



2nd Annual
**Pan Canadian Voice for Women's Housing
2018 Symposium**



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

Pan Canadian Voice for Women's Housing 2018 Symposium

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Kate Curry	Native Women's Association of Canada
Julia Hardy	Regina Immigrant Women's Centre
Holly Jarrett	Lived Experience Advisory Council, CAEH
Hélène Langevin	Maison Simonne-Monet-Chartrand
Lise Martin	ShelterSafe/Women's Shelters Canada
Miia Suokonautio	YWCA Halifax
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2018 Symposium Funders

The 2018 PCVWH Symposium was funded by CMHC and BC Housing



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Jean-Francois	Maison Simonne Monet-Chartrand
Hélène Langevin	Cambridge Bay
Topsey Lessard	Battered Women's Support Services
Angela Marie MacDougall	Yukon Women's Transition Home Society
Tracey MacEwan	Women's Shelters Canada
Lise Martin	A Way Home Kamloops
Katherine McParland	Community Advocate
Bianca Mercer	Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada
Samantha Michaels	Native Women's Shelter of Montreal
Marti Miller	Minwaashin Lodge Indigenous
Sabrina Monette	Women's Support Centre
Michele Nadeau	YWCA Moncton
Nicole Northcott	Hope Haven Transition House
Danya O'Malley	PEI Family Violence Prevention Services
Mary Saulnier-Taylor	Coverdale Centre for Women Inc.
Jewelless Smith	Council of Canadians with Disabilities
Miia Suokonautio	YWCA Halifax
Dolly Williams	Preston & Area Housing Fund

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A Summary of the Proceedings of the 2018 Symposium

An inclusive group of 40 women from every province and territory, representing First Nations, Métis and Inuit women's organizations, women with lived expertise, immigrant and refugee women's organizations, the black and women of colour communities, trans women, the women's disability community, and shelters, transition houses, women's centres and advocacy organizations, actively participated in the two-day October 2018 Symposium in Vancouver.

At the start of the day, the Federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Jean-Yves Duclos, welcomed Symposium delegates via video. Afterwards, to set the stage for the 2018 Pan-

Canadian Voice for Women's Housing Symposium, Maura Gowans moderated a conversation with four women with lived expertise including Bianca Mercer, Vivian Bomberry, Topsey Lessard, and a community advocate from Regina. These five women shared their personal stories, as well as their knowledge about what constitutes appropriate, adequate housing. They also discussed the other necessary services they believe are required by women, and by women with children, to enable themselves and live their lives to the fullest.

Throughout the day, short presentations were also made by six women from various parts of the country. Women spoke from a range of perspectives including



lived expertise, local-area service providers, and women representing national organizations. Angela Marie MacDougall, Ann Decter, Dolly Williams, Holly Jarrett, Jewelles Smith and Laura Budd each spoke for five minutes about a range of issues including: housing and being discriminated against; building housing that is accessible for women with disAbilities, including mothers with disAbilities; being more than just service providers, becoming part of a liberation movement; making housing welcoming for all women; systemic racism; and the pressing need for a clear definition of women's homelessness.

Based on these compelling presentations by women with lived expertise and others, Symposium participants engaged in small group conversations to develop six Calls to Action by the end of the first day of the Symposium. The Calls to Action pay special attention to:

- 1 Housing and Women with Lived Expertise
- 2 First Nations, Métis and Inuit Housing
- 3 Infrastructure Funding for Housing
- 4 A Voice for Women's Housing
- 5 Operational Funding for Women's and Women-Serving Organizations
- 6 Women and a Guaranteed Annual Income

As well as government representatives joining the Symposium on the second day, a live video stream of BC Premier John Horgan was broadcast on day one. The Premier announced the BC government will build 280 new homes for women and children fleeing violence, involving 12 projects around the province. The housing will be operated by non-profit providers who specialize in housing women and children. This is the first major investment in transition housing in Canada in more than two decades, with more to come.

