Regulations Reimagined:
Implementing Culturally Appropriate Housing for Indigenous People Living in Winnipeg, Edmonton and Saskatoon

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Executive Summary

Due to ongoing colonial systems that have displaced and disrupted Indigenous ways of life, Indigenous people in Canada are twice as likely as non-Indigenous people to live in inadequate housing. Much of the housing in Canada is not culturally sensitive and assumes a one-size-fits-all approach. Indigenous people living in cities should be able to live in dwellings that allow them to feel safe and secure and provide spaces for cultural practices. This capstone looks to fill this gap by investigating culturally appropriate housing provided by non-profit organizations in urban settings and the barriers in policies at the municipal level that prevent the creation of these projects.

This research employs three methods: 1) A document analysis of the development plans for the cities of Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Edmonton. 2) A precedent analysis of completed culturally appropriate housing in these three cities. 3) Semi-structured interviews with municipal and non-profit staff. The document analysis found differences in the ways that each city references Indigenous-specific concerns, with some creating direct policies and others incorporating vague overarching objectives. The precedent analysis showcases six success stories of culturally appropriate housing across the three cities. The precedents highlight the diversity of housing that is possible and provide lessons for future projects. The semi-structured interviews provide insight into the barriers present at the municipal level and reveal additional systemic barriers for Indigenous people accessing housing. Interview participants were able to share their perspectives on solutions moving forward and ways to improve the delivery of culturally appropriate housing.

The findings of this research highlight the complexity of the subject matter. The delivery of culturally appropriate housing is rooted both in upholding Indigenous self-determination while also identifying and removing barriers at the municipal level. Culturally appropriate housing should be created for and by Indigenous people, and municipal policies and zoning by-laws must continue to be decolonized to uphold inclusionary practices.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Significance of Research

Due to ongoing colonial systems that have displaced and disrupted Indigenous ways of life, Indigenous people in Canada are twice as likely as non-Indigenous people to live in inadequate housing (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2023). There are a growing number of studies and reports written and co-written by Indigenous people outlining how housing could be improved to be culturally appropriate, safe, affordable and sustainable; however, there are often municipal barriers that make it difficult to create this type of housing. This research looks to fill the gap and investigate what municipalities need to do to reduce the barriers to creating culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous people.

This research is important because simply building more housing will not solve the housing crisis that many Indigenous people are facing today. The housing being produced is not culturally sensitive and assumes a one-size-fits-all approach. Indigenous people living in Canada should be able to live in dwellings that allow them to feel safe and secure and provide spaces for cultural practices. This research looks to identify the barriers present at the municipal level that are preventing these types of housing from being built. The hope is that this will help municipalities adapt their housing policies to allow for culturally appropriate housing to be created within their cities.

This capstone focuses on Indigenous culturally appropriate housing provided by non-profit housing organizations off-reserve. Many of the housing precedents in this research also feature social supports for individuals recently experiencing homelessness and substance use issues. While it is made clear through this research that there is an overrepresentation of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, this is not indicative

of all Indigenous people. Culturally appropriate housing is important for all Indigenous people to access regardless of their housing status and is something that should be incorporated into all different housing forms and tenures, not just non-profit housing.

1.2 Positionality Statement

I am a non-Indigenous Canadian committed to creating communities where everyone is included. The historical and ongoing injustices faced by Indigenous People in Canada are not something I learned about through my public school education. As I completed my undergraduate degree in Geography, the topic came up more and more as I learned about the history of residential schools, the displacement of Indigenous Nations, and the `60s scoop. I learned how settler colonialism is not an event but an ongoing process that changes shape over time but is ever present in the systems that uphold our society today. Each time I think I have it all figured out, there is a new fact or story about settler colonialism that raises more questions in my mind and results in my feeling more confused. As I approach the end of my master's degree, I feel apprehensive about stepping into the field of planning. Over the last two years, I've struggled to articulate what my role is as a planner. How can I uplift and make space for Indigenous voices? How can I ensure that policies and processes are working for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit? Criticizing and analyzing municipal planning documents and continuing to learn from those with lived experience is how I have operated in this capstone and how I want to continue operating moving forward in my career. This capstone explores what non-Indigenous planners can do to improve municipal housing policies and to show the opportunities for collaboration with Indigenous Nations and organizations. We have a lot of

work ahead of us as non-Indigenous people in Canada as we work towards true reconciliation and action, but I am hopeful we can do it. I am committed to this ongoing process of learning and growing, and I hope I can inspire others to do the same.

1.3 Research Questions

To guide this research, the following questions were explored:

1. What is the current state of culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous peoples in Canadian prairie cities?
2. How do development plans enable or block culturally appropriate housing?
3. How can non-profits and municipalities work together to create culturally appropriate Indigenous housing?
4. What needs to change at the municipal level to accommodate culturally appropriate housing?

1.4 Report Structure

Section 1 (Introduction): This chapter introduces the topic and its significance to municipal planning. My positionality statement is included along with the guiding research questions. This section ends with an outline of the structure of this report.

Section 2 (Context): This section provides background information and Statistics Canada data on the three cities investigated in this capstone. Information is provided on population statistics as well as a brief introduction to the state of housing for Indigenous people in these cities.

Section 3 (Literature Review): The literature review provides an overview of the primary academic discourses on culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous People in Canada. It includes three main sections: defining what culturally appropriate housing is, the common themes identified, and the role of municipalities. The literature review concludes by identifying the gaps in the current academic research, which is what this research hopes to fill.

Section 4 (Methods): The methods section outlines what type of research was done and how it was undertaken. It describes how the document analysis, precedent analysis and semi-structured interviews were conducted.

Section 5 (Findings):

5.1 Document Analysis: This section illustrates the findings from the analysis of three development plans. The documents that were analyzed included *OurWinnipeg 2045* (2022), *The Official Community Plan of the City of Saskatoon* (2020), and the *Edmonton City Plan* (2020). Their policies and language concerning Indigenous people and housing were coded and analyzed.

5.2 Precedent Analysis: This section outlines six examples of culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous people in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Edmonton. Each precedent was analyzed using a rubric for ease of

comparison. Photos and a short description of each are found in this section to provide examples of success stories and inspiration for future projects.

5.3 Semi-Structured Interviews: This section describes the main findings from the three semi-structured interviews that were conducted with non-profit and municipal staff in Winnipeg and Edmonton. The findings feature three themes: barriers to accessing housing for Indigenous people, barriers to the inclusion of culturally appropriate elements, and solutions moving forward.

Section 6 (Discussion): The discussion weaves together the findings from the literature review, document analysis, precedent analysis, and semi-structured interviews to build a deeper analysis and understanding of the research topic.

Section 7 (Conclusion): The final section revisits the original research questions, provides direction for future research, and offers a few final thoughts on the research.

2. Context

Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Saskatoon were selected for this research to provide examples from each of the three prairie provinces in Canada. Both Winnipeg and Saskatoon are the largest cities in their respective provinces. Winnipeg has a population of 749,607 (Statistics Canada, 2022g), while Saskatoon has a population of 266,141 (Statistics Canada, 2022f). Although Edmonton is the second-largest city in Alberta, with a total population of just over 1 million people (Statistics Canada, 2022e), it has a significantly higher proportion of Indigenous people than Calgary, the largest city in Alberta. As outlined in Table 1, Winnipeg has the highest proportion of Indigenous residents at 12.4% of the population, followed by Saskatoon at 11.2%, and Edmonton at 6.3% of the population identifying as Indigenous (Statistics Canada, 2022a; 2022b; 2022c).

Table 1: *Indigenous populations in Edmonton, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg compared to the overall Indigenous population in Canada.*

	Indigenous Population (2021) % of total population	First Nation (%)	Métis (%)	Inuit (%)
Edmonton	6.3% (87,600 people)	44.9%	50.6%	1.5%
Winnipeg	12.4% (102,074 people)	44.3%	52.7%	0.5%
Saskatoon	11.5% (29,885 people)	52.7%	44.1%	0.4%
Canada	5% (1,807,250 people)	58%	34.5%	3.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2022a; 2022b; 2022c

According to Census Canada data, Indigenous people are the fastest-growing population in Canada, increasing by 8% between 2016 and 2021, compared to 5.4% growth of the non-Indigenous population during the same time (Government of Canada, 2023).

Due to the ongoing impacts of colonialism, Indigenous people in these three cities represent the majority of individuals who are experiencing homelessness. Jesse Thistle, a Métis Cree author from Saskatchewan, describes Indigenous homelessness in the following way.

> Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships (Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness, 2012).

It is important to understand the complexities of Indigenous homelessness, as described by Thistle, to fully grasp the nuances caused by historic and ongoing settler colonialism that have displaced Indigenous Peoples from their traditional ways of life. With this understanding, the importance of providing culturally appropriate housing can be seen as more than just providing shelter, but as a way to provide a safe place to reconnect to Indigenous culture.

Table 2 below summarizes the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in each city based on either the point-in-time counts or by-name lists.

Table 2: *Number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Saskatoon. More than half of the unhoused population identify as Indigenous in all three contexts.*

	# of individuals experiencing homelessness (2022)	# of individuals experiencing homelessness (2024)	% of unhoused population identifying as Indigenous
Edmonton	2519	4697	55% (2024)
Winnipeg	1256	Not Available	70-95% (2024)
Saskatoon	550	1499	80% (2022)

Source: Homeless Hub, 2025; End Homelessness Winnipeg, 2025; City of Saskatoon, 2024b

A point-in-time count is one method to count the number of individuals experiencing homelessness. It is typically conducted between 24 hours to a couple of days, with volunteers stationed at multiple points throughout a city to survey as many unhoused individuals as possible (End Homelessness, 2025). This method was used in Winnipeg and Saskatoon to estimate the number of unhoused individuals in 2024. The by-name list is another method where the number of unhoused individuals is counted by gathering data from service providers (Homeward Trust Edmonton, 2025). This list only accounts for individuals who have accessed services, so it is broadly understood that the true number of individuals experiencing homelessness is underrepresented. This method was used to estimate the number of unhoused individuals living in Edmonton. Both point-in-time counts and by-name lists significantly underestimate the number of women,

youth, and 2SLGBTQQIA+[1] individuals experiencing homelessness (Province of Manitoba, 2025). This is due to the fact that individuals in this demographic may not feel comfortable or safe accessing social services or may not feel safe disclosing their sexual orientation in survey answers and are therefore not included in the count (End Homelessness, 2025). Individuals not officially counted represent the hidden homeless population.

It is important to note that the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in these statistics is a direct result of Canada's legacy of colonialism and ongoing colonial systems (Rachelson et al., 2019). Systems such as health care, child welfare, education, and justice have historically and to this day severed ties between Indigenous Peoples and their land, families, culture and ways of life, which has resulted in intergenerational trauma (Province of Manitoba, 2025). The 2022 Point-in-Time count for Winnipeg found that more than 50% of individuals experiencing homelessness had prior involvement with Child and Family Services (CFS) and that 92.3% of individuals with prior involvement with CFS identified as Indigenous (End Homelessness Winnipeg, 2025).

Information regarding core housing need is another important indicator to assess if housing needs are being met. Core housing need refers to whether a household's housing is falling below at least one indicator threshold for housing adequacy, affordability, or suitability. Housing is deemed inadequate if it needs repair and unsuitable if it does not have enough bedrooms for the size and composition of the household. Table 3 outlines that individuals with Indigenous identity are much more likely than non-Indigenous people to be in core housing need in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Edmonton (Statistics Canada, 2022d).

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1 Two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and all other orientations and genders.

