

# MEMOIR

## The homelessness phenomenon among the First Nations of Quebec

Presented to the  
Commission des Affaires sociales

By:  
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&  
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## ***Preface***

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We would like to thank the *Commission sur les affaires sociales* for their invitation to present this memoir to the Quebec government in the framework of the consultation process regarding the homelessness phenomenon in Quebec.

We hope that your government will take into consideration the realities of First Nations and that the elements presented in this memoir will serve as a basis for the establishment of a government to government partnership for the development of policies and measures regarding homelessness.

### **The AFNQL**

Created in 1985, the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL) is a meeting point for the leaders of the 43 communities within 10 distinct nations: Abenaki, Algonquin, Atikamekw, Cree, Huron-Wendat, Malecite, Micmac, Mohawk, Innu and Naskapi.

The AFNQL operates in a similar fashion as the UN. The Chiefs provide the AFNQL with the mandate to develop various programs, projects and policies in all the various fields of activity. The mandates can be related to health, education, social services, housing, protection of the territories and natural resources, public safety as well as issues of a political nature such as inter-governmental relationships.

### **The FNQLHSSC**

Founded in 1994 by the Assembly of Chiefs, the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission is directed by a 7-member board of directors who are elected by the community delegates during their Annual General Assembly. Its mission consists of assisting the First Nations and Inuit of Quebec communities and organisations in the defence, maintenance and exercising of inherent rights regarding health and social services for the achievement and development of the related programs. The FNQLHSSC ensures the promotion of health and social services community organisation models and provides technical support for research, development and training on the subject – upon request by the communities. The organisation has the goal to ensure that the health and social services delivery system provided to First Nations respects the fundamental needs of its citizens.



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## *Introduction*

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“Poverty among the First Nations constitutes the greatest case of social injustice in Canada today.” National Chief Phil Fontaine.

“Housing and public services in the Aboriginal communities leave so much to be desired that they threaten the health and well-being of their residents. Inferior at all levels to the Canadian standards; they are the visible signs of the poverty and marginalisation that affect the Aboriginals in a disproportionate fashion.” Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, vol. 3.

“Numerous First Nations are experiencing a housing crisis. Unless actions are taken quickly, the housing conditions that are already unacceptable will only get worse, especially since the population growth on the reserves is twice as high as the Canadian average.” Sheila Fraser, Auditor General of Canada, 2003 Report.

Over the course of the past few years, the homelessness phenomenon among the Aboriginal population of Quebec, and especially among the First Nations, has increased in scope, both inside and outside of the communities. This situation is, in our opinion, partly caused by the housing crisis that the vast majority of the First Nations of Quebec communities are faced with. The situation is not better for the First Nations who live in urban areas, for the needs are greater than what is available in terms of social and affordable housing.

Among the elements that will be addressed, you will find:

- A demographic profile of the First Nations of Quebec in both the communities and in urban areas, as well as certain data regarding the socio-economic conditions;
- That homelessness among the First Nations is a phenomenon that is related to the significant housing crisis that the great majority of First Nations communities are experiencing;
- That homelessness has a dimension that is unique to the First Nations of Quebec, considering socio-historic and cultural factors;
- That the phenomenon is related to a migratory dynamic that is unique to First Nations;
- That homelessness can be related to a series of social and economic obstacles and that the living environments are an important factor;
- That homelessness can be connected to health problems;
- That homelessness is a public health and safety challenge;



- That the homelessness phenomenon can be solved through a political commitment to allocate more resources in the services both inside and outside of the communities;
- That the homelessness phenomenon among the First Nations is different depending on whether the observations are made in urban areas or within the communities.



## ***1. First Nations of Quebec – A profile***

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Before getting started, it seems very important to us to establish the demographic profile of the First Nations of Quebec, since this aspect plays a vital role in the development of programs and initiatives – both at the local level and within the federal and provincial governments.

Although the population of Quebec is aging, the reality for the First Nations is completely different since they are experiencing a strong demographic growth and the population is markedly younger than among the general population. The average age of the Aboriginal population is 24,7 years compared to 37,7 years for the population of Quebec. Among the First Nations of Quebec, 42% of the population is less than 25 years old compared to 31% for the Quebec population. There are 3900 children aged under six years. The predominance of young children causes a considerable need for services and programs in the First Nations communities.

In Quebec, there are 70946<sup>1</sup> First Nations people in more than 40 communities (INAC, 2008, p.ix). This population is divided among 10 distinct First Nations spread out across the entire provincial territory. The population of the communities is generally low since, other than for few exceptions, they generally have less than 4000 residents. The communities are spread out over limited access regions (11%), isolated and rural regions (37%) and urban regions (52%) (FNQLHSSC).

The First Nations represent approximately 1% of the population of Quebec. Generally speaking, the First Nations members live in their communities. There are 48218 First Nations living on-reserve, 1588 living on crown land and another 21140 First Nations members who live off-reserve (INAC, 2008, p.ix).

In Canada, it is the First Nations of Quebec who have the highest rate of traditional language use. The traditional mother tongue is spoken by almost half (47%) of the population (Statistics Canada, 1998).

The age structure of the First Nations populations indicates a strong demographic growth and this situation is not without consequences on the services that are provided – both in urban areas and in the communities. In that respect, there is increased pressure on the community services because of a growing number of First Nations who are returning to their communities after a short period of absence. Note that the proportion of First Nations who live in the communities has remained rather stable, with approximately 70% of the total population of the First Nations of Quebec. It is therefore a sharp contrast with the perception in terms of the migration of First Nations towards urban areas, although it is important not to deny this phenomenon.

There are 21140 First Nations members who live outside of the communities, according to the data gathered by INAC (INAC, 2008, p.ix). Among the cities in

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<sup>1</sup> This number does not include the Inuit.



Quebec, it is in Montreal that most of the people who disclosed their Aboriginal status are found. According to the data obtained during the last census by Statistics Canada<sup>2</sup>, Montreal had an Aboriginal population of 7 600 people in 2006, and of this number, 4285 were members of a First Nation. This is followed by Gatineau, with 3240 First Nations members; followed by Quebec with 1725; followed by Saguenay with 880; followed by Sept-îles with 670; followed by Trois-Rivières and Val-d'or with 585 and 515 respectively (Statistics Canada, 2006).

