Community-centred approach so that women can define "home"
- Flexible funding to meet women where they're at (i.e. affordable, healing, accessible, dignified)
- Safe housing for all women as defined by women
- Build a geography of hope that lifts all women up with an infrastructure built intentionally with dignity, healing, community, play, safety and accessibility.

How:

- Reconciliation
  - » Meet the 94 calls to action (from The Truth and Reconciliation Commission)
  - » WORK THE HELL OUT OF IT!
- Lived expertise and women-centred focus
- Investment
  - » Rural 30% / Urban 70%
  - » North & South
  - » Coast to coast to coast

Group 3

- Supports for women who do not have adequate resources
- Not enough specialized resources
- Women in shelters may not be not aware of resources and staff not skilled to refer to resources
- Not enough market housing
- Honour women's lived experience
- There is a lack of support experienced by women within their communities and families
- Better communication is needed for system navigation
- Increased housing supports during and after recovery
- One umbrella of resources
- Too much bureaucracy, it is not accessible/personalized
- Women are constantly being referred to different agencies
- Lack of financial resources available
- Women are not enough at the center of the process
- Barriers from and within each agency
- Women are unjustly losing their children to government care
- Support families as a whole and work with them long-term
- Women who experience violence/ abuse in intimate relationship experience unsafe housing, housing instability and homelessness
- Behind every statistic is a women with lived experience

Group 4

Call to Action

- How federal government funding given to provinces is accessible to housing
  - » Disability benefit instead of tax credit benefit
  - » Only accessible spots are studios and this needs to stop
- Streamline and control what the landlords can restrict and what they can ask renters, i.e. criminal record check
  - » Laws exist in some provinces but are not monitored, so it is hard to hold landlords accountable
  - » Who is holding who accountable? Landlord education/engagement is needed backed up by policy
- Address women's homelessness issues
  - » Work with women's organizations to address issues in each area as they differ.
- Lack of women's homelessness issues and how it is defined
  - » Differences in homelessness are not acknowledged
- Systemic issues with women losing income assistance when children are removed
  - » If a woman loses custody of her child(ren), she must be able to keep income assistance for a period as she works to regain custody
  - » Women on disability are affected differently and lose custody of their children because mothering is different
  - » Policy shifts are needed to support mothers
- Affordable rent
  - » Subsidize low income housing
    - ° Rent subsidized to women, not landlord
  - » Monitor to stop studio apartment rents being raised
- Housing benefit must not result in rent increases
  - » Benefit must also be non-restricted i.e. right now, students cannot apply
  - » Guaranteed annual income is needed
- Funding/policies for women's housing must withstand changes in government.
- Funding for rent supplied to women who are incarcerated
- Transition houses are considered as though the women are housed and therefore affects ability to get permanent housing
- Women's homelessness not recognized
  - » Women resorting to alternatives that are making them vulnerable
    - ° Must recognize all the ways women experience homelessness
    - ° Two women cannot share accommodation/the same address if they are on social assistance; income assistance reduced

Federal Provincial Territorial (FPT) Table – Have women with lived expertise:

- Homeless shelters with screens between women and men leave women vulnerable to rape
  - » Diverse experiences
    - ° Not all women have the same experience, i.e. women who are younger and women who are older, women who are racialized, etc.
- Find accountability on different levels
  - » Women receiving their own money
  - » Support the community i.e. spend on children, education
- Affordable, accessible, safe housing for funding tied to women's homelessness
  - » State principal clearly
- When women feel safe they feel comfortable to use their voice
  - » Spaces dedicated to women
  - » More opportunities for women and women's organizations to build relationships, share stories and strategies together
  - » Women working on the streets to feel safe
  - » The fight for women-only space continues
  - » Women don't access required services in co-ed spaces due to a fear of running into their abusers

Group 5

- Women not having services available when they need them
- How do we ensure women are heard without having to expose their personal lives?
- **STOP THE VAT and SPDAT TOOLS**
  - » Tools that screen women for housing are invasive assessment tools that need to be stopped
  - » Women are being re-traumatized while being screened for basic human rights (housing)
  - » Screening tools limit the ability to advocate
- Financial means (accountability) cannot dictate the level of care
- Having/needing flexibility with services based on the needs of women and communities
- Highlight Inuit women specifically with respect to lack of services and representation
  - » More specific responses to unique communities and recognition of systemic barriers associated with race, class, etc.
- More funding for women-only spaces
  - » Make funding more accessible for small organizations and more inclusive to all regions and remote communities
- Make sure the definition of homelessness reflects what it actually looks like for women