Table 3: *Percent of individuals in Core Housing Need in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Edmonton.*

	Indigenous Identity	Non-Indigenous Identity
Winnipeg	18.2%	7.9%
Saskatoon	18.7%	6.8%
Edmonton	14.8%	7.3%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2022d

Table 4 indicates rental vacancy rates for Winnipeg, Saskatoon and Edmonton according to CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) data. A vacancy rate of 3% is generally considered to be a balanced market (Federation of Canada Municipalities, 2012). Lower vacancy rates mean that it is more difficult for individuals to find housing and can cause rents to increase due to higher demand. Low vacancy rates can force individuals to remain in housing that is unsuitable due to a lack of other housing options.

Table 4: *Rental vacancy rates determined by CMHC in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Edmonton*

	Vacancy Rate (2024)
Winnipeg	1.7%
Saskatoon	2.0%
Edmonton	3.0%
Canada	2.2%

Source: CMHC Housing Portal, 2024

The high percentage of Indigenous individuals living in dwellings in core housing need combined with low vacancy rates suggests that many Indigenous people are being housed in unsuitable conditions in these three cities but have few other housing options available to them. Understanding the context is important to provide a complete picture of the housing situation and the specific complexities facing Indigenous people.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Historical and ongoing colonial processes have changed the living patterns of Indigenous people in Canada through a series of policies that have and continue to discriminate against Indigenous ways of settlement in favour of the typical Euro-Canadian home and urban form. Before colonization, First Nation, Métis and Inuit had culturally specific housing that supported cultural practices and ways of life in their territories. With the creation of reserves and policies enforced through the Indian Act, First Nations were often relocated to places they were unfamiliar with and forced to remain in these settlements if they wished to receive welfare cheques or family allowances from the Canadian government. Families were taught to keep a 'well-ordered Christian home' which included gender roles that were inconsistent with many Indigenous traditions, and government-funded housing was built based on Euro-Canadian housing designs, ignoring the housing designs that already existed (McCartney, 2016). The typical Euro-Canadian home is highly compartmentalized and prioritizes private over public spaces. Floor plans of these homes tend to disperse people and activities into discrete locations in the home. This is inconsistent with many First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultural practices that feature large gatherings and a need for communal space (Rachelson et al., 2019).

The 2021 Census data showed that Indigenous peoples are twice as likely to live in inadequate housing than non-Indigenous peoples (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2023). The barriers and housing inadequacies faced by First Nation, Inuit and Métis people are culturally specific and further differences are found between those living in rural and urban areas. Municipalities and housing providers have the power to support

cultural activities by creating housing that allows Indigenous practices to flourish (Rachelson et al., 2019). At the end of the day, it is in municipalities' best interests to create housing that will support their residents.

This literature review examines current definitions of culturally appropriate housing and its importance for Indigenous people in Canada. Then, a review of housing themes and methodological approaches when co-creating housing with Indigenous people is discussed. The last section of this review considers how municipalities can support these practices, as well as recommendations for further research.

3.2 What is culturally appropriate housing? Why is it important?

In a report published by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Association, culturally appropriate housing is defined in the following way:

> Culturally appropriate design goes beyond cosmetic features such as murals or decoration and encompasses particular ways of inhabiting private and common spaces informed by cultural factors (Rachelson et al., 2019).

A report published in 2023 by the Native Women's Association of Canada uses the same definition for culturally appropriate housing but also stresses that there cannot be a pan-Indigenous definition, and thorough consultation with Indigenous Nations and individuals is essential. This report goes on to discuss the specific needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit, as well as the specific needs of Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit, transgender, and gender diverse (WG2STGD+) individuals of each group. More generally, cultural safety is about transferring the decision-making power back to Indigenous people and recognizing power imbalances in the delivery of housing. Culturally

appropriate housing allows residents to feel connected to their homes and see their values reflected in these spaces (Hayward, 2022).

Culturally appropriate housing is important to allow Indigenous people to reach their full potential and for cultural practices to be passed on to future generations. Enforcing a Euro-Canadian housing model is a way that cultural superiority is expressed in Canada. Housing should not be reduced to simply providing shelter to individuals but should be viewed as an important community asset (Rachelson et al., 2019). Collaboration and discussion of the needs of Indigenous people must occur to ensure the survival of Indigenous culture and ways of life (Deane & Smoke, 2010).

Culturally appropriate homes are particularly important in urban settings where Indigenous people have historically been excluded (Tomiak, 2017). Lefebvre notes the 'right to the city', is earned simply by living in the city, and through this right, all persons living in a city have the right to complete usage of these urban spaces. Due to colonial representation of what it means to be an Indigenous person and the historic removal of Indigenous people from urban spaces, Indigenous identity has been represented as being incompatible with an urban lifestyle. Indigenous people in the city are seen as inauthentic as their colonial-imposed identity is associated with activities that take place outside of urban areas. A lack of Indigenous identity and recognition within cities is a constant reminder for Indigenous people that they are out of place within these spaces, and a lack of culturally appropriate housing only exacerbates this issue (Peters & Lafond, 2013).

3.3 Common themes identified

Methodological approach

As stated in the previous sections, the only way to create culturally

appropriate housing for Indigenous people is to ensure full participation in the design process. Each Indigenous group will have their own needs and designs that must be incorporated into the production of culturally appropriate housing, but there are different approaches to this type of collaborative research.

Sallese et al. (2024) engaged in a few different participatory approaches with graduate students in interior design at the University of Manitoba and Wasagamack and Garden Hill First Nations (located in Northern Manitoba). Students travelled to Wasagamack and Garden Hill First Nations to engage in 'design cafés', where Elders and youth were able to talk about design elements they wished to include in future housing. The authors and students would spend time in community learning about important cultural practices. The process of learning together and spending time in community was incredibly important for the authors and students to be able to understand the needs of these First Nations. Time spent together included activities that may not seem directly related to housing design but created a holistic picture of what was important to community members.

Deane & Smoke (2010) reiterated the importance of the process, not the outcome, in the way they conducted their participatory approach: "An iterative process demands a process-driven, not outcome-driven way of doing things".

Deane & Smoke (2010) outline the ways they engaged in various forms of participatory engagement with different Indigenous groups from 2003 to 2010. The authors conducted interviews, focus groups and surveys with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to create housing and cultural spaces within the city of Winnipeg. They also engaged in an *Integrated Design Process* (IDP) where Indigenous people, architects, and consultants came

together to develop physical models and sketches of possible housing designs. Decisions about designs were made by consensus, and this process was repeated at all stages of development.

In a study conducted by Larcombe et al., (2020), the concept of 'two-eyed seeing' was utilized when working with two Dene communities, Denesuline First Nation and Sayisi Dene First Nation. In the first phase, students in the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Manitoba went to visit these communities to engage in participatory workshops. Multiple workshops were held over a weeklong period where collaboration between university students, Dene high school students and other community members occurred through feasts, campfire dinners and craft nights. The following year, the authors created an exchange program between the students in Winnipeg and students in the Dene communities. The University of Manitoba students travelled to these communities to engage in everyday activities, such as hunting, drumming, singing, and community feasts to gain a better understanding of what the built structures needed to accommodate. Dene students were then able to travel down to the University and spent a week working alongside architecture students to critique and finalize the housing designs. These designs were then submitted to the authors for further review.

Time spent in community is emphasized as an integral part of the housing design process for each of these authors. The participatory process must involve a deep understanding of the everyday lives of First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities because these activities will form the basis of which elements must be included in the housing design. While the studies highlighted here are examples from on-reserve housing, the same participatory principles apply to creating Indigenous housing in urban settings.

Housing themes

The Native Women's Association of Canada created a report on the development of a sustainable, affordable, and culturally appropriate housing model in 2023 by scanning existing literature, housing models across Canada, and carrying out a national online survey. Through their findings, they identified three key features to be included in Indigenous housing models:

1. Space for ceremony and smudging (including appropriate ventilation and fire code considerations);
2. Environmentally sustainable housing incorporating natural materials; and
3. Adequate space to accommodate family, relatives and passing visitors.

The report further breaks down the specific housing needs for First Nation, Métis and Inuit based on the feedback received in the survey.

For First Nation individuals, housing should be moderate in size (between 1000-2000 square feet), include large, shared spaces, be accessible for Elders, include circular seating to foster community, proper ventilation for smudging, be pet friendly, and if space allows, include saunas and cultural spaces such as sweat lodges. Respondents also preferred that laundry facilities be located on the main floor rather than in the basement for better accessibility. Within multi-unit buildings, shared laundry facilities should be placed on the main floor in a high-traffic area to increase safety for residents (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2023).

Métis individuals requested the inclusion of ramps for increased accessibility, natural elements within the home, plenty of natural light, wood stoves to be used for both cooking and heating, round spaces, Indigenous art and carved doorways. Respondents highlighted that traditional homes used to include large pantries that would hold traditional and harvested foods over the winter. Métis individuals also described a need for homes to come

equipped with lawn and snow removal equipment.

Inuit respondents preferred large-sized homes (2000+ square feet) with big backyards to house immediate and extended family members. Proximity to nature and the use of renewable energy sources, such as solar panels, were also highlighted as integral elements of culturally appropriate design.

A few additional features were identified across respondents such as the inclusion of outdoor cooking facilities, separate quiet places for children to sleep when social gatherings are happening, and outdoor spaces to grow food and traditional medicines. Some First Nations have particular orientations that housing should face, whether that be a cardinal direction or the direction of the sun. For example, for some Cree Nations, the main entrance will face the South, for Anishinaabe it faces the East, and for Dakota, the entrance faces the West (Deane & Smoke, 2010). This preference differs among groups but should be considered in the design process.

Larcombe et al. (2020) identified housing themes during the 'two-eyed seeing' research that was conducted with two Dene First Nations in Manitoba. Like the NWAC's report above, researchers found that First Nation individuals desired more cultural spaces to host traditional practices as well as having garden or greenhouse spaces for growing food, but additional themes were also identified. Participants felt disconnected from the building materials currently being used to create their homes and expressed an interest in using local and natural building materials. They also wanted to be energy-independent and self-reliant, as many of their homes relied on fossil fuels like diesel and oil that were shipped into the community from far away. Lastly, community members wished to be trained on how to fix their own homes or have their homes designed in a way that is low maintenance and easy to repair.

These findings indicate that Indigenous groups have diverse needs and desires for their housing, and while the themes that have emerged provide an overview of what these needs are, it is still integral to continually engage and co-create with Indigenous peoples.

3.4 The role of municipalities

Non-Indigenous individuals and entities need to create space for Indigenous practices and sovereignties to thrive. This is different from merely 'being included'; it should involve building capacity and fostering an environment where Indigenous laws, practices, and cultures can flourish. Indigenous people and groups are the only ones who can articulate what is best for themselves, and they should have proper avenues for advocacy (Porter, 2017).

Municipalities have policies and tools they can use to influence the type of housing that is built in their community. Community amenity contributions are one tool that can be used to ensure that a proposed development applying for a rezoning, for example, will contribute in some way to the community. This could be helping to fund more affordable units or contributing to cultural centres or services. Municipalities also have the power to ensure that culturally appropriate housing is made a priority within their development plans or official community plans. Furthermore, municipal zoning bylaws can also be updated to ensure that specific zones and requirements are inclusive of culturally appropriate housing design. (Rachelson, et al., 2019). While municipalities use zoning as a tool to regulate land use and not land users, the land use regulations can, at times, inherently discriminate against certain user groups. Zoning regulations like minimum lot sizes or unit sizes can exclude certain uses and smaller dwellings, and by

extension, certain groups of people and households (Skelton, 2012). Zoning bylaws are also used to enforce parking and open space requirements, which can elevate property costs and restrict access to certain groups. These regulations are often said to be used to maintain a neighbourhood's aesthetic or preserve the environment, but these rules still exclude certain user groups (Thomas, 2024).