Government representatives at the Symposium listened and learned from women. Evan Siddall, President and CEO of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), and the BC Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Selina Robinson, were in attendance. The six Calls to Action were shared with Evan Siddall. Siddall listened to Symposium participants as they shared their knowledge about housing, and their experiences with housing that met their needs, as well as housing that was inadequate. In response and on behalf of the CMHC, Evan Siddall made five commitments to the Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing Symposium.

The women who participated at this second annual Symposium of the Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing went away exhilarated and revitalized to continue to advocate for and ensure that CHMC and the National Housing Strategy provide appropriate housing that serves women where they are at in their lives.

Six Calls to Action

1

Housing and Women with Lived Expertise

Recognizing that there are national strategies being developed on housing, poverty and violence against women, government must acknowledge that it does not have lived expertise and must be prepared to listen and learn from those who do:

The Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing calls on CMHC to develop the National Housing Strategy (NHS) in consultation with those most affected;

We ask that CMHC develop the NHS in consultation with the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Strategy to End Violence Against Women - we advocate for those strategies to make women's housing a priority; and

We ask that CMHC carry out the NHS in a transparent way and be accountable for its progress to stakeholders in women's housing.

2

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Housing

In the spirit of reconciliation and recognizing that Indigenous housing is a right under the United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Article 23:

The Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing calls on the federal government to ensure that all housing responds to First Nations, Métis and Inuit women;

We call for housing that is culturally sensitive with appropriate regulations and accommodations and that is administered by First Nations, Métis and Inuit women - to this end, the housing must be inclusive of healing and treatment centres;

We also call on the government of Canada to take immediate steps to reverse the policy that excludes Inuit from accessing federal shelter funding; and

We call on the federal government to recognize the needs of women and children in urban centres and out of Indigenous communities (off reserve).

“ **Housing is a *human right*;
it's not charity** ”

Symposium Participant



3 Infrastructure Funding for Housing

Recognizing that provinces are not equally committed to flowing money to communities or equally committed to supporting women's organizations:

The Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing calls on CMHC to reinstate the Shelter Enhancement Program* immediately, allowing for both shelter and other kinds of housing for women, and equal to 25% of the total NHS funding envelope; and

We also call on CMHC to make this funding available to on and off reserve projects.

*A 2009 evaluation of the Shelter Enhancement Program was overwhelmingly positive.

4 A Voice for Women's Housing

Recognizing that the government of Canada must take immediate responsibility to end systemic violence towards women and ensure that National Housing policies are women-centred:

The Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing calls on the federal government and CMHC to consult with and provide ongoing funding to the Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing.

5

Operational Funding for Women’s and Women-Serving Organizations

Recognizing the need to ensure adequate and appropriate operational and program funding to women’s and women-serving organizations to meet the needs of women where they are at in a timely, flexible, and responsive manner, taking into account the economic realities of each of the regions, and the complexities of women’s issues in those communities:

The Pan-Canadian Voice for Women’s Housing calls for funding for women’s and women-serving organizations, which is comparable to the level of funding for services and programs provided directly by government and broader public sector agencies; and

We also call on the federal government to ensure that community-based front line workers and organizational and program staff are competitively compensated.

6

Women and a Guaranteed Annual Income

Recognizing that poverty and housing go hand-in-hand and many women cannot currently afford safe, accessible, affordable, sustainable housing:

The Pan-Canadian Voice for Women’s Housing calls on CMHC to advocate for a Guaranteed Annual Income program that is reflective of regional realities. The program should be built using an intersectional gender lens with the participation of a diverse cross-section of women. It must be responsive to women’s self-identified needs such as ensuring family preservation, sustainable, rent-geared-to-income housing, strong transitional supports, and be in addition to child benefits.



CMHC's Commitments to the Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing

Evan Siddall, President and CEO of CMHC, made Five commitments to the Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing Symposium:

- CMHC will:
1. Publicize the Six Calls to Action through social media with a link to the report;
 2. Share the Six Calls to Action with Provincial and Territorial governments;
 3. Maintain transparency and accountability vis-à-vis Provincial and Territorial governments and one third of NHS funding to projects targeting women.
 4. Champion the cause of women's unique housing needs with housing providers; and
 5. Support the Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing by supporting another Symposium next year (at least).