In order to properly figure out the homelessness phenomenon, it is necessary to understand the social, economic, political and cultural environment within which the problem is taking place as well as the social and economic conditions of the actual homeless people. The same goes for the First Nations who live in specific environments with realities that are unique.

### ***1.1 The social and economic conditions***

Canada and Quebec are considered nations that have excellent conditions of life among the most industrialised countries. The health and social services, education and housing support programs are the types of measures taken by governments to support the citizens in their development. The First Nations are experiencing a different reality. While Canada is ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in terms of the Human Development Index of the UN, the First Nations of Canada are ranked 78<sup>th</sup> (2003). Certain First Nations communities are living in conditions that are on par with third world countries: unsanitary and overcrowded housing, water problems, outdated schools, under-employment, etc.

The Canadian Council on Social Development revealed in a year 2000 report that 55,6% of Aboriginals in Canada who live off-reserve were living below the poverty-line. In Montreal, more than 50% of Aboriginals live under the poverty-line (CCSD, 2008). Even if we do not know the rate of people living under the poverty-line in the First Nations of Quebec communities – since there haven't been any studies on this issue – we do however know that poverty is very prevalent and, in some places, it is even a matter of endemic poverty. In fact, the rate of social assistance dependency, the unemployment rate as well as the average revenue of the Aboriginal population in Quebec demonstrate that the social and economic conditions of the First Nations are greatly inferior to the rest of the Quebec population. For example, certain

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<sup>2</sup> As for the data on the First Nations population both inside and outside of the communities, it is important to remain prudent. First of all, Statistics Canada's census does not cover all of the First Nations territories and even in the communities or organisations that were accessible, not all of the members accepted to participate in this exercise. As for the Indian Affairs' registry, there are certain problems - for example, the time of birth or death may cause the registry data to be incomplete. As for the urban setting, some authors and interveners pointed out that the off-reserve Aboriginal population is under-estimated. See Gauvin, Pierre R. et al. Evaluation and Adjustment of Demographic Data for Registered Indians in Canada, 1973 to 1996. Statistics Canada – INAC, Ottawa. Consulted online at: [www.stat.fi/isi99/proceedings/arkisto/varasto/verm0185.pdf](http://www.stat.fi/isi99/proceedings/arkisto/varasto/verm0185.pdf) And Brassard, Renée and Jaccoud, Mylène. La marginalisation des femmes autochtones à Montréal. In Newhouse, David and Peters, Evelyn (dir.). No Strangers in these parts: Urban Aboriginal Peoples. Government of Canada, Ottawa, 2003, p. 143.



communities have rates of social assistance dependency that are close to 50% (INAC, 2008). It goes without saying that revenue from social assistance does not allow for living over the poverty threshold.

The poverty phenomenon among the Aboriginal population, in the same manner as in non-Aboriginal communities, especially affects the women. In this respect, the situation of single-parent mothers is worrisome<sup>3</sup>. According to data by Statistics Canada, the average income among Aboriginal women was \$13300 while that of non-Aboriginal women was \$19350 (Khosla, p.2).

**Table 1:**  
**Income and social assistance among the Aboriginal people in Quebec**

	Aboriginal population of Quebec	Quebec general population
Employment income (average)	\$21231	\$29385
Total income (average)	\$22332	\$33117
Social assistance dependency	28%	7,4%
Unemployment rate	20%	6,9%

Source: FNQLHSSC, *First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Regional Longitudinal Health Survey*, 2006; Observatoire de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue, *Portrait de la pauvreté et des inégalités*, Janvier 2007.

### ***1.2 Food insecurity***

The Aboriginals of Canada have a rate of food insecurity that is four times higher than among the Canadian population – 33% among the Aboriginal population compared to 8,8% among the non-Aboriginal population (Health Canada, 2007, p.20) A child who is hungry is at risk of having trouble concentrating at school, which greatly impedes social development and diminishes the chances of breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Most community interveners underline that the hunger problem is very well present in the First Nations of Quebec communities and very few communities have any of the known counter-measures, such as food banks and community kitchens in order to address this issue.

### ***1.3 The housing crisis among First Nations***

The First Nations of Quebec are currently going through a serious housing crisis. This problem that is found in most of the Aboriginal communities in Canada is of a structural nature, given that the housing funding program in the First Nations communities is not adapted to the demographic context. In other words, the federal

<sup>3</sup> In 1996, 33% of Aboriginal women in Canada were single parent mothers.



government's programs do not allow for the needs resulting from the strong demographic growth of First Nations to be addressed.

**Table 2:**

**Profile of the First Nations of Quebec housing situation**

Total number of houses	12500
Total number of overcrowded homes out of the total number	4200
Number of houses with needs <sup>4</sup> out of the total number	6700

Source: AFNQL

The Aboriginal people are currently experiencing a significant demographic growth and are among one of the three rapidly developing groups in Canada (CMHC, 2007, p.24). The First Nations population is growing at nearly twice the rate as the rest of the Canadian population - 1,9% for First Nations compared to 1 % for the non-Aboriginal population (Government of Canada, 2008, p.22).

The youth of the population: 52% of the registered Indian population was less than 25 years of age, compared to 33% in the Canadian general population – demonstrating the urgency to act since the housing needs will continue to increase in a significant manner once these youth are at the stage in their lives when it is time to leave their family home. Between 2001 and 2026, the population of the First Nations in Canada will increase by 45%<sup>5</sup>. The populations in the reserves and in the urban areas should increase respectively by 64% and 33% over the course of this period. From 65000 in 2001, the population of the First Nations of Quebec should reach 93000 people in 2026 (Government of Canada, 2008, pp.21-22). Over the next ten years, the AFNQL anticipates that there will be a need for an additional 10000 homes to provide for the needs caused by this demographic growth.

As admitted by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, only 56,9% of the homes of the First Nations of Canada were considered to be adequate in 1999-2000 (Health Canada, 2003, p.69). A study emanating from another federal agency revealed that more than 22% of Aboriginal households surveyed in the reserves occupied homes of insufficient quality in 2001 (CMHC, 2006, p.53). Out of all the households that live in housing that belong to the band, 12,6% were living in housing that did not meet quality and size standards (CMHC, 2006), and by quality, we mean housing that does not necessitate significant repairs, that has a sufficient number of rooms and is affordable - meaning that the family does not need to spend a third of the household income before income taxes for their housing. The average income for these households was \$21 238 (Ibid).

<sup>4</sup> Needing renovation and/or decontamination.