At the provincial level, building codes could be modified to ensure culturally appropriate housing can be compliant. Each province has its building codes adopted from the National Building Code of Canada, and therefore, modifications can be made to more specifically align with the needs of residents in that province. Strategic planning and land use planning at the provincial level will also help to shape where culturally appropriate housing can occur (Rachelson et al., 2019)

Policy changes at the municipal and provincial levels have the potential to have a huge impact on the success of culturally appropriate housing. Continued engagement and full collaboration with Indigenous residents in urban areas must take place for local governments to gain a stronger understanding of how to enable the development of culturally appropriate housing.

3.5 Summary

Gaps in research

While the reports from the Native Women's Association of Canada and CMHC include information about culturally appropriate housing in urban settings, this is not reflected as much in the academic literature. Most of the academic literature focuses on the housing needs of Indigenous people living on-reserve or in remote Northern communities. Culturally appropriate

housing in cities is equally important, and the same participatory practices should be used to ensure full collaboration with Indigenous people.

There should also be further investigation into how municipalities can better support culturally appropriate housing. Currently, the recommendations from CMHC are vague and not prescriptive enough. It is insufficient to state that zoning bylaws and development plans should be updated. Additional processes should be established to ensure that these policies can support rather than suppress culturally appropriate housing. This could be accomplished with additional guidance from higher levels of government or more engagement and collaboration with Indigenous people and non-profit housing providers (Rachelson, et al., 2019).

Overall Analysis

Policymakers have historically ignored Indigenous peoples and identities in urban settings, and the perception of Indigenous peoples being 'out of place' in cities continues to be perpetuated today. Ensuring culturally appropriate housing within urban spaces is an important way to ensure that Indigenous peoples and cultures can flourish without being constrained by the Euro-Canadian concepts of what a home should be.

While there has been research conducted by organizations on the important aspects to be included within a culturally appropriate home, it is important to avoid using a pan-Indigenous lens. As the authors have stated above, culturally appropriate housing can only be provided when there is full engagement with the future residents. To fully understand what these needs are, it is important to go beyond a participatory approach with Indigenous partners. To be able to fully embed aspects of Indigenous culture within the home, a much fuller understanding must be achieved, which goes beyond setting up workshops or conducting interviews. Additionally, a full

equal partnership at every stage of development between developers and Indigenous peoples must be created. As stated earlier, it is not enough to just ‘be included’, Western ideologies need to move over and make space for Indigenous practices.

There are several examples of participatory research done in collaboration with First Nation people living on-reserve; however, this work needs to continue and be replicated in urban settings and include Métis and Inuit Peoples as well. There is a strong foundation and preliminary understanding of cultural housing needs, but it is time for municipalities and local governments to act and incorporate these into zoning bylaws and development plans. Municipalities should work together to understand how to best support culturally appropriate housing and ensure their policies are not exclusionary. These changes will help to support decolonizing zoning bylaws and ensure that cities and urban spaces are welcoming for all Indigenous peoples.

4. Methods

This research was undertaken using a mixed-methods approach. Semi-structured interviews were used to answer research question **#1: What is the current state of culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous peoples in Canadian prairie cities?** Research question **#3: How can non-profits and municipalities work together to create culturally appropriate Indigenous housing?** And research question **#4: What needs to change at the municipal level to accommodate culturally appropriate housing?** The document analysis was used to find answers to research question **#2: How do development plans enable or block culturally appropriate housing?** The precedent analysis was also used to provide additional context for research question **#1.** The following sections detail the methods used.

4.1 Document Analysis

I conducted a document analysis using the development plans for the City of Winnipeg (*OurWinnipeg 2045*), the City of Edmonton (*Edmonton City Plan*), and the City of Saskatoon (*Official Community Plan of the City of Saskatoon*) for the presence of policies related to Indigenous people and concerns. Documents were accessed through local government websites. These development plans represent some of the 'hard infrastructure' of planning, influence the built environment around us, and guide important decisions (Farthing, 2016). This research method was important because "policy research affects the principles that govern institutions and programs" (Hessler, 1992).

Development plans, or Official Community Plans, shape the decisions and policies that are created at the municipal government level. These plans influence how municipal planners and other staff make decisions

about zoning by-laws, housing goals, the built environment and more. For a municipality to be moving towards reconciliation, policies should be written in these development plans to guide these actions. Policies that help to guide government-to-government relationships, political sovereignty and self-determination are particularly important for Indigenous Nations (Baskatawang, 2023).

The three development plans were analyzed using Dedoose coding software with a mix of inductive and deductive coding. The coding framework used can be found in Table 7 in the Findings Section. This method was both quantitative and qualitative. The output counted the number of times policies related to Indigenous people were present within the documents and later analyzed how these policies were framed within the documents. The coding framework was not limited to housing policies and counted the number of times Indigenous government or governance was mentioned, the topic of colonization, the distinction between First Nation, Métis and Inuit, and the presence of Indigenous art and identity in the built environment. It is important to note that the three documents were of different lengths, which could influence the overall analysis. *OurWinnipeg 2045* is 53 pages, *Edmonton City Plan* is 182 pages, and *The City of Saskatoon OCP* is 151 pages in length. The city of Winnipeg has an accompanying secondary plan to *OurWinnipeg 2045* called Complete *Communities Direction Strategy 2.0*, whereas the city of Edmonton and Saskatoon's development plans are longer and more comprehensive, containing this information within one document. I decided to compare only development plans between the three cities and, therefore, did not include Winnipeg's secondary plan in the document analysis.

4.2 Precedent Analysis

Precedent research is important for planning and design fields to show what has worked for similar projects to help direct design decisions. Inspiration can be taken from various sources and can help create a vision for future projects (Lindsley, 2022). For the precedent analysis, six completed culturally appropriate housing projects were chosen from Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Edmonton (two from each city). The projects were chosen if they were brought up as apparent "success stories" during interviews, and I chose the two Saskatoon projects as examples of permanent Métis housing. The two Saskatoon examples were chosen by searching online websites of Saskatoon-based Indigenous-led non-profit housing providers and finding examples of apparent successful development projects.

A rubric was established beforehand to evaluate each precedent; this can be found in Table 5. The rubric was simple and asked about the number of housing units, who the housing is intended for, and the type of cultural supports available. The information for the rubric was gathered primarily through the organizations' websites but also through news articles, local government articles, and, in some cases, articles from the developers. Pictures of the precedents are also included to provide a visual representation.

Table 5: *Example of rubric used to evaluate culturally appropriate housing precedents.*

Precedent Name	EXAMPLE
Date open	
Location within the city	
# of units	
Type of housing	
Housing for whom?	
Length of stay	
Staff	
Operated by	
Funded by	
Culturally appropriate elements	
Other amenities	

4.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

Using the interview schedules found in Appendix B & C, I asked key informants about the delivery of culturally appropriate housing and housing policies. I used a semi-structured approach to allow me to probe and ask follow-up questions to further my understanding of the interviewee's experience with the subject matter (Farthing, 2016). I was interested in interviewing individuals working at a municipal level in a role that meaningfully engaged with housing policies in some way (e.g., municipal planner, Indigenous housing liaison, housing policy analyst, etc.). I was also interested in interviewing individuals working for housing non-profits who engaged with the delivery of Indigenous housing.

Having the opportunity to contact individuals from Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Edmonton provided an opportunity to showcase different

Indigenous housing strategies from these locations. Interview participants were identified and recruited by searching publicly available websites online. Online sources included the City of Edmonton, City of Saskatoon, and City of Winnipeg websites, as well as non-profit housing websites. The goal was to have an even number of individuals from each city and an even number of individuals working in municipal and non-profit housing roles.

Professionals were contacted via email requesting their participation in a virtual interview to participate in this research. The initial email included a one-page information sheet with additional details about the research along with the research questions. Once participants agreed to participate, they were sent a consent form (Appendix A) to be reviewed, signed, and returned before the interview. As indicated in Table 6, 19 interview invitations were sent in total. One interview was conducted with an individual in a municipal housing role in Edmonton, and two interviews were conducted with individuals working for non-profit organizations in Winnipeg.

Table 6: *Interviews requested, accepted, and completed.*

Type of profession	Invitations	Accepted	Completed
Municipal Planning or City Housing Staff	11	1	1
Non-Profit Housing Staff	8	4	2
Total	19	5	3

Interviews were conducted via Zoom and were 45 to 90 minutes long. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using Zoom's transcription software. The transcriptions were cross-referenced with the audio recordings for accuracy before they were analyzed. To ensure anonymity, interview participants were assigned an anonymous participant code such as 'municipal housing staff' or 'non-profit housing staff' instead of

labelling files with their names. Following the completion of the interviews, the transcriptions were analyzed using a coding framework. The coding framework can be found in Appendix D and was developed with both an inductive and deductive approach. The coding framework was first developed using the interview guide; however, additional themes were revealed during the discussions. The deductive approach provided some guidance and structure to ensure that certain data is extracted from the interviews, while the inductive approach allowed for more exploration of the emerging themes (Farthing, 2016). Both approaches proved to be important for this analysis.

4.4 Limitations

The topic of culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous people is incredibly large and important, and this research is only able to touch a small part of it. The first limitation was not being able to speak with more municipal housing staff. The ethics protocol for this research project was approved on January 10th, 2025, which truncated the time to recruit interview participants and conduct interviews. The goal of recruiting interview participants from each city was not achieved, and interviews were only conducted with participants from Edmonton and Winnipeg.

At the outset of this research, the document analysis was intended to include other government policy documents such as provincial building codes and municipal zoning by-laws. With the eight-month timeframe of the capstone class, it was not possible to include all of these and produce a finished document. Future research should focus on these documents to analyze how they influence the built form of culturally appropriate housing and explore ways to decolonize these policies. This will be further explored in the conclusion.

5. Findings

The findings chapter is divided into three sections presenting findings from the document analysis, precedent analysis and the semi-structured interviews. The document analysis outlines the degree to which Indigenous people and policies are present within the development plans from Winnipeg, Edmonton and Saskatoon. This provides a broader look into how Indigenous peoples are considered in general throughout policies included in each development plan. The precedent analysis provides six examples of completed Indigenous housing projects located in the same three cities. Each precedent provides a different example of culturally appropriate housing. The semi-structured interview findings identify barriers to accessing and providing culturally appropriate housing. This final section outlines recommendations for improving the collaboration and building relationships between Indigenous peoples and municipalities.

5.1 Document Analysis Findings

Table 7: *Findings Findings from the document analysis of the development plans from the City of Winnipeg, the City of Edmonton, and the City of Saskatoon*

Findings			OurWinnipeg 2045	Edmonton City Plan	Saskatoon OCP
Collaboration with Indigenous Groups	Consultation	Building Relationships	1	1	4
		Participation & Influence	2	4	5
	Indigenous-led Initiatives		2	1	0
	Indigenous Housing Policies		0	1	2
Indigenous Peoples	First Nation		6	4	13
	Métis		8	3	15
	Inuit		5	2	0
	Heritage and/or Practices		5	2	6
	Art/built environment		0	4	0
	Government		8	0	1
	Indigenous Rights		7	0	4
	Population (Change in)		3	0	3
	Specific named Nation or person		0	2	10
	Total Mentions		47	20	64
Recognition of Past Harms	Colonization		1	0	3
	Reconciliation		10	2	9
	Residential Schools		0	0	1
	TRC[2]		0	0	3
	UNDRIP[3]		1	1	0
	Violence against Indigenous women		1	1	0
	Land Acknowledgement		2	1	2
Other Indigenous policies	Urban Reserves		3	0	3
	Indigenous specific policies (aside from housing)		5	1	0

2 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The commission created 94 calls to action to further reconciliation in Canada.