Group 6

- Service providers still need self-reflection for their practices
- Need on-demand services
  1. Housing
  2. Detox
  3. Mental Health Services
- Barriers' causing re-traumatization
  - » Lack of integration of services
  - » Lack of resources (not enough, supplement)
  - » Need for more individualization in services
  - » Too many extensive waiting lists
  - » Lack of education in community
- Services and housing not trauma informed
- VAT question system (screening tool) is problematic
  - » Acts as a marker that follows women
- Homeless counts miss women but policies are based on this analysis
  - » Need gender lens on all data collection
  - » Instead of tweaking tools, fast track those most vulnerable
  - » Allow service providers to cover some of the vulnerabilities
  - » Trust service providers to do work
- More choice in housing options instead of placing vulnerable populations near harmful areas (regardless of desire)
  - » Still comes down to affordability
  - » Lack of resources to build community
    - ° Need funding for programming for peer support, transportation and social connection
- Co-ed spaces are unsafe
  - » Tend to be male dominated
- Stop overemphasizing centralization
- Guaranteed income/livable wage
  - » Poverty leads to further trauma
  - » Childcare integration with housing
  - » Funding for services, not just for brick and mortar and for outcomes
- Holding provinces/territories accountable
  - » Long-term funding, and funding successful programs long-term
- Portable rent supplement focused on local housing needs
- Tools that inform policy
  - » New tools that are trauma informed and intersectional (i.e. assessments, homeless counts, definition of homeless)
  - » Tweaking old tools doesn't work i.e. VAT, SPDAT. Need to start over with a gender lens
  - » Move away from centralized services
- Flexible funding structure
- Core funding for service providers to offer services based on community need, not based on a pre-set standard
- Accountability
  - » Coordination and integration of various federal strategies
  - » Provinces and municipalities held accountable
- Financial adequacy: Guaranteed Income
  - » Helps with survival and quality of life
  - » Rent supplement

Day 1 - Session 2

Group 1

- Making sure all National Strategies are speaking to each other
  - Lack of communication and not honouring lived expertise
- Asserting autonomy
  - Switch from outputs to OUTCOMES
- No resource to do the work properly with flexibility
- Why build more jails?
  - Build housing! We need more housing!
- If women are housed, children should and will be at home with their mothers/families
- Need Guaranteed Income
- Hold federal government accountable
  - Where's the money going or being allocated?
- Don't take tools created for men and tweak them, create tools geared for women!

Group 2

- How to define reconciliation and implement it within our organizations?
  - What it means?
- Create a manifesto:
  - what, when, how
- What we want: safe and affordable housing
- Federal government needs to take leadership with funding for women living on reserves
  - Canadian government needs to look at the way women's child/ren are taken away
    - Put legislation in place and follow through to support women living on reserves, and to keep women and children together
- Look at the needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women
  - Different needs in different regions (provinces/territories)
    - Create a committee with women who are/have experience with each program created
- Count what matters, i.e., housing, income, child tax

Group 3

- What we want:
  - Programs for women of colour and women with disabilities
  - Every woman to have their voice heard
  - Services for women by women
  - Decisions for women by women
  - Accessibility to the services
  - Access to intersectional feminist counselling/mental wellness providers
  - Empathy
  - Access to peer support services
  - Theoretical understanding
  - Cultural shift
  - Good connections to the federal government for transferring money

Group 4

- Stop building inaccessible housing
  - What they are building does not accommodate the needs (universal design)
  - Make housing a right, not a privilege
  - Funding unique to needs of the community
  - Housing designed by women, for women
  - Women constructors to design our community
- Why are we not demanding housing and services?!
  - Fit into boxes created by others, but not what we need
  - Women in Canada need housing
  - Don't want housing, we NEED housing
  - We have the ability to determine what we need
  - Violence against women has become diluted, all women have experienced violence
- Children in care are homeless
- Women not given a chance because system has deemed them unfit
- Prioritize mother and child/ren together
- Not leaning to foster care and or putting children in group homes – keep families together