<sup>5</sup> It is a scenario of moderate growth.



Among the obstacles to accessing adequate housing, there is household poverty, but also the under-funding of the housing program and the strong demographic growth. This growth has the effect of contributing to the overcrowding of homes, “*Therefore, the overcrowding situation not only has the effect of reducing the longevity of the home, but also of aggravating the social problems such as poor hygiene conditions, family tension and violence*” (INAC, FNQLHSSC, 2008, p.14). As for the longevity of homes and their salubrity, the FNQLHSSC, in its 2002 health survey, underlined that 54,8% of the adults in the First Nations of Quebec communities indicated that their homes were in dire need of maintenance and repair and that 35,8% lived in housing that was contaminated with mould (FNQLHSSC, 2008, p.14).

The Indian Act ensures that it is difficult for an individual to become the owner of their home on a First Nations territory. This situation, combined with the fact that goods cannot be repossessed on a reserve, makes it very difficult to access mortgage loans and funding intended for the construction of housing. In addition to creating a phenomenon of overcrowding, the shortage of housing on the reserves – which is impacted by the strong demographic growth – causes the creation of waiting lists. Nearly 90% of the First Nations of Quebec communities have a waiting list for their housing program. A delay of four to six years is necessary for approximately one-third of the communities (36,7 %) and in nearly one-fourth (21,4 %) of the communities, the waiting time exceeds seven years (Ibid, pp.14-16).

#### ***1.4 The consequences of overcrowding***

The overcrowding of homes and apartments in the communities has important consequences from a social perspective. In some communities, two, even three families live together packed into a single home (Survey, 2008). The lack of privacy caused by overcrowding fuels and conditions a series of social problems that compromise the social development of the individuals in the communities. The problem is particularly important for the children and the youth. The lack of privacy detracts from the development of children and youth and weakens their chances to succeed in school. How can a youth concentrate on school work without a calm and serene place to study? The answer to this question is obvious.

This lack of privacy is conducive to the appearance of violence and fuels social problems such as addictions. Naturally, the chances that an individual will develop social and psychological problems are clearly higher in a living environment where the problems are already well established. Once the situation explodes, it is often the mothers and their children who are on the receiving end of stress and anxiety caused by these difficult living conditions. There is therefore no reason to be surprised by a high rate of placement of children and youth among the First Nations of Quebec. The problem is even more significant since the overcrowding of the homes practically prevents adoption within the communities. The youth are therefore sent into the Quebec families. The result is a loss of culture that contributes to the loss of First Nations identity and traditions.

In this type of context, it is not surprising that certain youth and mothers leave the community in favour of the city. Others will prefer to wander in the community or



find refuge among friends and family for a time. In some cases, people who commit undesirable acts are evicted from the houses. They therefore find themselves living on the street. One must not be surprised to see people wandering about in certain communities from the spring to the fall. Other people are banned from the community. Many of these people therefore go to Montreal, Quebec, Val-d'Or, Saguenay, Gatineau, etc. Given their social and economic situation, chances are high that these people will end up on the streets (Survey, 2008).

### **1.5 The off-reserve housing crisis**

Even though the needs for housing are alarming in the communities, they are equally so outside of the communities, since a high number of Aboriginal people who live in urban areas live under the poverty line. In addition to dealing with difficult living conditions, Aboriginals who live in urban areas face racism, discrimination and intolerance on behalf of many citizens of European ancestry. The reality is that a high number of Aboriginal people who live in the cities have a hard time finding housing and employment, simply because they are not “white”. This discrimination can cause people to seek refuge among people who are close to them when possible. However, faced with such obstacles, some will prefer to return to their community while others will be headed for marginality: homelessness, delinquency, crime, etc.

Poverty among the Aboriginal people in urban settings is explained by a great number of factors such as the demographic composition of the urban population, lack of education, the unemployment rate and an income that, on average, is lower than that of the rest of the population (CCSD, 2008, p.16). Another factor that also contributes to the poverty of Aboriginals is the difficulty to access affordable and quality housing.

**Table 3:**

**Off-reserve Aboriginal housing conditions, Quebec, 2001**

	Total number of Aboriginal households	% of all of the households that are faced with serious housing needs according to the CMHC standards	Average income (\$)	% of households that have an unaffordable home considering their income
Province of Quebec	23410	19%	\$16913	14,2%
Quebec City	1890	18,8%	\$12361	16,1%
Montreal	6615	19%	\$13072	17,6%
Gatineau	2535	14,6%	\$13521	12,4%

Source: CMHC, 2006



The high level of mobility among the Aboriginal population helps to better understand the poverty phenomenon. This mobility takes place at various levels: between the cities and the rural regions and within the cities. The geographic context and the conditions of life in the communities only serve to increase the complexity of this phenomenon. The hypermobility<sup>6</sup> of Aboriginals is directly connected to poverty, social exclusion, dropping out of school and problems in family and love (CCSD, 2008 Brassard and Jaccoud, 2003). The “promise” of a better life in the city actually happens for a limited number of individuals and families of Aboriginal ancestry. For the majority, they leave a difficult living environment for another.

For a great many Aboriginal people, city life is synonymous with living in a dump; for others it means “crashing” with friends and family while waiting to find a decent and affordable home. These situations lead to a problem of overcrowding, frequent moving and, for some, homelessness. This leads some individuals to return to the reserves, where they are also at risk of dealing with housing problems (CCSD, 2008, pp.16-17). As for access to housing, the First Nations, both inside and outside of the communities, seem to be stuck in a vicious cycle. Many must return to live in the community since they were unable to establish a better life in the city. The paradox is that this is one of the reasons that lead them to leave their community.

A study performed by La Prairie (1992) illustrates the connection between poverty, homelessness and crime among the Aboriginal people who live in urban settings. A vast majority of Aboriginals who live in the cities are only there for a temporary period – homeless, unemployed, single and frequently at odds with the law. Nearly 60% of Aboriginal people who live in Montreal have already stayed in a correctional facility (in Beauséjour et al., 2006, p.19). Despite the high level of resilience that the Aboriginal people are demonstrating, living in a difficult environment from a social and economic perspective leads to a series of health and social problems (Ibid, p.21).