3 United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Resolution passed by the United Nations in 2007 defining the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Table 7 shows the findings from the document analysis of *OurWinnipeg 2045*, the *Edmonton City Plan*, and the *Official Community Plan of the City of Saskatoon* (City of Saskatoon OCP). The findings show a variety of topics that are covered throughout the development plans, with some having more mention of Indigenous peoples than others. The *City of Saskatoon OCP* mentions Indigenous people the most out of the three documents, followed by *OurWinnipeg 2045* and then the *Edmonton City Plan*. Both Winnipeg and Saskatoon's development plans mention reconciliation more frequently than Edmonton's, and *OurWinnipeg 2045* writes about Indigenous government the most out of the three documents. Both the *Edmonton City Plan* and the *City of Saskatoon OCP* have specific Indigenous-related housing policies; however, this is lacking in *OurWinnipeg 2045*. *OurWinnipeg 2045* does feature other Indigenous-related policies throughout the document.

5.1.1. Mention of Indigenous Peoples

It is important to note how Indigenous Peoples, governance, culture and inclusion into the built form are discussed throughout the development plans. In *OurWinnipeg 2045*, almost every time that collaboration between different governments is brought up, Indigenous government is listed along with Federal and Provincial governments. For example, "Working with government bodies including, Indigenous, Federal, and Provincial governments and community partnerships" (*OurWinnipeg*, p. 14). Indigenous government is listed alongside other forms of government for consultation and partnership, not just mentioned in relation to Indigenous projects.

The *City of Saskatoon OCP* begins with a detailed history of First Nation and Métis people who cared for and managed the land that is now Saskatoon. The section titled "B1 Our Location and Our History" (pp. 8-9) tells the history

of the signing of Treaty 6. The section details specific Indigenous Chiefs by name who were involved in the signing and speaks of the displacement of Indigenous People from the area for Saskatoon.

The *Edmonton City Plan* mentions Indigenous People the least number of times compared to the previous two documents but has the highest number of policies about the inclusion of Indigenous storytelling, culture, and art into the built form. An example from the development plan is "Policy 3.1.1.1: Commemorate and celebrate Indigenous history and culture through the planning and design of civic spaces" (p. 63). There are three other policies in the document encouraging the incorporation of Indigenous identity into urban spaces in the city outlined in Table 8.

Table 8: *Three policies outlining the incorporation of Indigenous identity into the built form within the Edmonton City Plan*

Policy #	Page #	Policy Description
Policy 1.2.3.2	Page 46	Develop opportunities for public education and storytelling on the contributions of Indigenous peoples, culture and history.
Policy 5.2.1.7	Page 80	Partner with Indigenous communities and cultural groups to name places and spaces to be culturally reflective of the diversity of Edmonton.
Policy 6.2.1.5	Page 88	Encourage art and creative enterprise to celebrate Indigenous history and culture.

Each development plan describes the city's relationship with Indigenous people in different ways. Table 7 shows that *OurWinnipeg 2045* and the *City of Saskatoon's OCP* mention Indigenous People much more frequently than the *Edmonton City Plan*. The *Edmonton City Plan* does not mention Indigenous governance or rights in the document; however, these are mentioned in the other two development plans. Within *The City of Saskatoon OCP*, Indigenous rights are mentioned in relation to building

strong relationships founded on respect and recognition of Indigenous rights (p. 17) and with respect to working alongside “rights holders” (p. 71). Within *OurWinnipeg 2045*, the rights of Indigenous people are brought up in acknowledgement that they are constitutionally recognized (p. 14) and respecting Indigenous rights through municipal responsibilities (p. 16). *OurWinnipeg 2045* also includes Policy 2.18 Potable Water Conservation, which acknowledges Indigenous rights while providing safe water to the city and that the city’s water supply originates from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation on Treaty Three Territory (p. 23).

5.1.2. Past harms and Policies to support Reconciliation

The topic of reconciliation is mentioned several times throughout *OurWinnipeg 2045* and the *City of Saskatoon OCP*. While it is only mentioned twice in the *Edmonton City Plan*, other policies acknowledge past harms and work toward reconciliation.

In the Social Equity section of *OurWinnipeg 2045*, objective 2 states, “Build bridges spanning ideas, cultures, identities and generations on a foundation of truth, understanding, and rights-based reconciliation” (p. 29). In the same section, some policies outline the City’s commitment to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and truth-telling concerning heritage sites in the city (pp. 29-30). Later in the development plan, there is a specific policy regarding capacity building with Indigenous Nations: “Policy 1.15: Community Capacity Development. Partner with community organizations and Indigenous governments to enable community development, leadership and empowerment opportunities, by leveraging municipal programming and service resources including recreation, libraries and the arts, in particular

for systemically disadvantaged groups and for those living in areas of highest need" (p. 20).

The *City of Saskatoon OCP* contains a subsection in its "Vision and Strategic Goals" section specifically dedicated to reconciliation. Within this section, the document explains the purpose of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the City's commitment to reconciliation through building partnerships and recognizing Indigenous rights and title, and their commitment to change the systems and processes that hinder these actions (pp. 16-17).

While the *Edmonton City Plan* does not go into depth about its commitment to reconciliation the same way the other two plans do, the development plan does contain a policy acknowledging violence against Indigenous women and girls. "Policy 1.13.2. Participate in multilateral efforts to address violence against Indigenous women and girls" (p. 44).

5.1.3. Collaboration, Participation, and Indigenous-specific policies

Each development plan mentions the need for participation and collaboration between Indigenous Nations and the municipal government. Both the *Edmonton City Plan* and the *City of Saskatoon OCP* have specific Indigenous housing policies that are listed below; however, *OurWinnipeg 2045* does not.

The *City of Saskatoon OCP* mentions building strong relationships with Indigenous Nations multiple times in the document. Section D2.4 has the following policy, "(c) Strengthen relationships and partner with First Nations and Métis communities and Indigenous organizations" (p. 24). Later in Section "E1.2 Water", there is another policy that states "(g) Engage with First Nations and Métis communities when actions or decisions may have an impact on

the South Saskatchewan River, Opimihaw Creek, or any other water system" (p. 35). The Official Community Plan also specifically mentions Indigenous housing in the section "C2.2 Indigenous Partners" with the following, "The City has also partnered with Métis and First Nations housing providers on the provision of attainable housing, recognizing that safe, affordable housing is the necessary foundation for building healthy, economically viable communities" (p. 16). This section and excerpt are situated within the vision and strategic goals section of the OCP, and is not a specific policy listed within the document.

The *Edmonton City Plan* contains a few policies describing Indigenous engagement and relationship building. Policy 2.4.1.1 states, "Through relationship building, integrate Indigenous values and knowledge with environmental management and stewardship practices to enhance environmental protection" (p. 60). The development plan also contains a specific Indigenous housing policy: "Policy 2.2.2.3: Increase access to social supports and resources including safe, clean and affordable housing options for the urban Indigenous population" (p. 55). Unlike the *City of Saskatoon OCP*, these are specific policies located within Edmonton's development plan.

OurWinnipeg 2045 does not include any Indigenous housing-specific policies like Saskatoon and Edmonton's development plans; however, it does mention the need for relationship-building with Indigenous Nations and the creation of urban reserves. Policy 1.13 about Urban Reserves states, "Facilitate the process of urban reserve development by building respectful relationships with First Nations governments and leadership to establish and maintain processes and protocols including service provision, bylaw harmonization, and planning" (p. 19). Later in the document, there is also a policy highlighting the importance of economic development for Indigenous

Nations: “Policy 3.10: Indigenous Economic Development, prioritize support of Indigenous-led opportunities for land, heritage, culture, art, entrepreneurial and tourism-related economic development for the benefit of Indigenous Peoples” (p. 25).

5.1.4. Summary

It is worth noting that while all three development plans play a similar role for each city, they are each written differently which will influence how Indigenous policies are implemented in each city. The ‘Our Vision and Strategic Goals’ section of the *City of Saskatoon OCP* contains most of the information about Indigenous peoples however, many of the goals in this section do not have subsequent policies like the other sections of the plan. The bulk of *OurWinnipeg 2045* and the *Edmonton City Plan* contains objectives and policies that form actionable items for city administration.

5.2 Precedent Analysis

The precedent analysis showcases six different examples of culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous people in Winnipeg, Edmonton and Saskatoon. The examples provide real-world context for how culturally appropriate housing can be realized and highlight lessons learned for future housing developments. As with any housing development, the design should be context-specific and involve engagement from the prospective residents. Every nation, community, and individual will have different needs that the housing should respond to as best as possible.

5.2.1. Winnipeg

Table 9: *Precedent findings for Astum Api Niikinaahk tiny house village, located in Winnipeg, MB.*

Precedent Name	Astum Api Niikinaahk (means “come sit in our home” in Michif)
Date open	December 2022
Location within the city	Downtown Winnipeg
# of units	22 tiny homes (18 units 170 sqft, 4 units 400sqft)
Type of housing	Transition style housing with wrap around supports
Housing for whom?	Unhoused community – has Indigenous-led cultural practices and activities, but you don’t have to identify as Indigenous to live here
Length of stay	No time limit
Staff	10 full-time staff, 4 part-time staff, handful of casual employees. Runs 24hrs/day to provide support for residents
Operated by	Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre
Funded by	United Way, End Homelessness Winnipeg, CMHC
Culturally appropriate elements	• Indigenous led supports • Units are set up to face each other in a circle around a courtyard that has a sacred fire pit and sweat lodge. • The name was gifted by Two-spirit Métis Elder Charlotte Nolin • Created with inputs from unhoused individuals, the team spoke with individuals living in encampments to get inputs on the future development • Cultural activities and ceremonies
Other amenities	• Mental Health Supports • Internet, television, kitchenette, bathroom, bed • Harm reduction services: unused pipes and needles

Figure 1: Astum Api Niikinaahk Tiny House Village. The middle of the residence features a firepit for ceremonies and gatherings. Source: National Housing Strategy.

Figure 2: Astum Api Niikinaahk accessible ramps to doorways are available for some of the units, all facing a common courtyard. Source: APTN New.

Astum Api Niikinaahk is a unique housing project for the city of Winnipeg. It features 22 bachelor-style tiny homes, each including a kitchenette, bathroom, and bed. Each unit also has internet and television access. The units all face each other in a circle around a courtyard that features a sacred firepit and the organization has plans to include a 10-person sweat lodge in the future. The name Astum Api Niikinaahk was given to the homes by Two-Spirit and Métis Elder Charlotte Nolin. The name means, “Come sit in our home” in Michif (Jonsa, 2023). The project was completed in December 2022, and residents moved in quickly in January 2023. 18 of the units are 170 square feet, while four units are 400 square feet, providing extra space for those with mobility issues. The colours of the building, which can be seen in Figure 2, represent the ocean, the sky, the lakes, the trees, and the grass (Cook, 2023).

The housing units are attached to a larger main building where Indigenous cultural programs are held and run by support mentors. Staff working at Astum Api Niikinaahk also offer mental health support and harm reduction by providing unused pipes and needles. Residents are allowed to stay in their homes for as long as needed, offering stability for individuals who have sometimes spent years experiencing homelessness (Jonsa, 2023). There is also a “managed alcohol program” within the medical centre located in a separate building on the property (Cook, 2023), assisting those struggling with alcohol use. Many other housing programs have strict rules requiring residents to be sober. However, Melissa Stone, the project coordinator, argues that this is a barrier that is keeping individuals on the street (Jonsa, 2023). Astum Api Niikinaahk has a gentler approach to helping residents along their journey with substance use.

During the concept design phase of the project, the team engaged

with individuals who were living in encampments and experiencing unsheltered homelessness, meeting people where they're at, rather than asking them to come to the team. The main takeaway from this outreach was that future residents wanted to feel safe. As such, the project is fenced-in (Cook, 2023), the doors are made of steel, and there are security cameras around the property (Jonsa, 2023).