Women with Lived Experiences Share their Stories about Housing

What does good housing mean to you?

Good housing means I have the necessities such as heat, water and electricity. It can also mean to build, establish, strengthen and bond with whoever lives within the home. It's also a place where I can feel safe and have a roof over my head, and it can be a place where fond memories or bad experiences occur.

Describe a time when your housing was inadequate.

As a single mother, I waited for a couple of years until I was able to get a two-bedroom unit. Living in a one-bedroom unit with my son was inadequate because we did not have our own space. Therefore, the living room/kitchen area became my bedroom. I was grateful to have a roof over my head, and yet I felt we needed bigger space. When a two-bedroom unit became available, we didn't stay too long because we moved away.

Today's housing project isn't the old home anymore; they're tearing out all the farms and homes in the area we're living to put in new development. Housing is not the only thing changing; animals and nature are affected as well.

Topsey Lessard is an Inuit from Cambridge Bay, but now living in the Lower Mainland.

“The Women's Housing Symposium is the most incredible symposium/conference I have ever participated in. The atmosphere was so inclusive, welcoming, and everyone had a voice.

I was so inspired how together the women co-created knowledge and understanding and the opportunity to share our voices with decision-makers.

Thank you for re-charging my energy and creating such an incredible space for women”

Katherine McParland, Executive Director, A Way Home Kamloops

What does good housing mean to you?

Housing is safety, security and quality of life!

Describe a time when your housing was inadequate.

When I was in my early 20s I was just out of university and financially bankrupt. I was unable to provide the funds for first and last month's rent, or to find accommodation in my rural community that I could afford, or that would provide a safe place to express my gender identity. I had to move back into my parent's basement. I had a room with a bed and minimal furnishings that I could call my own, but no access to come and go without using communal space. I also had no space to do my own cooking or laundry that would allow me to express my gender safely.

Without being able to come and go without scrutiny, or to do my own laundry or wear clothes that I am comfortable in, I spent much of my time alone, withdrawn and in a depressive state for

several years. I would engage in unsafe behaviour such as taking clothes with me and finding parks or underused roadways to change from my masculine clothes into feminine clothes. Wearing feminine clothes gave me a few minutes of joy in presenting as I saw myself and not as I was expected to be. I could not go about my day without constantly being aware of and preventing myself from being out and visible. This took an extreme amount of emotional energy and had me in a passive suicidal depressive state for years.

I was fortunate to find work with my sister and her husband (though still in housing that did not fit my needs). This increased income helped me to seek more suitable housing when I could afford it, two years later.

Laura Budd, an out proud trans woman, and a wife and mother of two awesome children. An advocate for the Gender and Sexual Diverse community, an outspoken motivational speaker about mental wellness, and the Education Coordinator for Moose Jaw Pride.

“Being a participant in this year's Symposium really made me feel good. I loved how we all became one energy source feeding off each other's ideas and really got out of our heads together. It was the first time in a long time that I felt my opinion was needed and more importantly wanted.”

Bianca Mercer, Lived Experience Expert



“ ***I listened and I was heard. Very interesting to hear the life experience/expertise. Unfortunately, we have similar problems/obstacles across Canada.***

Symposium Participant

”

What does good housing mean to you?

To me good housing means standard, affordable housing with adequate provision of safe clean water, sanitation, drainage and garbage management. Good housing should not be overcrowded, not be exposed to extreme cold or heat, or problems detrimental to one's health. Even when housing is well designed, built and maintained, it should not mismatch between what the property provides and the occupier needs. Unaffordable housing affects household budgets, health, education and the ability to gain and sustain employment.

Describe a time when your housing was inadequate.

I am currently living in a shared space with 54 women of all ages. I have found it extremely unhygienic to share the washrooms. Some women have no sense of hygiene at all and sometimes poop on top of the pan of the commode or on the floor! Some women use sex toys in the washrooms in an intoxicated state. Some women go naked at night knocking on other women's doors to get women to open the door.