Group 5

- Social workers taking children from moms with disabilities
- Judiciary
  - » Not exposed to diversity
  - » Male dominated authority
- Paradigm shift is needed
  - » Make voices known – make them LOUDER
- Government agencies must work better with other agencies
- Policies and systems changed due to single incident rather than looking at the whole
- Government needs to be flexible
- Women's voices need to be heard
  - » Continue the conversation

Group 6

- Violence against women must be intolerable
  - » There should be more campaigns for men to understand that violence is NOT acceptable instead of all the victim campaigns
  - » Be supportive of women who callout abusers in their community
  - » Respond to gender-based violence intersectionality
    - ° Gender-based analysis in all policies
  - » More funding/focus on children who witness abuse
  - » Criticize the normalizing of violence against women in media and pop culture
- More supports for "moms" who have had their child/ren taken away due to incarceration
- Universal design to accommodate disability accessibility
- More homes/shelters on reserves and in remote communities
- Alignment between provincial and federal goals and responsibilities
- In addition to keeping existing funding, run programs through gender focused analysis
  - » Make sure lived experiences are accounted for in creating this analysis
- Housing with integrated supports for families
- Many existing programs are high barrier
- Federal funding can be inaccessible
  - » Women punished by removing funding/resources
- Look in to different funding mechanisms
  - » Try to find ways for funds to not flow through cities/provinces
  - » Rural communities often can be disadvantaged due to focus on urban communities
- Funding for home ownership – provides stability

Day 1 - Session 3

Group 1

- No notes from small group discussion

Group 2

- Build space within the government for women to share their stories
  - » Stories help to change legislation and break down walls and provide the urgency needed to change
- Who gets to tell their stories?
  - » At what point is it empowering?
- Specific Calls to Action
  - » Be accountable and transparent on the many upcoming strategies
  - » Housing initiatives must include support
  - » Use the shared stories to make impactful change, empower the person to make a change

Group 3

- Holistic approach for support services
- Money to go directly to women's services
- Money to go directly to the frontline support workers
- Lack of affordable housing
- 50% of funding allocated to women housing programs
- Funding will be decided by the women, for the women
- Counting women in shelters and institutions in homeless statistics
- Statistics disaggregated
- Family investment
- Gender lens
- Guaranteed annual income created through gender lens by women for women
- To ensure family preservation and sustainable housing

Group 4

- Call for set-asides for women's housing (women and children) at the federal level
- Real details
  - What percentage is reasonable?
  - Reinstate the Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP)
    - Accessible to northern communities
    - How much?
    - Is it based on region?
- Include women in any redesign of the program (Shelter Enhancement Program)
- Serve most vulnerable members in the community
- Set aside money to start flowing now!
  - Before the end of the fourth quarter
  - Guaranteed annual income
  - What is needed to get it flowing?
  - Transparency on the tracking
  - Set asides based on needs
- In the north, there is a lack of capacity
  - Modular housing by the end of fiscal year
  - Inuit women to lead the consultation process. Four modular housing projects, one in each region (Inuit/Nunangat)
- Second stage housing for women and child/ren in Montreal
- Subsidy attached to income/child tax to go through gender equity lens

Group 5

- Given cultural/political/social climate, the federal government needs to release this funding NOW
- We may not see another opportunity for funding for women's housing or this Symposium for some time
- Groups that want to build… what do they need to be ready?
- Need sustainable funding
- Ongoing operating expenses/funds
- No more funding in the form of "loans"

Group 6

- Funding for social support of organizations to provide education
  - Down to the elementary level
- Funding/policy that takes rural/remote areas into account
- National definition of women's homelessness:
  - Needs to be intersectional
  - Consult with women with lived expertise to define
  - De-stigmatize homelessness to help define
- Streamlining programs with an eye to flexibility and openness
  - Make funding directly accessible to service providers
- Ensure accessibility of service to women of lived expertise
- Find a way to count women's homelessness more accurately
- Stop worrying about ensuring someone "deserves" help
- Create initiatives/programs to educate/empower women
- Funding for decent wages for staff