The operating budget for Astum Api Niikinaahk is approximately $1 million annually, with the majority of funding required for wraparound support staff. The project provides 24/7 staff support for residents, and in some cases, more staff members are required for more vulnerable individuals (MacLean, 2024). The project is operated by the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, an Indigenous organization providing programs and sites to support Indigenous communities and families.

Table 10: *Precedent findings for Kinew Housing, located in Winnipeg, MB.*

Precedent Name	Kinew Housing Corporation
Date open	Incorporated in 1970
Location within the city	Many different houses throughout the city
# of units	Over 400 housing units
Type of housing	Subsidized housing – single-family homes. Acquisition and rehabilitation of older homes, 30 new homes built between 2005-2009
Housing for whom?	Indigenous families (status, non-status, Métis & Inuit)
Length of stay	No time limit
Staff	Multiple at office on McGregor St
Operated by	Kinew Housing
Funded by	
Culturally appropriate elements	• Indigenous led non-profit urban housing corporation • Used to provide training for tenants to know how to fix their own homes
Other amenities	• Backyard • Comes with tenant handbook – lots of information on how to pay for rent, utilities, how to prevent mold in homes, what to do if you get locked out, etc. • No pets allowed • No fires allowed (except for propane ones)

Figure 3: Example of one of the single detached homes managed by Kinew Housing. Source: Kinew Housing Inc.

Figure 4: Another example of a single detached home operated by Kinew Housing Inc. Source: Kinew Housing Inc.

Kinew Housing started in 1970 as a small Indigenous organization concerned about the lack of affordable housing in Winnipeg. The organization started purchasing older homes throughout the city and would perform repairs or renovations before renting them out to Indigenous families. As time went on, they started to purchase newer homes that required less repairs. They also provided training programs for tenants on how to make repairs on their own (Kinew Housing Inc, n.d.). Between 2005 and 2009, Kinew Housing also built 30 new homes for Indigenous families. Today, Kinew Housing manages 400 housing units throughout the city with rents that are based on total family income. Subsidized housing provides families with a safe and stable place to live (Himmelsbach, 2023). Most of the homes rented by Kinew Housing include yards, providing extra space for families.

Each tenant is provided with a “Tenant Handbook”, available on Kinew’s website. The handbook is an in-depth guide for residents, outlining details such as what tenants’ responsibilities are, how to pay your rent, how to care for your home, tips on preventing mold in your home, and other health and safety information. There is even a suggested list of “tools to have” so that new tenants can be self-sufficient when making small repairs in their homes (Kinew Housing Inc., n.d.).

5.2.2. Saskatoon

Table 11: *Precedent findings for Round Prairie Elders' Lodge.*

Precedent Name	Round Prairie Elders' Lodge
Date open	December 2021
Location within the city	Pleasant Hill Village, southwest neighbourhood in Saskatoon
# of units	26 units – multi-unit residential building
Type of housing	40% Subsidized rental units for Métis Elders in Saskatoon
Housing for whom?	Métis Elders
Length of stay	No time limit
Staff	Yes – staff to support the needs of older adults.
Operated by	The Central Urban Métis Federation Inc
Funded by	ISC, Indigenous Housing Innovation Initiative, CMHC, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Housing Cooperation, City of Saskatoon.
Culturally appropriate elements	• Smudge-friendly Ceremony/Prayer Room • Courtyard with traditional medicinal plants and fruit trees (cherry, plum and apple trees, and saskatoon, haskaps, raspberries, and gooseberries) • Fireplace outside for cultural and social events • South facing courtyard • Large gathering space on main floor with large common kitchen area
Other amenities	

Figure 5: The Trottier Spiritual Room within the lodge is a place for Elders to go for ceremonies and smudging. Source: Big Block Construction.

Figure 6: The large garden space located in the centre of the development. Source: Big Block Construction.

The Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. (CUMFI) identified that many of their Métis Elders were struggling with unaffordable housing and very low vacancy rates for senior rental units and wanted to provide a solution. Their vision involved culturally appropriate housing that was affordable and included on-site supports for Elders. An Indigenous consulting agency, Medicine Rope Strategies, led two engagement sessions with 30 Métis Elders and produced a consulting report that was shared with the rest of the design team. David T. Fortin Architect is a Métis architectural firm that led the design of the project, and Big Block Construction was the development company. CUMFI and Big Block worked closely alongside one another throughout the process and hired Indigenous contractors and companies to provide local economic benefits to community members. CUMFI was able to connect Big Block with Indigenous companies throughout the construction process (CUMFI, 2021).

The lodge features a 3-storey, multi-unit residential building with built-in supports for Elders. There is a south-facing courtyard featuring a fireplace for cultural and social events and a garden with traditional plants used for medicines (as seen in Figure 5). The building has a cultural room that residents can use for smudging (Big Block Construction, n.d.). The main floor has a large gathering space with an indoor fireplace that can be used for hosting larger events, and right next door is a large common kitchen. Both the spiritual room and the gathering space look out into the garden, which is located in the centre of the development. At the core of the design, the team wanted to create spaces that would instill a sense of community among the Elders and visitors (Big Block Construction, 2022)

Table 12: *Precedent findings for the Central Urban Métis Federation Inc. Community Homes*

Precedent Name	CUMFI Community Home Project
Date open	December 2022
Location within the city	Pleasant Hill Village, southwest neighbourhood in Saskatoon
# of units	14 units (with 58 bedrooms)
Type of housing	• Two multi-unit buildings. • Two 6-bedroom units, ten 4-bedroom units, two 3-bedroom units
Housing for whom?	Indigenous families – single parent families
Length of stay	No time limit
Staff	Not onsite
Operated by	The Central Urban Métis Federation Inc
Funded by	CMHC rapid housing initiative, Saskatchewan housing corporation, City of Saskatoon
Culturally appropriate elements	• Métis colours (inspired by Métis flag) • Larger units for more family members
Other amenities	

Figure 7: CUMFI Community Homes. Source: City of Saskatoon, Rapid Housing Initiative.

Figure 8: CUMFI Community Homes, bird's eye view of site layout. Source: Big Block Construction.

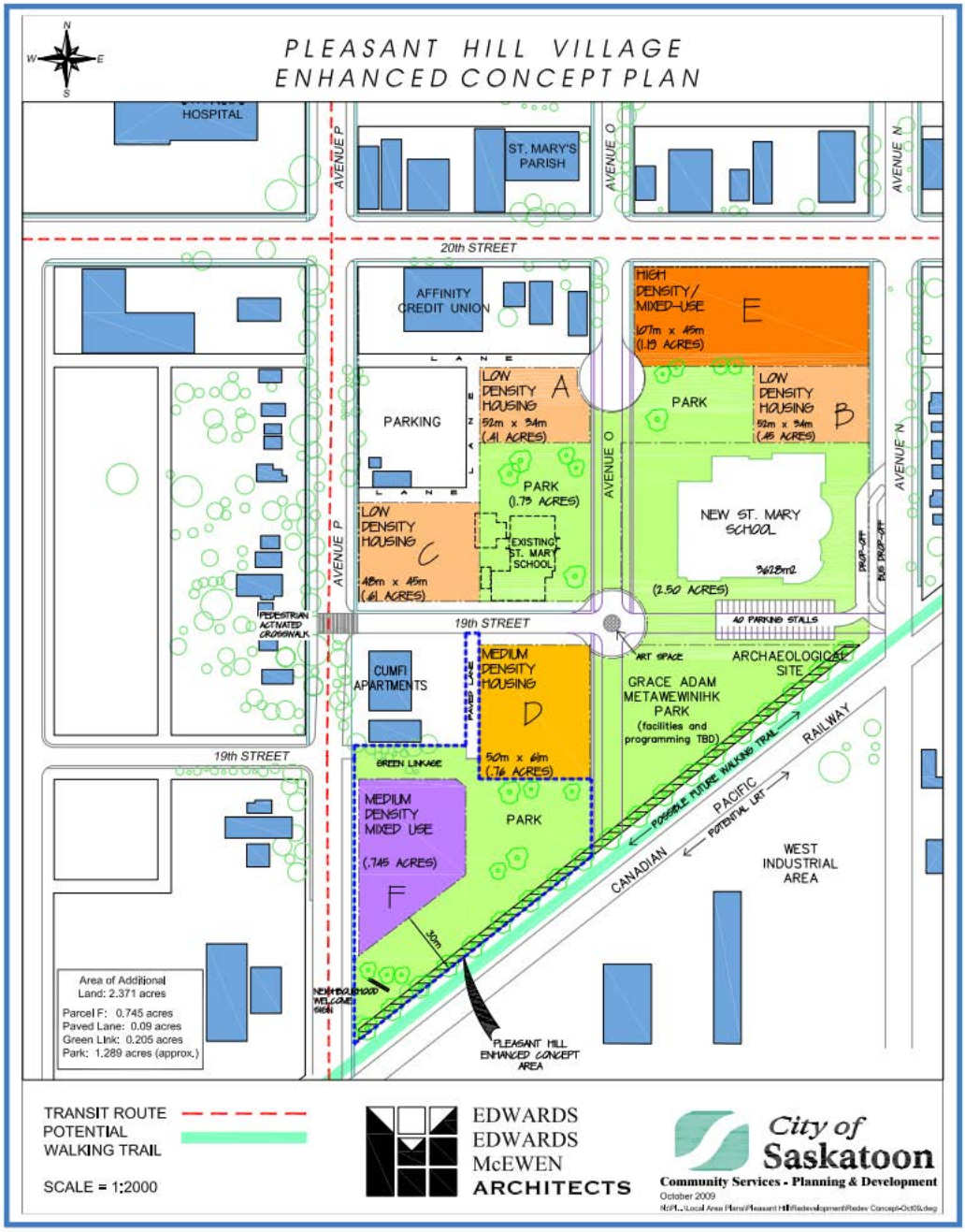

Figure 9: Pleasant Hill Village Concept Plan - the CUMFI Community Homes project was built on Lot C. Source: City of Saskatoon.

The CUMFI Community Homes project was built to offer affordable housing for larger families. The development features two 3-storey buildings with a total of 14 affordable units, and 58 bedrooms. The 14 units include two 6-bedroom units, ten 4-bedroom units, and two 3-bedroom units. Units are rented primarily to single-parent families. The project began construction in mid-July 2022, and residents were moving in four and a half months later (Big Block Construction, n.d.).

The Community Homes project is part of the Pleasant Hill Village redevelopment in Saskatoon. Figure 9 shows the concept plan for the redevelopment of the neighbourhood, and the CUMFI Community Homes project was built on Site C. The rest of the development features plenty of gardens and green space. The Grace Adam Metawewinihk Park includes a playground, sports fields, pathways, a skateboarding park, and a community garden. The large field provides a location for larger gatherings to take place for residents in the community (City of Saskatoon, 2024). The Round Prairie Elders' Lodge, which was mentioned in the previous precedent, was built on Lot F in this neighbourhood.

5.2.3. Edmonton

Table 13: *Precedent findings for Ambrose Place*

Precedent Name	Ambrose Place
Date open	November 2014
Location within the city	McCauley Neighbourhood, close to downtown Edmonton
# of units	42 units
Type of housing	• Supportive housing units: 2-bedroom, 1-bedroom, bachelor suites and 10 accessible units • Affordable units on top floor, supportive housing on 2nd and 3rd floors
Housing for whom?	Indigenous people with higher needs including mental illness, addictions, chronic health conditions, cognitive impairments, and disruptive trauma symptoms
Length of stay	Permanent supportive - no restrictions
Staff	Yes – social workers, Occupational Therapists, Recreational therapists, housing support workers. Elder on site 2 ½ days a week
Operated by	NiGiNan Housing Ventures
Funded by	
Culturally appropriate elements	• Indigenous led housing programs • Cultural support with NiGiNan cultural team and onsite Elders • On-site ceremony room (supports smudging)
Other amenities	• Pharmaceutical services • 24/7 health care services • Managed alcohol and cannabis use • Close to public transit and downtown • Community facilities located on 1st floor

Figure 10: Entrance of Ambrose Place. Source: Rescom.