According to Brassard and Jaccoud, the marginalisation processes of the first peoples “started early in childhood and overlapped into the macro-social context marked by the consequences of the colonisation of the First Nations of Canada and Quebec.” In their opinion, the migration phenomenon towards urban areas is preceded by the marginalisation of First Nations. Urbanisation, the strong demographic growth and the precariousness of the living conditions certainly constitute the main tendencies of the socio-economic and demographic conditions of the First Nations of Canada. The migratory movement of Aboriginal people towards the urban centres expanded in the 1960s in Canada while this phenomenon developed at a later time in Quebec. According to the survey of 2001, more than 11000 live in Montreal; however, according to many interveners, this number is grossly under-evaluated (Brassard and Jaccoud, 2003, p. 143).

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<sup>6</sup> Even though this phenomenon is present in Quebec, it is of a much higher scope in Western Canada – where more First Nations members are found to be living in urban areas.



**Table 4:**

**Social housing, by region, for the off-reserve Aboriginal people**

Administrative region	Number of homes
Bas St-Laurent	40
Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean	300
Capitale nationale	156
Mauricie	100
Montreal	52
Outaouais	532
Abitibi-Témiscamingue	322
Côte-Nord	297
Nord-du-Québec	30
Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine	58
Lanaudière	24
Laurentides	95
Montérégie	24
Total	1926

Source: Société d'habitation du Québec

Considering the social and economic situation of the Aboriginal people in urban areas, racism and discriminatory practices on behalf of some landlords and real estate developers, it is necessary to increase the availability of social housing for the First Nations people. For example, Montreal only has 52 social housing units for a population of 7600 individuals – this number is largely insufficient.



### ***1.6 The causes of poverty and the housing crisis among the First Nations***

The primary cause of poverty among the first people is, without contradiction, the heritage of colonization and the implementation of the *Indian Act* that, for all intents and purposes, prevented the economic development in their communities and contributed to the establishment of a system based on dependence. The absence of land and resources that are managed by the First Nations is a major obstacle to economic autonomy. The following are the conclusions of a chief before the Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples:

“The Indian reserves are not a factor of economic production. They are rather the essential factor in the under-development of First Nations in Canada, since the array of economic transactions that involve the reserve lands that the Indian Act authorises is very restricted, which for all intents and purposes completely reduced the economic value of the lands of First Nations.” (In Government of Canada, 2007, p.33).

### ***1.7 The under-funding of First Nations governments***

In his brilliant work, “*Enough to keep them alive: Indian Welfare in Canada*” the Professor Hugh Shewell from York University demonstrated that the social assistance policies of the federal government with respect to Aboriginal people were conceived with a very clear objective: the assimilation of the Aboriginal people of Canada. From the creation of Indian Affairs in the middle of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, the government’s strategy consisted of offering the strict minimum in terms of services on the reserves. They were meant to be simple transitional areas – temporary places between “traditional” life and “modern” life in the cities or the rural agglomerations. By offering the strict minimum within the communities – by obligating the people to survive in a dependent fashion rather than living in an autonomous and independent manner – the federal government had the private conviction that the people would end up abandoning their customs and traditions in order to adopt the way of life of the citizens of European ancestry (Shewell, 2004). History has shown all the harm causes by these policies.

In fact, the government drew inspiration from the British system to develop programs and policies intended for the First Nations of Canada. The Elizabethan Poor Law (1834) – that legalised and institutionalised charity in Great Britain – had to ensure a lower “income” for paid work, even at its lowest rate.

“While the welfare policy has sustained the weak, it has done little to make them strong – and many Aboriginal leaders and elders in Canada will say that this is their major objection to welfare. Indeed, many elders will go even further, saying that the welfare policy has sustained Indian people in poverty, and weakened their spirit by encouraging dependence rather than self-reliance – and self-reliance was a trait that virtually defined both the individual members of traditional Indian economies and



the communal groups and families in which they lived” (Thatcher in Sider, p.33).

Since the creation of Indian Affairs and its supervision of First Nations, the underfunding is one of the main characteristics of the relationship between the First Nations governments and the federal government. Still today, the First Nations governments are at a disadvantage in terms of their capacity to provide quality services to their members. They are ready to take care of the problems that they are faced with; however, they must have the necessary means to do so. A study performed by the Assembly of First Nations demonstrates that the 1996 “reform” was devastating for First Nations.

For example, the expenditures per First Nations resident are worth half of those granted to Canadians (between \$7000 and \$8000 compared to \$15000 and \$16000) (Assembly of First Nations, 2006). According to the Auditor General of Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) funding has increased by only 1,6% between 1999 and 2004 (while taking into consideration inflation), while the population of registered Indians increased by 11,2%. In comparison, the Canadian Health and Social Transfers (CHST) increased on average by 6,6% over the same period (Assembly of First Nations).

There is an enormous difference between the increases allocated to the provinces in the framework of the CHST and the increases granted to the First Nations governments. In 1996-1997, the federal government decided to cap at 2% (INAC basic services) the national budget increases for the First Nations essential services and at 3% (Health Canada) for the budget increases that are earmarked for health, which provides nursing care, medical transportation, drugs and other essential health services.

The financial “power” of the First Nations governments has therefore been diminishing in a significant manner since 1996 as inflation and the demographics continue to increase. The First Nations population is going through a demographic growth that is much higher than that of the general population, as stated previously.



## ***2.0 Homelessness among the First Nations of Quebec: one phenomenon, two dimensions***

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There is very little in the way of documentation concerning the homelessness phenomenon in Aboriginal settings in Quebec. In order to know more, we sought out the expertise of the interveners and organisations that work with First Nations, both inside and outside of the communities. The objective of this consultative process was to obtain a qualitative portrait of homelessness among the First Nations population of Quebec.

### ***2.1 Methodology***

First of all, a literature review was carried out. Works stemming from First Nations organisations, government agencies, non-government organisations and university researchers were consulted. Then, a survey was carried out among the health and social services directors who work in the communities. The aforementioned took the time to consult with their personnel. Furthermore, the community interveners who work for Aboriginal organisations in urban settings were also consulted.

### ***2.2 Sampling for the consultation***

All of the First Nations of Quebec were contacted with the exception of the James Bay Cree. A questionnaire/survey was sent out to the 31 communities across nine different First Nations. Out of these 31 communities, 28 of them filled out the survey that we developed for the purposes of the work of the *Commission des affaires sociales* on the homelessness phenomenon in Quebec. The questions focused on whether or not there were homeless people in the communities, the magnitude of the phenomenon, and the profile of the homeless people, the particularities and the causes of homelessness as well as whether or not there are services provided by the community in order to address this problem.

