



# IT'S A TOUGH GAME: NAVIGATING HOUSING MONOPOLIES IN YELLOWKNIFE, NT

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# RESEARCH PROCESS



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[The Housing Authority] told me the priority is for single mothers and people with disabilities. They said I could go ahead and put my name on the list, but even after waiting ten years, I still wouldn't get a place.

-“Carl”, in *No Home in a Homeland* (Christensen, 2017)

“

The problem is now that so many of the places here are owned by [the same private rental company]. And I had an issue with them, and they won't rent to me anymore. And often other companies will check with [the private rental company] before renting, so you can get yourself on the blacklist really easily.

-“John”, in *No Home in a Homeland* (Christensen, 2017)

“

The only place I could get for [\$900] would mean living with other people, and I really can't do that right now. Rooming houses and things like that, there are bound to be people using drugs and alcohol there, and right now I just can't be around that stuff. It won't be good for me.

-“Jim”, in *No Home in a Homeland* (Christensen, 2017)





# Northwest Territories Housing Corporation

## Housing First

### **Housing First:**

HF is an approach that addresses homelessness by moving chronic and episodic homelessness people into independent housing and then coordinating support services clients need to maintain housing. The Housing First (HF) approach has brought about an understanding that housing instability or homelessness is often the result of a number of interconnected social issues, ranging from mental health and addiction issues to domestic abuse and poverty.

A five-year research demonstration project started in 2008 by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) has shown positive results for participants formerly chronically or episodically homeless to remain stably housed under the model.

The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation (NWT HC) is exploring how this approach could be implemented in the NWT by:

- Supporting the City of Yellowknife's Community Advisory Board in their implementation of a Housing First project involving utilizing private market rental housing (scattered site HF model) in Yellowknife (\$150,000 per year)
- Assisting sheltering agencies to convert their excess space into separate, independent single occupancy rooms with share facilities (congregate HF model) using a one-time capital investment of \$600,000.

Housing First has been adapted to fit unique needs of different communities across Canada, this means no one approach is exactly the same. Here are some elements of the Housing First approach:

### **Understanding Housing First:**

Researchers who have studied the success of housing first have indicated it is due to the client-centred focus, number of interventions and collaboration from a



# THEMES



There is an article in the paper not too long ago where I was interviewed and I was thinking I hope I don't lose my job over this. That's one of the challenges I have....I'm both an advocate and a service provider and that's really hard because we don't have an advocacy office here. I went to the NWT Human Rights Commission last week and said we need to have an office here because I can't be both. I'm going to lose my funding sometime because I'm a mouth piece and saying too much against the hand that feeds you.

*-“Jane”, housing provider and advocate in Yellowknife*



Northview has stopped taking income support tenants. So, we've been able to get around that because we're a [Housing First] program, and I'm not sure whether that's still the policy, but it was definitely like an actual policy of theirs, they would not accept income support for their rental, because it was unpredictable about when they would receive payment. So, they would have units sitting empty rather than take tenants (that were on income support).

*-“Louise”, housing provider and advocate in Yellowknife*



I often think there is no sense calling it ‘transitional’ housing, because in Yellowknife and all across the territory, there is really nowhere to transition to. Even if they could afford to rent an apartment, many of our clients have had previous experiences with the main landlord in town, and some have arrears with the Housing Corp. There’s nowhere else to go, really.

*-“Lori”, housing provider and advocate in Yellowknife*

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I also think, many of our clients really like living here with other women. They like the support. If there's nowhere to transition to, and our clients feel stronger here, maybe we need to rethink the whole concept. But that's not what the government wants to hear.

*-“Lori”, housing provider and advocate in Yellowknife*



It's really person-based, and that's the unfortunate thing. And, I mean, right now, we have a great relationship with the manager, and when we were initially starting up, the manager was actually part of this group called The Homeful Partnership, that was advocating for Housing First in YK. But uh, yea, if someone comes in who's not supportive of our program, then we can very easily lose the units. And it's not sustainable because of the funding model.