Figure 11: Ambrose Place situated within McCauley Neighbourhood in Edmonton. Source: Ron Wickman Architect.

Ambrose Place is a 42-unit supportive housing development for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness with a disability or chronic substance use. The four-storey building has affordable units on the fourth floor, and supportive housing on the second and third floors. The mix of individuals, some on the top floor working towards sobriety and moving on from Ambrose Place, builds community with those potentially still struggling with addiction living on the second and third floors (Asquith & Gallant, 2015). The project offers 24/7 health care services such as social workers, housing support workers, pharmacy services, and managed alcohol and cannabis programs. The project is operated through NiGiNan Housing Ventures, and the cultural team makes regular visits to support residents through ceremony at the on-site ceremony room (NiGiNan Housing Ventures, n.d). Many Indigenous people experiencing homelessness cannot get to ceremony spaces if they don't have a car or mode of transportation, but this valuable offering brings the ceremony to their homes.

The housing project is named after Ambrose Daniels, a beloved community member who passed away at the age of 54 from contracting pneumonia while living on the streets of Edmonton. His story is the inspiration behind the housing model from NiGiNan. Residents are not forced to immediately become sober or quit substances but are provided with a safe environment and a sense of community, which often leads to healthier choices (NiGiNan Housing Ventures, 2020). The approach used at Ambrose Place is to meet people where they're at and work with residents in a non-judgemental and gradual way to enable them to transform their way of life - however that may look for the individual.

Table 14: *Precedent findings for Omamoo Wango Gamik*

Precedent Name	Omamoo Wango Gamik ('All our relations')
Date open	September 2020
Location within the city	Belvedere neighbourhood, northeast neighbourhood in Edmonton
# of units	42 units – 1 & 2-bedroom apartment and five 2-bedroom townhouses
Type of housing	Housing for individuals and families at risk of being homeless. Light wrap around supports, emphasis on spiritual, cultural and community support
Housing for whom?	Housing for individuals and small families, with the intention to keep families together and kids out of the CFS system.
Length of stay	Permanent supportive - no restrictions
Staff	Yes – Resident Indigenous Elder, 24hr support staff, housing support worker
Operated by	NiGiNan Housing Ventures & Right at Home Housing Society
Funded by	Federal government, government of Alberta, City of Edmonton
Culturally appropriate elements	• Access to ceremonies through regular visits from NiGiNan team • Large, shared space with a kitchen • Roof top patio with garden space • Elders live alongside to provide supports • Workshops and cultural gatherings to foster community atmosphere & build resident living capacities
Other amenities	

Figure 12: Omamoo Wango Gamik supportive housing operated by NiGiNan Housing ventures in the Belvedere Neighbouhood, in Edmonton AB. Source: NiGiNan Housing Ventures.

Figure 13: Rooftop Garden at Omamoo Wango Gamik features garden beds for residents. Source: NiGiNan Housing Ventures.

Omamoo Wango Gamik is a multi-generational 42-unit supportive housing project for Indigenous families. The building features 1- and 2-bedroom units as well as five 2-bedroom townhomes. The project provides residents with cultural supports and has a resident Elder, a shared programming room, and a shared rooftop patio with garden space (Figure 13) (NiGiNan Housing Ventures, n.d.). The permanent supportive housing project is located in Belvedere, a neighbourhood in northeast Edmonton, where there was an identified shortage of Indigenous supportive housing.

Omamoo Wango Gamik means “All our relations”, and the model of the project is to heal families by being in community. The idea for the project came from the frustration behind the disproportionate number of Indigenous children who are taken from their families and placed in the foster care system. Dr. Carola Cunningham, CEO of NiGiNan Housing Ventures, stated in a presentation, “I never understood why child [and family] services punished the children because their parents got off track” (Community-Based Research Canada, 2022). Omamoo Wango Gamik works to surround children with mosoms and kôhkoms, aunties and uncles, to remain in place and remain in community. The building has reduced rates for mosoms (grandpas) and kôhkoms (grandmas) to live on the second floor of the building, and in return, these Elders volunteer with young families and offer their support. Being surrounded by relatives also helps children who have previously been in foster care to regain their Indigenous identity and culture. Several gatherings and ceremonies take place on-site, and the project works to create a positive, supportive, and healing environment for all residents.

5.2.4. Summary

The six precedents outlined above showcase the range of Indigenous cultural elements and supports that can be incorporated into residential spaces. Supports can be varied, depending on the context, whether this be providing specific staff to meet residents' needs, providing a gentler approach to mental health and substance use, or providing more gathering spaces and bedrooms for families. It is important, as outlined in these precedents, to integrate in-depth consultation with prospective residents during the design and construction phases of a project to ensure the specific supports and elements provided within the building will be tailored appropriately to meet the needs of the future residents.

5.3. Semi-Structured Interviews

This section is divided into three major themes that were discussed during the semi-structured interviews: barriers to accessing housing, barriers to providing culturally appropriate housing, and solutions moving forward. The themes are derived from the interview guide, which can be found in Appendices B & C. The cities represented in the interview findings are Edmonton and Winnipeg. Unfortunately, there were no interview participants from Saskatoon.

5.3.1. Barriers to accessing housing for urban Indigenous People

Before getting into the barriers to accessing culturally appropriate housing in urban spaces, interview participants were asked about the primary barriers individuals face when accessing housing in their respective cities. The first theme that came up was the lack of housing supply and lack of staff support. Non-profit participant 1 stated that there is not enough stock, rents are unaffordable, especially for those who have low or no income, and the City of Winnipeg's vacancy rate is still under 2%. There is little incentive for a rental property owner to lower their rent or provide housing for people with lower income because they are meeting their occupancy rates.

Non-profit participant 2 had similar sentiments about the lack of staff support for individuals accessing housing, especially supports that address the needs of Indigenous people.

> There's not enough mental health resources and along with mental health, there's not enough holistic approaches or organizations that are doing the holistic approach. So, it can be tough like you walk into a place, and it is all medical, and the walls are a gray colour, and you walk in, and the lights are super bright, and you just feel so out of place. Like as for me, when I've needed mental health help, I've always been turned away so I can't imagine what it's like for somebody who's on the street. (Non-profit participant 2, Interview).

The same interview participant went on to explain that after experiencing homelessness for an extended period, it can be difficult and feel restrictive to be living in a house again. Many individuals get evicted from housing projects for not following certain rules and fall into a cycle of being housed and then unhoused, which is frustrating and unsustainable.

Not having a fixed address is another barrier to accessing housing. Non-profit participant 1 stated:

> If you don't have a fixed address, you can't get a health card, which means that you can't access the necessary medication that you have. (Non-profit participant 1, interview).

Non-profit participant 2 added that you need identification to apply for Provincial Housing, but many individuals don't have identification if they don't have a fixed address to get their identification cards mailed to them.

Additional barriers that were brought up by non-profit participant 2 related to individuals losing their Indian status for various reasons and the need to be on Employment and Income Assistance to access certain housing services. At the same time, even though some housing providers require prospective residents to register for EIA (Employment and Income Assistance), the amount given is minimal and often does not cover the cost of rent.

According to non-profit participant 2,

> You get only a certain amount for EIA, which is $570 for rent. So that is like the biggest barrier of finding housing and suitable housing for somebody (Non-profit Participant 2, Interview)

These barriers are additional steps for individuals already struggling to access housing and supports. The small amount for EIA forces individuals to choose housing that is at times inadequate, but all they can afford.

The barriers to accessing housing are complex and interconnected. There is a lack of staff support for individuals experiencing homelessness, but if they remain unhoused without a fixed address, they cannot get a health card or other ID to access the services they need. The barriers seem to keep individuals unhoused and make it especially difficult for Indigenous people to break out of this cycle due to the ongoing impacts of settler colonialism that have created these systems. Returning to Thistle's definition of Indigenous homelessness, this needs to be understood "through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews".

5.3.2. Barriers to providing culturally appropriate housing

The interview participants brought up examples of how current housing units may not be suitable for Indigenous families. Non-profit participant 1 explained that many Indigenous families require more space and bedrooms to accommodate more flexible household dynamics. Oftentimes, housing units with multiple bedrooms are unavailable, which forces families to squish into apartments or smaller homes that are inappropriate for them. Non-profit participant 1 explained that families may have a grandparent staying with them for months at a time, children to be looked after, or other family and friends who are all living under one roof. Many low-cost housing

units are 1-bedroom apartments or bachelor-style suites, which would quickly become too small for a larger family.

Land use policies and other regulations also present barriers to producing housing that is culturally appropriate for Indigenous people. For non-profit housing organizations that want to provide additional services, such as staff support or a medical centre with dispensed medication, this can be challenging from a zoning and building code perspective. One interview participant spoke to the challenges of following these regulations.

> We want to have medicine available on-site...Well, as soon as you do that, you're now not residential again. You have commercial spaces. There are certain building code requirements as part of that medication that you need to [meet]. You need to have it locked up safe and secure all that kind of stuff (Non-profit Participant 1, Interview).

This can be difficult, especially if a building originates as residential housing, but the needs of its residents change over time to require additional supports. Non-profit participant 1 gave the following example,

> I'm looking at getting 24/7 staff support. Oh, well, now you're no longer a residential unit. You are a convalescent home, and so you're no longer meeting certain land-use requirements. And now you have a rezoning application ahead of you just because you wanted to give 24/7 staff support (Non-profit participant 1, Interview).

While the rules and regulations enforced through land use and building code regulations can be important and are ultimately for our safety, they present additional barriers for housing providers trying to deliver care to their residents, whose needs change over time. Zoning by-laws are an exclusionary tool to allow municipalities to ensure that land is used and allocated for uses that are deemed most desirable (Skelton, 2012). Building codes, while provincially regulated, are another tool to exclude certain uses.

The inability to engage in cultural practices in rental properties was also mentioned as a barrier to culturally appropriate housing. Non-profit participant 2 spoke about the protections afforded by provincial tenancy regulations. They stated that the tenancy branch does not allow landlords to make unreasonable house rules, but at the same time, there is nothing that explicitly protects Indigenous cultural practices, such as smudging or cultural teachings inside the home.

> There's nothing in the [tenancy branch] that protects Indigenous people in their own home that they're paying rent for to smudge (Non-profit Participant 2, Interview).

Some rental housing has strict rules that tenants are to follow, and if they are not followed, the tenant may be evicted. Without specific protections originating from provincial tenancy boards, engaging in certain cultural practices could result in eviction.

The time spent by housing providers and organizations interacting with staff at the municipal level is time-consuming and takes away from other important tasks. Non-profit participant 1 described the "bureaucratic paralysis" that comes from having too many systems and siloed departments at the city level. Getting approval from one department does not mean you will get the approval needed from another department, causing a cycle that is frustrating and time-wasting. The same participant suggested implementing an affordable housing advisory committee at the municipal level to help streamline these processes. Non-profit participant 2 spoke about the need to change outdated policies and systems at the municipal level if they are no longer serving the intended individuals.

> A lot of times, people say, 'oh, it's the system, it's our policy we have to follow'. Then change it, you know. There's a lot of talk about liability all the time. But liability. I mean, that's the last thing people need when they're trying to get housed (Non-profit participant 2, Interview).

Getting caught up in bureaucracy and potentially outdated systems slows down the work that housing providers are trying to accomplish. A streamlined system would help expedite projects and house individuals faster.