As for the Aboriginal organisations that work with the First Nations people in urban areas, we contacted nine Native Friendship Centres. Of this number, seven of them responded to our survey. Furthermore, the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal as well as the Quebec Aboriginal Project - organisations that work among the homeless people of Aboriginal ancestry in Montreal - responded to our questions. Even though the survey does not enable us to establish a statistical portrait of the homelessness phenomenon in Aboriginal settings, it is able to raise whether or not the phenomenon exists in the communities; to identify what the causes are; to gather testimonies on behalf of interveners and, therefore, the needs of this population, both inside and outside of the communities.

Homelessness is a phenomenon that raises many questions for which we do not have all the answers. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the situation of homeless people in Canada is worrisome and not well known. The same thing goes for the homeless people of Aboriginal ancestry. Certainly, it is not easy to carry out research among people without a stable home – many of whom do not access governmental, para-governmental and community-based services. Many



homeless people slip “between the cracks”. The lack of data from a statistical perspective must however not be an excuse for inaction. A transversal analysis of available documentation does however allow us to properly identify the problem and understand the main aspects and challenges. The qualitative method also allows for the gathering of testimonies on behalf of people who work among this clientele, which helps in terms of understanding the scope and causes of the problem. The conclusions of this consultative process can be found in section 3.

### ***2.3 Literature review: the definition of homelessness***

The following section provides information taken from the literature review:

In the MSSS’s frame of reference, the person who is experiencing a situation of homelessness does not have a *“set address, a stable, safe and sanitary home, has a very low income, experiences access discrimination in relation to services, has problems related to physical health, mental health, addictions, family violence or social disorganisation and is deprived of a stable membership group.”* (free translation) (Gouvernement du Québec, 2008, p.3). Three types of homelessness mark this phenomenon: situational homelessness, cyclic homelessness and chronic homelessness (Ibid, p.3). Among the explaining factors, there are the structural and individual factors as well as those of a non-institutional nature. These factors are associated with different problems such as physical and mental health, drug and alcohol addictions as well as problems related to the judicialisation of people (Ibid, pp. 7-8).

Even if certain elements of this definition can apply to the homelessness phenomenon in Aboriginal settings, there are however significant differences that must be recognised.

First of all, there is a distinction regarding homelessness among the First Nations. On the one hand, homelessness among the communities does not have the same “image” as that of Aboriginal people who live in one of the cities in the province of Quebec. On the other hand, the phenomenon within the communities does not have the same scope as in the cities – especially in Montreal – where, without a shadow of a doubt, are found the majority of the homeless people of Aboriginal ancestry.

Following a consultation process among homeless people, the Montreal Native Friendship Centre came to the conclusion that the term “homeless”, in Aboriginal settings, cannot be limited to people who live in the streets (Ship, 2001, p.16). Other studies form the conclusion that it is necessary to understand the history of colonialism in Canada in order to paint an “image” of homelessness among Aboriginal people. In her study performed in the town of Sioux Lookout, Deb Sider underlined that homelessness among First Nations is directly related to the social and psychological impacts of the Indian residential schools such as the loss of a meaning of life, the loss of a socio-cultural reference point, the loss of language and identity loss created by repeated efforts to assimilate the First Nations people by killing the “Indian in the child.” Among the causes of homelessness – of which some are closely linked to the consequences of the development of the Indian residential



schools – she underlined the lack of affordable housing, poverty, mental and physical health problems, addictions, family violence, the migration phenomenon, the marginalisation of a community member and certain shortcomings regarding Health Canada’s Non-Insured Health Benefits program<sup>7</sup>.

### ***2.3.1 Homelessness among Aboriginals: a profile of the problems and the services provided to the First Nations members***

The youth represent a portion of the homeless population that is increasingly significant and young Aboriginals are over-represented within this group. Studies show that Aboriginal youth are over-represented among the homeless in most of the large Canadian cities (National Council of Welfare, 2007, p.84). In the North and in the rural regions, the problem is often hidden by the overcrowding and “couch crashing” phenomenon (Ibid, p.84). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples concluded that the homeless Aboriginal youth have a different profile: “the cultural context, history, the structural conditions and the experiences on the street were different from those of other youth living on the street. Many of them experienced racism, as well as other stigmatizations associated with the poor who live on the street” (In Ibid, pp.84-85).

With around 3% of the Canadian population, the Aboriginal people represent about 10% of the homeless people in Canada (Sider, 2003, p.8). According to the CMHC, Aboriginals who live outside of the communities are not only more likely to find themselves without shelter, but are also, proportionately speaking, almost twice as many (24 % in 2001) to have pressing needs (quality and access) in terms of housing. The housing conditions for the off-reserve Aboriginal people are by far inferior to those of other Canadians (CMHC, 2006, p.53), and the situation is not likely to change soon, since the federal government cut spending in its social housing program in 1993<sup>8</sup>. The Aboriginal organizations that focus on the development of social housing outside of the reserves still feel the effects of these drastic cuts.

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<sup>7</sup> Medical transportation is not insured by Health Canada for a person who misses an appointment and/or does not complete their treatment. Therefore, some people remain in the city, since they lack the necessary resources to be able to return to their respective communities.

<sup>8</sup> From 1970 to 1993, the federal government invested in social and cooperative housing for the Aboriginals who were living off-reserve through the CMHC’s Urban Native Housing Program. This program contributed to improving the life conditions of Aboriginals living in urban areas. Despite this, the federal government stopped funding the construction of social housing between 1993 and 2001. The scope of the homelessness phenomenon therefore increased and the life conditions in the predominantly Aboriginal neighbourhoods therefore deteriorated. The federal government therefore needed to act. Instead of investing in the construction of social and affordable housing, the government set up a program – administered by Human Resources and Social Development Canada - that was intended to fight homelessness. From 2001 to 2006, a new initiative to foster the construction of affordable housing was developed by the CMHC in partnership with the provinces, but there was very little in terms of results. Since then, the federal government has not developed any initiative to promote social and cooperative housing (Walker, 2008, pp.6-7).