Having to share the kitchen is also difficult. Some people do not clean up after themselves. I cannot keep anything in the fridge or kitchen as people steal. After cooking, everything has to be carried down to my room and put in my tiny little fridge. It becomes very inconvenient to eat and sleep in the bedroom.

The building is more than 50 years old. The tap water smells and tastes gross. It's not very safe for drinking. The air conditioning is also full of dust since it's a very old facility. It has caused health problems for me since I am allergic to dust. There is no dignity in living in a shared space, which is like a hostel. It can be a temporary living space but it cannot be called a home.

A Community Advocate from Regina who lives in shared space.

What does good housing mean to you?

Safe, affordable, sufficient, healthy environment. A community. A place where I am treated with dignity and respect. Abuse is not tolerated, nor is racism or discrimination.

Describe a time when your housing was inadequate.

When I was homeless and living in a park. When I was a youth in care and had no home, I had nowhere to belong. I was harmed many times because I did not have a safe place to go. In many of the places I lived the people who worked there preyed on women. The places were unsafe and unsanitary.

Maura Gowans is a Dene, mother, fighter, survivor, warrior - the one who walks gently beside resiliency.

“ *I was completely heard. I feel that all that I had gone through I have not gone through in vain. Being able to share it on such a big platform where making a change is possible; my voice was heard.* ”

Symposium Participant





What does good housing mean to you?

Good housing means a safe, warm, adequate place (furniture, kitchen appliances, clean place) that a person can reside in for a long period of time without worry of being homeless. Having a sense of satisfaction and ease in your housing is also important.

“ **Good housing means a safe, warm, adequate place...**

Bianca Mercer, Lived Experience Expert

”

Describe a time when your housing was inadequate.

I really enjoy the [women-only supportive housing program], but I also feel that here in Nova Scotia there is inadequate support to help women become independent. I don't want to be on Income Assistance my whole life. When I got a job and became part of a paid program, the [staff] at the [supportive housing program] started to say I was at risk of losing my housing because I wasn't on welfare.

There has to be another way we can allow women to become independent and not feel, because they are growing into more of an individual who is less dependent on the government, fear of being homeless again.

Bianca Mercer is an independent woman with a lot of lived experience who wants to make the world a better place; fighting the system and changing the world one story and lived experience expertise panel at a time.



What does good housing mean to you?

Safety and security was crucial to find for my housing needs. This means that there were rules and regulations that other tenants and guests were required to follow. Cameras that were installed that provided another level of security. In my last residence there were monthly inspections and pest control was carefully followed.

Describe a time when your housing was inadequate.

In 2008 I became homeless due to the potential of violence and while spending some time at [second-stage housing] I was eventually, after one month, required to move into a [women-only SRO] in Vancouver.

While the SRO was clean and tidy, after about four months the organization started reconstructing the ground floor, removing asbestos and lead paint on the outside. The paint was removed by an electric sander and huge amounts of dust blew in through the open window as I was sleeping. I suffered breathing difficulties and was coughing up blood from the dust I inhaled. Also the asbestos was removed without any type of protection for the residents.

I still fear that I may have breathed in this known carcinogen and will eventually suffer lung disease.

Vivian Bomberry is a First Nations woman who has been unwillingly exposed to dangerous high-risk chemicals.

Next Steps for the Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing

2018 PAN-CANADIAN VOICE FOR WOMEN'S HOUSING A SYMPOSIUM

The next Pan-Canadian Voice for Women's Housing Symposium will be held in Winnipeg in June 2019. CMHC is committed to funding the next Symposium. The new members of the Advisory Circle, in addition to planning for the third annual Symposium, will explore ideas around keeping PCVWH participants informed, including the possibility of developing a newsletter or setting up a PCVWH intranet. A working group will also be constituted to begin work on defining women's homelessness.

2018/2019 Advisory Circle Members

Janice Abbott (BC)
Annetta Armstrong (Manitoba)
Laura Budd (Saskatchewan)

Lori Deets (Saskatchewan)
Lorie English (Manitoba)

Holly Jarrett (National)
Hélène Langevin (Quebec)
Bianca Mercer (Nova Scotia)
Danya O'Malley (PEI)

Jewelless Smith (National)

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