Culturally appropriate housing and services should not just be provided on a specific site but should be incorporated more broadly at the neighbourhood level. While some elements should be incorporated into the built form of a home, other supports and cultural elements should be part of the broader placemaking process. Non-profit participant 1 stated,

> I think that's a really big gap in the lexicon...we're starting to have these conversations about Indigenous site making, but we aren't doing Indigenous-based placemaking (Non-profit participant 1, Interview)

Of course, providing appropriate housing is crucial to allowing individuals to live and express their culture but it is also about ensuring the surrounding sites and neighbourhoods are built with the same principles in mind. Placemaking elements can include cultural spaces for Elders and Knowledge Keepers to provide teachings, commercial spaces, other mental health and holistic supports, or garden spaces for individuals to grow medicines. It is not only about what can be provided within the housing space but also what the neighbourhood and community can provide.

The barriers to providing culturally appropriate housing are rooted in the rigidity and, at times, exclusionary nature of land use planning practices and housing regulations that do not support culturally appropriate housing development and placemaking. Slow and outdated municipal processes provide an additional barrier that can be time wasting for housing providers.

5.3.3. Solutions Moving Forward. How to provide more culturally appropriate housing?

While the barriers to accessing safe and culturally appropriate housing have been outlined in the previous two sections, the interview participants also provided many concrete solutions for overcoming these barriers.

Non-profit participants 1 and 2 spoke about the time consuming process when dealing with local government, and how this can negatively affect organizations providing housing. Often approvals will be needed from different departments, causing even more delays and can take away staff resources needed for other aspects of the project. Having a more streamlined process at the municipal level would help to expedite these housing projects and house individuals faster.

Non-profit participant 1 spoke about the need to revisit how North American housing products are currently serving residents. The catalogue of housing developments and choices has remained relatively similar over the last hundred years and only represent a Euro-centric view of what housing should look like, even though there are a multitude of cultures and family structures within urban spaces.

> We need to consider cultural flexibility when defining appropriate housing. I think that's a big, long-term thing we need to get our head wrapped around as a nation is [how] we've boxed up residential housing so much that it is kind of culturally blind now (Non-profit participant 1, Interview).

They stressed the need to redefine what housing looks like now and in the future and to think outside the box. Family structures are not one size fits all, and neither should the housing products that are designed and developed. Housing projects should be innovative and meet the needs of current and future residents, instead of forcing residents to fit inside the 'housing' box.

The final suggestion that was brought up by all three interviewees was to have more "For Indigenous, By Indigenous" housing projects and organizations to provide culturally appropriate housing. Non-profit participant 1 shared that all non-profit housing organizations need to be operating in a way that is building capacity for Indigenous-led organizations and communities rather than doing the work on their behalf. Municipal housing participant 1 echoed the need for more Indigenous capacity building and called for an end to "paternalistic policies and processes." They stressed the need for more flexibility, learning, and patience when working with Indigenous-led organizations.

> Without paternalizing, having partnerships to help guide and mentor and recognize that Indigenous people, we're like ten steps behind, broadly. And we have a lot of skills and knowledge but most of us are still dealing with intergenerational trauma and those things that affect our daily functioning. So just recognizing that and trying to fan the flames on the momentum and offering help where it's needed. And trusting they know what's right for their people (Municipal Housing Participant 1, Interview).

Municipal housing participant 1 stated that their long-term vision for the future would be an Indigenous Housing Authority at a provincial level with regional authority. More generally, they also stated wanting to see even more Indigenous involvement in the decisions that are made for Indigenous people.

> Long term, I want to see Indigenous people, Indigenous organizations, administering Indigenous housing dollars. (Municipal housing participant 1, Interview).

Having other levels of government recognize that Indigenous people understand their own needs is integral to creating housing that works. Municipalities and other organizations must make space for Indigenous

people to take the lead on housing projects and proceed in a way that will work for future residents.

5.3.4. Summary

The semi-structured interview findings were broken up into the barriers to accessing housing, the barriers to providing culturally appropriate housing, and solutions moving forward. The barriers presented by the interview participants stem from a colonial system that continues to disadvantage Indigenous people. Dismantling and decolonizing these systems creates space for Indigenous sovereignty, autonomy, and capacity building. Individuals working in this space should think critically about how these systems and housing products currently serve individuals and think outside the box moving forward.

6. Discussion

This section draws together the findings from the literature review, the document analysis, the precedent analysis, and the semi-structured interview findings. The discussion is divided into two major sub-sections: the state of housing for Indigenous people in Canada and solutions moving forward.

6.1 State of Housing for Indigenous People

This research started with a literature review that outlined many of the important elements of culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous people. A few main elements that were identified were space for ceremony and smudging, the incorporation of natural construction materials, and adequate space to accommodate family and visitors (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2023). These same elements were brought up by interview participants as being important factors to incorporate into homes. Non-profit participant 2 spoke about the importance of protecting residents' right to smudge and engage in cultural practices and non-profit participant 1 spoke about the need for larger homes to accommodate different family sizes. The precedent analysis showed that there are many other factors to consider when creating culturally appropriate homes. Homes like Ambrose Place support individuals recovering from addiction and cognitive impairments and provide residents with on-site pharmaceutical services. Astum Api Niikinaahk, the tiny house village, features smaller living quarters for residents; however, it also features shared space for ceremonies and gatherings. The takeaway is that the housing must reflect the diverse needs of residents, and the only way to clearly understand this is to fully engage with Indigenous people living in these cities.

In the study discussed earlier by Larcombe et al. (2020), architecture

students engaged in cultural activities with members of the Denesuline First Nation and Sayisi Dene First Nation while designing homes. Students participated in activities like drumming, hunting, and singing and engaged in community feasts. It was important for students to understand the cultural values and activities before they were able to create designs because the housing must reflect the culture. These engagement processes allow housing designers and developers to have a clearer understanding of what residents need in their housing products and should be conducted in urban settings as well. The engagement process to build Astum Api Niikinaahk was extensive and thoughtful. As mentioned in the precedent analysis, organizers travelled to where individuals experiencing homelessness were living to engage with them. The team went to known encampments near the riverbanks and around vacant buildings and built relationships with people living there. They continued this outreach for months while building relationships with folks who they hoped would live at Astum Api Niikinaahk one day (Jonsa, 2023). Engagement does not have to look like an open house with workshop materials; it can also look like meeting people where they're at and building relationships.

There are many successful housing projects, including the ones in the precedent study, that show flexibility in their designs and incorporate many of the important elements discussed throughout this research. However, there are still many barriers to accessing and building this type of housing. As mentioned by non-profit participant 1, there are rigid regulations in building codes and zoning by-laws that make it difficult for housing to be built with all the supports required. This can slow down construction as organizers deal with rezoning procedures or are forced to change designs due to different building code regulations. The document analysis revealed

that the *OurWinnipeg 2045* development plan does not have a specific housing policy for Indigenous people, while there is one policy found in the *Edmonton City Plan* and two policies in the *City of Saskatoon OCP*. Instead of providing a specific housing policy, *OurWinnipeg 2045* frequently recognized Indigenous governance which could help guide Indigenous housing created by Indigenous people. The document analysis did not reveal which approach was most effective in ensuring the delivery of culturally appropriate housing, but it is likely that the most effect strategy is one that is context specific.

Non-profit participant 2 spoke about additional barriers for residents attempting to access culturally appropriate housing and barriers at the bureaucratic level. They spoke about the difficulties of conforming to colonial processes and systems to get assistance. Systemic barriers prevent Indigenous Peoples from accessing proper housing, such as losing their Indian Status, not being enrolled in Employment and Income Assistance, not having identification cards, and many others. Providing culturally appropriate housing involves not just the site itself but the broader system of supports and policies. As non-profit participant 1 expressed, it is about Indigenous placemaking, not site-making. Additionally, as discussed in the literature review, municipal zoning can be exclusionary and present another barrier to providing different types of housing. Land use zoning can include minimum lot sizes or unit sizes, which prevents different types of housing from being built and can, in turn, exclude certain user groups. While zoning by-laws are put in place to maintain a neighbourhood's character or preserve the environment, they can also cause harm and exclude certain housing types from being built throughout a city.

6.2. Solutions Moving Forward

Moving forward, municipalities must develop true partnerships with Indigenous people. The precedent analysis shows the range of housing opportunities available when non-profit housing providers, designers and developers engage meaningfully with Indigenous people and projects are Indigenous led. The literature review shows the depth of engagement that is possible to create housing designs on First Nation reserves. Similar processes are required in urban settings to understand the cultural needs of individuals and to reflect these values in housing products. Indigenous people are the only ones who can articulate what is best for them, and this needs to be recognized by local governments (Porter, 2017).

The priority to create more culturally appropriate housing must also be reflected within the development plans and guiding documents for municipalities. The policies within *OurWinnipeg 2045* reiterate the government-to-government relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the municipality but lack a specific housing policy, whereas the *Edmonton City Plan* had a specific housing policy for Indigenous people but did not mention Indigenous governance. Specific policies could make it easier for municipal staff to engage in action plans that will help realize the goals of these policies. As non-profit participant 1 explained, there can be “bureaucratic paralysis” at the municipal level, which can be time-wasting and cause unnecessary delays in housing projects. Creating more direct policies could help streamline these processes and alleviate delays.

Building capacity and establishing Indigenous Housing Authorities in all provinces is an important solution moving forward. This initiative helps enhance the capacity of Indigenous Peoples while allowing them to determine how funding can be allocated. DOTCHAI (Dakota Ojibway Tribal

Council Housing Authority Inc.) is a housing authority in Manitoba that works to buy, lease, build, develop, or improve land on and off-reserve. They specifically assist families from their five member First Nations with low to moderate incomes living in urban communities, as well as students and families with disabilities (Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council, 2025). This model is similar to an Indigenous-led non-profit housing provider but differs in where funds and support are allocated. An Indigenous housing authority could choose to provide support to specific communities, a specified region, or province wide. This approach ensures that housing decisions for Indigenous people are made by Indigenous people, and having a housing authority at the provincial level would result in even more decision making power.

Municipalities and other levels of government need to reframe policies to put Indigenous people in the driver's seat. At its core, cultural safety and appropriate housing are about recognizing the power imbalances in the delivery of housing and ensuring that the decision-making power and autonomy rests with Indigenous people. Everyone should feel safe and feel as though their values are reflected in their homes.

7. Conclusion

This section revisits the original research questions, outlines recommendations for future research, and reflects on the research subject in the final thoughts section.

7.1. Revisiting the Research Questions

Q1. What is the current state of culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous peoples in Canadian prairie cities?

The precedent study showcases a few examples of culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous people in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Edmonton. The housing available is built based on the needs of the Indigenous individuals living in those cities, therefore the examples vary in the diversity of services they provide. Each example highlights different features; some precedents feature more supportive housing for individuals recently experiencing homelessness, while others feature housing units with multiple bedrooms for large families. Many of the examples include cultural spaces and ceremony rooms. While these examples provide a good starting point, there is an urgent need for more culturally appropriate and suitable housing in these three cities.

The semi-structured interview findings also highlighted some of the difficulties to creating culturally appropriate housing with slow municipal processes and zoning and building code regulations that make it difficult to deliver housing that meets the needs of Indigenous residents.

Q2. How do development plans enable or block culturally appropriate housing?