**Table 5:****Aboriginal homelessness in the large Canadian cities**

Cities	% of the urban Aboriginal population	% of the homeless population that has Aboriginal ancestry
Ottawa	1%	17%
Calgary	2%	17%
Vancouver	2%	30%
Edmonton	4%	37%

Source: The National Council of Welfare, 2007, p.85

According to the *Conseil des Montréalaises*, Aboriginal women account for half (50%) of the Aboriginal homeless population in Montreal. It is important to note that a significant number of women leave their communities – some of which are accompanied by their children – either to improve their life conditions, escape a violent spouse, complete their studies or to work. Considering the lack of affordable housing intended for off-reserve Aboriginal people, racism and discrimination, some women find themselves “on the street”. With less than 1% of the total population of Montreal, the governments consider the Aboriginal population of the city as marginal, and, consequently, invest very little in resources that are specifically intended for them. Thus, the city of Montreal only has but a few resources that are intended for Aboriginal people: the CAAM, the Quebec Aboriginal Project and the Native Women’s Shelter of Montreal. These organisations admit to being unable to provide assistance to everyone because of a lack of resources. For example, the Native Women’s Shelter only has 15 beds, which is completely inadequate in order to address the demand. Compared to Montreal, the city of Toronto has 44 organisations on its territory that have the mandate to provide services that are intended for the members of an Aboriginal nation; yet the two cities have an equivalent proportion of Aboriginal people in their total populations (NFCM, 2002, p. 8).

**Table 6:****Services for Quebec Aboriginal people in urban areas**

Organisation	Territory	Field of activity
Chibougamau Cree Native Centre	Chibougamau	Various services for Aboriginal people
Val-D'or Native Friendship Centre	Val-D'or	Various services for Aboriginal people
Senneterre Native Friendship Centre	Senneterre	Various services for Aboriginal people
Lanaudière Native Friendship Centre	Joliette	Various services for Aboriginal people
Montreal Native Friendship Centre	Montreal	Various services for Aboriginal people
Quebec Native Friendship Centre	Quebec	Various services for Aboriginal people
Sept-îles Native Friendship Centre	Sept-îles	Various services for Aboriginal people
La Tuque Native Friendship Centre	La Tuque	Various services for Aboriginal people
Waskahegan Corporation	Province of Quebec	Housing corporation
Native Women's Shelter of Montreal	Montreal	Shelter for women who are victims of violence
Native Aboriginal Project	Montreal	Shelter for the homeless
Quebec Native Women	Province of Quebec	Promotion and defence of the rights of Aboriginal women
Native Para-judicial Services of Quebec	Province of Quebec	Judicial services and legal counselling

**2.3.2 Homelessness and health**

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, homeless people are more at risk of having mental health problems; have a lower life expectancy; are hospitalised more frequently; and have a higher level of suicide contemplation (CIHI, 2007). Plus, these physical and mental health problems are already prevalent among the First Nations, which makes them even more vulnerable when they are faced with homelessness.

The Aboriginal population is over-represented within the population that is infected with HIV/Aids and tuberculosis. The problem is especially significant among the women. Also, Aboriginal people are faced with significant shortcomings in terms of health services. We already know that the life conditions are an important factor in



the explosion of the Aids rate among Aboriginal women according to the Canadian Women's Health Network "*These socio-economic conditions are directly connected to the positive results in the HIV screening tests observed among Aboriginal women, because they are linked with the precarious and difficult life environments. Thus, the survival techniques employed by the Aboriginal women often involve high risk behaviours such as migration towards urban centres, homelessness, prostitution, the use of injection drugs and alcohol abuse*" (Prentice, 2005). There is also a need to acknowledge that the people who contact HIV/Aids are often marginalised within their own communities and they are, in a way, obligated to depart in favour of the city. The same applies to incarcerated individuals, but to a lesser extent.

### ***2.3.3 Psycho-social problems***

Many people in the communities have psycho-social disorders that are all too often associated with a climate of violence, idleness, an identity conflict or various forms of addictions. These psychological issues are in a way the heritage of the Indian residential schools era, where many Aboriginal people were subjected to physical and sexual harm. Some people look to escape this violence and for them, migration towards the city is often the only solution. Once in the city, these people are confronted with new problems. The arrival in the city constitutes, for some, a social and cultural shock.

## ***3. Report of the consultations: the testimonies***<sup>9</sup>

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In light of the testimonies gathered during our survey, it appears that the homelessness phenomenon among the First Nations is the result of several factors. These factors stem from both the health problems as well as the precarious life conditions that the First Nations are faced with. The main causes of homelessness are the physical and mental health problems, drug and alcohol addictions, the housing crisis, racism and discrimination. Plus, these problems are related in that they fuel one another. For example, we know that the majority of people who suffer from addictions issues have mental health and idleness problems. It is therefore difficult for these people to locate and take care of a home because they do not necessarily have the organisational capacity and health required to do so. In this respect, it seems obvious that the deinstitutionalization phenomenon in Quebec lead many people to live on the streets with serious addictions and mental health problems. This situation applies to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Even if there are two dimensions to the homelessness phenomenon among First Nations, meaning the problems within the communities and in urban areas, the fact still remains that both are closely related to the housing crisis that is impacting most of the communities of Quebec. This crisis does not only affect the members who live on a reserve, but also those who live in the cities. An intervener who works in the urban setting effectively underlined the problem that the Aboriginal people who

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<sup>9</sup> In order to maintain the confidentiality of the interviewed people and in the spirit of respect for the communities and their members, no specific names or communities will be identified hereafter.



migrate towards cities are confronted with: “*many people come to the city because they are unable to find a place to live within the community. Once in the city, they are faced with the same problem.*” (Survey, September 2008).

The city is not necessarily an *Eldorado* for those who come from an Aboriginal nation: “It is not true that one can arrive in a city with a family that includes five children and that it will be a simple matter to find a place to live” (Survey, September 2008). With that in mind, most interveners who work in urban areas underline the importance of focusing on awareness in order to solve this problem. The people should ensure that they have access to a home and employment before leaving the community.

Even if the Aboriginal people who live outside of the reserves can benefit from the social housing program provided by the Waskahegen Corporation<sup>10</sup>, it seems that they are obligated to deal with a long waiting list and consequently, they cannot address the demand, as underlined by an intervener in the urban setting: “in the city where I work, there is a three-year waiting list for the social housing provided by the *Waskahegen Corporation*” (Survey, 2008). If the availability of social housing turns out to be lacking, it is not a simple matter for the Aboriginal people to turn towards the private market to find accommodations, since many owners discriminate against them. An intervener in the urban setting pointed out that “*most of his clients are faced with a housing problem: there is not only the shortage issue that is at the heart of the matter, but also discrimination on behalf of some owners who refuse to rent dwellings to Aboriginal people because they do not have a credit rating*” or because allegedly “*they are all alcoholic*” (Survey, 2008).