Development plans serve as the framework guiding municipalities in various aspects, such as their zoning by-laws and other policies that

dictate how municipal departments will operate. These plans influence how municipalities engage and foster relationships with Indigenous Nations and people. Developing and implementing clear housing policies provides planners and other municipal staff with the necessary framework to develop action plans and prioritize goals associated with housing for Indigenous people. The language chosen to represent Indigenous people and governance is important as well and can influence the level of trust, the amount of respect, and the overall relationship built between Indigenous Nations and the municipality. Using policies that reference government-to-government relationships rather than paternalistic language can help to foster respectful and mutually beneficial relationships. The document analysis found that *OurWinnipeg 2045* frequently references and recognizes Indigenous government in various policies throughout the plan. The *Edmonton City Plan* has specific policies around Indigenous culture and placemaking and about Indigenous housing. The *City of Saskatoon OCP* has a long introduction outlining the history and ongoing relationships that First Nation and Métis people have with the land and the city and highlight the importance of reconciliation. Each city provides a different way to engage with Indigenous people and culturally appropriate housing through their development plans.

Additionally, municipalities can review their zoning by-laws to identify exclusionary policies that prohibit certain types of housing and assess how they may be negatively impacting specific user groups within the city.

Q3. How can non-profits and municipalities work together to create culturally appropriate Indigenous housing?

Municipalities can help non-profit housing providers by streamlining the processes associated with providing housing projects. The bureaucracy

associated with municipalities can slow down the work that housing providers are trying to do, which is detrimental to individuals in need of housing. Municipalities can also work with non-profits to identify new possible sites or vacant buildings that can be used for new housing projects.

Q4. What needs to change at the municipal level to accommodate culturally appropriate housing?

Establishing clear policies in development plans that prioritize culturally appropriate housing is one way that municipalities can better ensure that collaboration with Indigenous people and organizations will be done. Instead of using vague language about these goals, clear and specific language will help municipal staff work towards these goals and complete associated tasks.

In addition to clear policies, implementing more flexible zoning regulations regarding the provision of various supports and services (like 24/7 staff support) would help reduce barriers to delivering culturally appropriate housing for residents. Additionally, working collaboratively to modify rules and regulations in other sectors and across other levels of government, such as the process for obtaining identification cards, would assist more individuals in accessing housing and other health supports. Overall, municipalities should work towards decolonizing policies and processes that have historically disadvantaged Indigenous people across all departments.

7.2. Opportunities for Future Research

This topic is large and important and there were many research areas that I was not able to cover, which are important subjects for future work.

First, I was not able to interview many planners working at the municipal level. It would have been interesting to learn more from their perspective as to how their internal policies and review processes work or

do not work at the municipal level. Future research should also include professionals from other cities to provide a broader view of municipal policies and processes across Canada. This research was focused on large prairie cities, but future research could also investigate what smaller cities are doing to provide culturally appropriate housing.

This capstone was only able to scratch the surface of the roles of exclusionary zoning and restrictive building codes in preventing culturally appropriate housing. A deep dive into these policies to understand how they restrict certain building forms would help to identify how they need to change to be less restrictive. While analyzing the overarching policies within development plans is a good place to start, zoning by-laws and building codes more directly affect how housing projects are built. Critically decolonizing these policies would help remove additional barriers to providing culturally appropriate housing.

7.3. Final Thoughts

Providing culturally appropriate housing is rooted both in upholding Indigenous self-determination and identifying and removing barriers at the municipal level. Culturally appropriate housing should be created for and by Indigenous people. Ensuring that Indigenous voices are making the decisions in the funding, siting, and building of culturally appropriate housing will ensure that these projects are successful. At the same time, municipalities must ensure that their policies and development plans support the creation of these types of housing and work with non-profits and other Indigenous organizations to make these processes less time-consuming. There is more work to be done to decolonize policies and dismantle barriers present in encompassing systems, but doing so will result in more Indigenous people feeling safe and living in homes that truly reflect their cultural values.

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9. Image Sources

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Appendices

Appendix A - Informed Consent Form

Participant Informed Consent Form

CITY 7050 CITY PLANNING CAPSTONE PROJECT

Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture

Study Title: Regulations Reimagined: Implementing culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous peoples in Winnipeg.

Student Principal Investigator Jaclyn Gavas, Master of City Planning Student, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture. Phone number: (XXX)XXX-XXXX, email: gavasj@myumanitoba.ca

Research Supervisor Dr. Rae Bridgman, Acting Associate Dean, Department of City Planning. Email: rae.bridgman@umanitoba.ca

Conflicts of Interest and Undue Influence

There is no conflict of interest.

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, feel free to ask any of the people named above. Please take the time to read this document and any accompanying information carefully. It is very important that you understand:

- What is being asked of you,
- What the risks and benefits of participation are, and
- How the information you provide will be used and stored.

Purpose of the Study

I am doing this research to complete my Capstone Project which is a course requirement to complete the Master of City Planning Program. The goal of the project is for students to conduct in-depth research on an issue of importance for planning practice. This research will be under the supervision of Dr. Rae Bridgman. This research study is looking at how to deliver culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous peoples living in Winnipeg and other similar sized prairie cities. We are hoping to learn about the role of municipalities in removing barriers and creating policies and development plans that help instead of hinder the process of creating this type of housing in urban contexts.

Study Procedures

If you decide to take part in the study, we will meet for a 30–60-minute interview through the University of Manitoba licensed Zoom platform. With your consent, I will audio record our meeting so that the interview can be transcribed. The questions to be asked during the interview will be provided ahead of time to allow for preparation.

Study Risks

This interview is minimal risk, meaning that the risks are no greater than what you might encounter in your daily life.

Study Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you by participating in this study, however it does provide an opportunity for you to share your perspective and help to remove policy barriers in delivering culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous peoples in Winnipeg. These insights will provide lessons that can be passed on to other planners and individuals working to provide housing in cities.

Compensation

There is no compensation for this study.

Use and Storage of Information

All the information you provide as a participant in this study is confidential which means we as the research team must keep it safe. We will do our best, however, it is not possible to guarantee absolute confidentiality. We will only share your personal information if required (court order or law).

Your information will be stored on a secure platform approved by the University of Manitoba. We will have a file that links your name to your information using a code. We will keep the file with your name, contact information, and code separate from the research information you share with us. The audio files from the interview will be used to create transcripts which will be securely stored on the University of Manitoba OneDrive system. When we share the results of this study, we will combine everybody's responses. We may use some your information through quotes. The quotes will not include your name but will instead be attributed to your job title (e.g.: municipal city planner, non-profit representative). We will destroy any

information that identifies you (name, email address) by 02/25 by erasing electronic copies. The rest of the information will be kept on the secure University of Manitoba individual file storage system OneDrive under my personal university account in a password protected folder until the end of the academic year, June 2025, and then will be destroyed. Only myself, the PI, and my supervisor, Dr. Rae Bridgman, will have access to the data collected.

Dissemination

The study results will be shared through the completed Capstone Project final report and presentation and may be used for conference presentations and/or publications in journals and other academic and professional resources. Students' completed capstone project reports will be publicly available through the University of Manitoba's City Planning website here https://umanitoba.ca/architecture/department-city- planning/student-work . A summarized 1-page report will be sent via email to interview participants by the end of the academic school year, 06/25.

Withdrawing

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You can choose to do only the activities and/or answer only the questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the study for any reason. You do not have to explain why. You will not be penalized in any way. Should you withdraw partway through the study, all of your information will be destroyed unless you have consented to allowing us to keep it. You may withdraw from the study until 02/25. After this date, we will start to analyze the information so it may not be possible to withdraw your information. To withdraw, please contact the principal investigator, Jaclyn Gavas, or the research supervisor, Rae Bridgman at the email or phone numbers listed above. Participants can also choose to withdraw part way through the interview by closing the Zoom window.

Questions or Concerns

Designated University of Manitoba personnel may check that this study is being done safely and properly. To do this, they may visit the study site or review the research records. We will tell you if someone outside the research team will be there while you are participating. If this makes you uncomfortable, please tell a member of the research team, who will ask the personnel to return at another time.

This study has been reviewed and approved by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. However, this does not mean that participation is risk-free. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Human Research Ethics at humanethics@umanitoba.ca or (204) 474-7122.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this study, you may contact any members of the research team listed on the first page or the Office of Human Research Ethics.

Consent

By signing this document, I agree that:

- I have read the above information or had it read to me.

- I have had the opportunity to ask and have answered all of my questions.
- I understand what is being asked of me.
- I will be taking part in a research study.
- I may freely stop or leave the research study activities at any time.
- My information may be shared outside the University of Manitoba.
- I do not waive my legal rights by participating in the study.

Notice Regarding Collection, Use, and Disclosure of Personal Information

Your personal information is being collected under the authority of *The University of Manitoba Act*. The University of Manitoba is committed to preserving your right to privacy. The information you provide will be used by the University to support our research. Your personal information will not be used or disclosed for other purposes, unless permitted by *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* or *The Personal Health Information Act*. If you have any questions about the collection of personal information: Ph: 204-474-9462 or Email: fippa@umanitoba.ca

I agree to participate in this study	☐ Yes ☐ No
I agree to be audio-recorded in this study.	☐ Yes ☐ No
I would like to receive a summary of the results of this project. If yes, please provide your email address or mailing address below. Email: _____	☐ Yes ☐ No
I would like to receive a copy of the final report	☐ Yes ☐ No

Appendix B - Interview Guide for Municipal Housing Staff

1. What is your role with [insert name of municipality], and how long have you been in it?
2. What is your experience with creating or amending housing policies, zoning or bylaws?
3. In your experience, what is the approach to community collaboration when amending these policies? How are First Nations, Métis, and Inuit involved and what has been your experience with this?
4. Do you think there are adequate housing policies in place that specifically address the cultural needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit? If not, how would you like to see these policies change?
5. What barriers can you identify that would prevent First Nations, Métis or Inuit from creating culturally appropriate housing in the municipality you work for? (Specific elements of development plans or zoning bylaws may be brought up here).
6. Can you share any success stories of housing projects that you have been a part of that effectively met the needs of First Nations in your municipality? Any non-housing projects?
7. What opportunities are there to collaborate with non-profit housing organizations to help deliver culturally appropriate Indigenous housing?
8. What is your long-term vision for housing policies and collaboration with First Nations within municipalities? What does a healthy municipal-First Nation relationship look like?

Appendix C - Interview Guide for Non-Profit Staff

1. What is your role with [insert name of organization], and how long have you been in it? Who do you provide housing services for?
2. In your experience, what would you say is the current state of housing for Indigenous people in [Winnipeg or other city]? What are the primary barriers individuals face to accessing housing?
3. How important is the inclusion of cultural spaces in homes for Indigenous people?
4. What are the primary barriers you encounter when advocating for culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous people, and how do you address these challenges?
5. Are there any successful housing projects that have stood out to you, and can you speak to what made these success stories?
6. Do you think there are adequate municipal housing policies that support the growth of culturally appropriate housing? If not, how would you want to see these policies change?
7. Do you think there are more opportunities for collaboration between non-profit housing organizations and municipalities?
8. How do you, and the organization you work with, ensure that you are engaging with Indigenous people in a good way to understand their housing needs?
9. What is your long-term vision for the future of housing policies and the development of culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous people? What would a healthy Indigenous-municipal relationship look like to you?
10. Is there anything that has not been discussed that you would like to talk about?

Appendix D - Semi-Structured Interview Coding Framework

	State of Housing	Municipal policies for accessing housing	Barriers to accessing housing	Barriers to the inclusion of culturally appropriate housing	Success Stories	Barriers at the municipal policy level	Possible Solutions
Non-Profit Participant 1	1		3	5	6	5	2
Non-Profit Participant 2	1		4	2	2	2	2
Municipal Housing Staff 1	1	2					4

Appendix E - Precedent Analysis Rubric

Precedent Name	EXAMPLE
Date open	
Location within the city	
# of units	
Type of housing	
Housing for whom?	
Length of stay	
Staff	
Operated by	
Funded by	
Culturally appropriate elements	
Other amenities	