It is difficult to establish a profile of homeless people, because there has been very little in the way of studies that have been carried out on the issue. According to information from the interveners and the *Sûreté du Québec*, the vast majority of Aboriginal homeless people “have an addictions problem, some have mental health problems while others must resort to prostitution in order to survive. They tend to have a feeling of gregariousness, because they have a tendency to come together. They have a low level of education, virtually non-existent, and the women are over-represented within this population” (Survey, 2008).

“I guess that 5% to 10% of our clientele lives on the street. These people come to the centre in order to receive various help services - to benefit from shelter and a nice cup of coffee. They are characterised by an alcohol and/or drug use problem. However, the centre does not manage to reach out to all the homeless people, which means that we do not have a clear and exhaustive portrait of this clientele. The police even informed us that a ghetto had formed near the railroads and that the Aboriginal clientele was over-represented within this group” (Survey, 2008).

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<sup>10</sup> The Waskahegen Corporation has the mission to build affordable dwellings for the Aboriginal people who live off-reserve. In partnership with the Société d’habitation du Québec, the Waskahegen Corporation provides to its members the social housing programs Accès-Logis and Logements abordables.



As for the magnitude of the phenomenon, most of the people interviewed agree that the scope is currently increasing in Quebec. In their opinion, this situation is related to the over-crowding of homes in the reserves, addictions and the lack of dwellings available in the cities. Furthermore, the Aboriginal people are faced with problems related to integration into the urban lifestyle; the result for some is cultural shock that can have significant repercussions on a personal level. This is even more of a problem since a great number of First Nations citizens are experiencing an identity crisis. The racism and discrimination that they are the targets of can therefore lead them to marginality.

Even if the lack of housing on-reserve and in the cities constitutes a contributing factor to this phenomenon, it is not the only explanation, because mental health problems and social and psychological disorders also have an impact. The lack of human resources and clinical follow-up for people who have mental health problems related to various causes, such as the intergenerational consequences of the Indian residential schools, contribute to fuelling the homelessness problem.

Among the communities that participated in our survey, several declared that the homelessness phenomenon was not present in their area. However, they acknowledged that the reality could be hidden by the housing overcrowding phenomenon that affects the vast majority of the communities. Homelessness is in a way disguised in the communities. It manifests itself openly at times and generally comes to an end in the fall season. Some people will opt to go live in the forest for a time, while others head for the cities. It seems that solidarity within the communities acts as a barrier against homelessness, since the people without a stable home in the communities are, in most cases, able to find a place to sleep. Some will stay in a permanent manner with the members of their family or among friends, while others will only stay temporarily.

The profile of the homeless people in the communities is essentially the same as outside of the communities. They have, in general, problems with addictions and mental health. Even though we find a lot of women who are experiencing homelessness in urban areas, particularly in Montreal, it seems that the phenomenon affects the young men in the communities even more so. Only a more exhaustive study would enable us to validate this information.

As for the solutions, the people who were interviewed agree that the needs for housing are alarming, because overcrowding does not only affect the First Nations in the communities, but also those who live in the cities. Generally speaking, the interveners who work both inside and outside of the communities underline the lack of resources at their disposal in order to address the homelessness phenomenon and the related problems. The consulted individuals bank on a better education, more availability in terms of social and affordable housing, the construction of temporary shelters, employability programs and an increased availability in terms of resources and services to combat addictions. Improved support for people with significant mental health issues is also required.



#### ***4. From yesterday to today: Recommendations***

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##### **Yesterday: Recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996)**

In 1996, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) shed light on the conditions of life of the First Nations in Canada. In terms of housing, the RCAP reported on the CMHC programs and the consented improvements while stating that great steps needed to be taken so that the housing conditions of the Aboriginal people could be comparable to those of the non-Aboriginal population. Even though the established portrait was dark, the Commission recommended a plan to address this situation – a plan that was to allow First Nations to obtain full and complete political autonomy, as well as ensuring resources to allow for their complete social and economic development. More than ten years have passed since the Commission performed their work and among the approximately one hundred recommendations that targeted significant change, very few were implemented.

Even though the funding of the housing program is a federal responsibility, the provincial government can play a fundamental role regarding the improvement of the conditions of life of the First Nations – especially for the members who live outside of the communities. The following was taken from the recommendations made by the RCAP (RCAP (vol. 5), 1996, pp.245-246):

- The governments, both federal and provincial, have the obligation to ensure that Aboriginal people receive adequate services in the areas of housing, water supply and sanitation;
- The governments have the responsibility to re-establish among the Aboriginal people an economic foundation to enable them to address their needs;
- The Aboriginal people have the obligation to address their needs in terms of housing in accordance with their capacity to pay;
- The governments must provide Aboriginal people with the additional resources they need, without which they would be unable to fully meet their needs in terms of housing;
- That the Government of Canada provide, over the course of the next ten years, the resources that will allow to provide reserves with adequate dwellings in a sufficient quantity, while inciting the governments of the provinces and territories to reach the same objective in the rural communities, northern communities and in the urban regions.

##### **Today: The AFNQL and the FNQLHSSC recommend...**

More than ten years have passed since the publication of the RCAP report and very little has changed. Considering the maintenance of status quo, the situation in terms of housing has even continued to deteriorate and will only continue to get worse with time and the strong demographic growth that the First Nations are experiencing. This lack of action comes with a price and, sooner or later, will have to be dealt with. The current rate of new housing construction only allows to meet 15%



of the need. In order to solve this problem, an investment of \$1,5 Billion is needed (AFNQL, 2007, p11). If we do not attack the structural cause of homelessness, which stems in part from the housing crisis, the homelessness phenomenon among the First Nations of Quebec will probably increase in scope. In that respect, we can look at what is happening in the large cities in Western Canada – Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg – where Aboriginal homelessness is sometimes endemic in magnitude. With a growing population, both in the communities and in the cities, it is important to act. For example, the demographic weight of the Aboriginal population only continues to increase in some cities like Val-d’Or and La Tuque. It is therefore important to develop a plan that will ensure that these people will not find themselves in a situation of poverty and social exclusion. To that end, the construction of social and affordable housing is essential.

The following are the solutions identified in order to solve the housing crisis among the First Nations of Quebec:

- Fill the current need for 8000 housing units, of which 3500 must be social housing units, by building 10000 quality dwellings in ten years;
- Address the need for housing in urban areas for the off-reserve First Nations members, under the authority of local governments;
- Obtain the commitment from the Government of Canada to implement a social housing program for the communities. In this respect, we are looking to obtain the support of the province.

Regarding the eventual development of a policy to fight homelessness, the government must take into consideration the interests and needs of the First Nations, so that they can adapt the said measures. Following the commitments made by the three governments during the first First Nations Socio-Economic Forum that took place in Mashteuiatsh, the Quebec government made the commitment to consult the First Nations regarding all the measures, policies and laws that concern them. This must serve as the starting point in the eventual development of a homelessness policy.

The AFNQL hopes that the First Nations will be consulted and that they will be able to participate in the development of the aforementioned policy from the very beginning of the process. As for the adoption of measures, we recommend to the members of the *Commission des affaires sociales* that the government should work in a collaborative manner with the First Nations so that they can adapt the measures and actions that the province would like to develop. Our presence at the inter-ministerial collaboration tables is needed more than ever.

It is a good idea for a homelessness policy to be developed while taking into consideration the other social measures that have been set forth by the Quebec government. From our perspective, it is also essential that this policy, as with other social measures, can be adapted to the unique context that is prevalent among the First Nations – as early as possible in the developmental stage.



Moreover, the Quebec government acknowledges that homelessness is one of the most significant social problems in Quebec (Gouvernement du Québec, 2008, p.12). “On this matter, the *Loi visant à lutter contre la pauvreté et l’exclusion sociale*<sup>11</sup> (*free translation: Act to fight against poverty and social exclusion*), anticipated that it must “foster access to a decent dwelling at a reasonable price through assistance measures or the development of social housing, as well as the reinforcement of community support for the most destitute individuals from a social perspective – meaning the homeless (*free translation*).” (art. 9, par. 7)

It is clear that the Quebec government is increasingly feeling the pressure to address the growing needs of the First Nations people in terms of social services. This is the result of a progressive disengagement on behalf of the federal government that refuses to adequately fund the communities in this area as well as for the construction of additional homes. Yet, this is a matter of a responsibility that is clearly under the federal government’s jurisdiction – as they are under the obligation to provide First Nations with treatment that is comparable with the provincial population.

Therefore, we believe that it would be advantageous for the Quebec government to join with First Nations when they make their claims to the federal government for the additional funding needed to build additional homes in the communities as well as adequate financial support for the provision of social services. Furthermore, the federal government must also contribute financially to improving the social housing and the social services that are specifically intended for the First Nations who live outside of the communities<sup>12</sup>.

It is vital to deal with the homelessness situation among the First Nations in an upstream manner, meaning by reducing the social factors that are prevalent in the communities that lead to the development of this phenomenon. We therefore invite the Quebec government to support our initiatives in this respect more closely.

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<sup>11</sup> L.R.Q., c. L-7.

<sup>12</sup> Particularly through a program comparable to the former CMHC’s Urban Native Housing program, see *supra* point 8.



### *Our recommendations:*

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1. That the resolution of the homelessness problem be under the responsibility of the First Nations;
2. That the provincial and federal governments provide support to First Nations on a partnership basis;
3. That the representatives of the AFNQL or their proxies be a part of the policy development and governmental processes from the very beginning;
4. That the provincial government give their consent to adapt governmental measures to the needs and realities of the First Nations;
5. That the provincial government support First Nations in the capacity-building for the interveners who are both inside and outside of the communities – in order to address the special needs of the First Nations members;
6. That the government agree to create a key position within the FNQLHSSC in order to act as a liaison between the various partners and the services provided by the First Nations and the province;
7. That the provincial government allow the First Nations official representatives to participate in the inter-departmental committees as well as in the various bodies that develop the policies, actions plans, strategies, and governmental measures that have an impact on the First Nations;
8. That the provincial government work in collaboration with the First Nations so that they obtain the funding that will enable them to reach parity with the Quebec population in terms of housing and health and social services.



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# ANNEXE



Wendake, September 9, 2008

**To: Health and Social Directors**

**From: Patrick Bacon, Project agent – Initiative to combat poverty**

**Re.: Questionnaire/survey<sup>13</sup> on homelessness in the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador**

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The brief prepared by the AFNQL and the presentation made to the Social Affairs Commission will not contain the names of any individuals, nor will they contain any information that could specifically identify any community. Only an overall portrait of the situation will be published.

The brief – and its recommendations – will then be presented to the Commissioners. Our goal is to gain better understanding of the problem of homelessness, which is affecting a growing number of individual First Nations members both in and away from the communities. We will also present avenues for solutions to combat this problem, on the basis of the work by the Commission.

The consultation will be held in Quebec City on a date likely after Parliament reconvenes, which should be on or about October 21.

Therefore, to obtain specific answers to our questions before September 19, 2008, Marie-Josée Dussault will contact each of you during the week of September 15 for purposes of completing the questionnaire, a copy of which we are including as an annex for your information.

We hope you will agree to take part in this data-gathering activity.

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<sup>13</sup> Please note that the information which is gathered will remain confidential. The brief prepared by the AFNQL and the presentation made to the Social Affairs Commission will not contain the names of any individuals, nor will they contain any information that could specifically identify any community. Only an overall portrait of the situation will be published.



Name of Community: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person/reference/occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Is the phenomenon of homelessness present in your community? If yes, can you give an estimate of the number of homeless people?
2. Among the members who leave your community to live in an urban centre, do you know of any who are confronted by the problem of homelessness (unable to find housing or shelter)? If yes, can you give an estimate of their number?
3. Do you feel that homelessness is on the increase in and away from your community?
4. What is the profile of homeless people in your community (age, gender, with or without children, with or without a spouse, employed or unemployed)?
5. What do you feel are the main causes of and factors affecting homelessness in and away from your community?
6. Do you feel that the housing crisis in the First Nations has a direct impact on the phenomenon of homelessness? If yes, to what extent?
7. Do the homeless people living away from your community contact you to obtain services or assistance? If yes, please give a few examples.
8. Have any measures been taken in your community to resolve this problem?
9. What do you feel are the solutions or measures that should be put into place to resolve the problem of homelessness in the First Nations?