*-“Louise”, housing provider and advocate in Yellowknife*



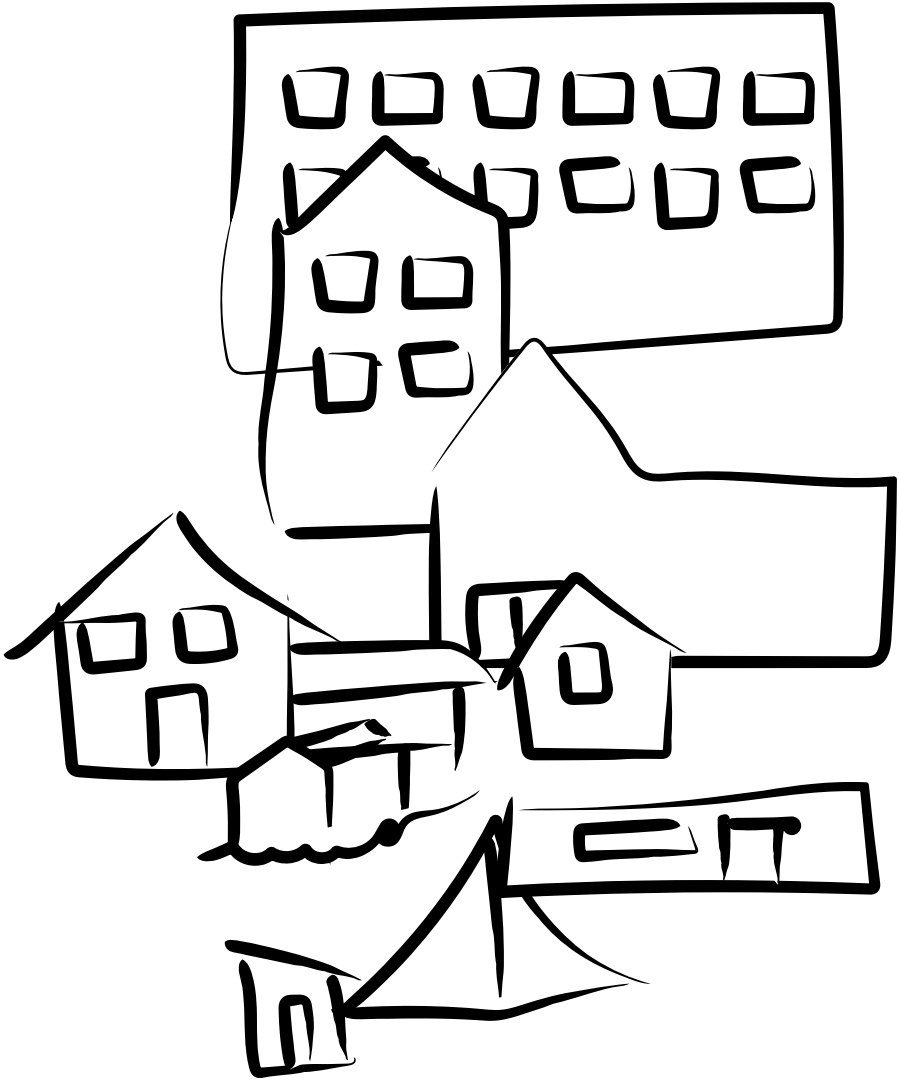
I think our expectations need to be adjusted, or adapted to the realities of what people are dealing with, and what the market is like here. Funders want to see high-acuity clients in Housing First units, but they also want to see people moving on, graduating out of the program. We are just not seeing that happening, really. Many of the people in these units will likely, hopefully, be there long-term. There is a lot of pressure on the programs to have people moving out of Housing First into independent living.

*-“Mike”, policymaker and housing advocate in Yellowknife*





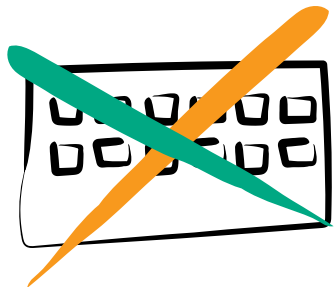
# Title of Resource



## Hi, I'm Joe.



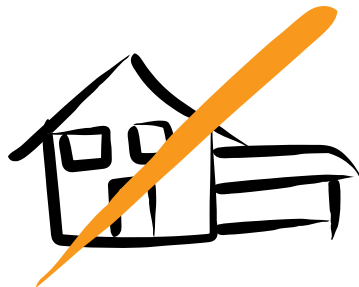
Joe is a single man in his mid-50s. He is a labourer, but doesn't have his journeyman ticket, so the jobs he is able to access on work sites are lower paid than his skilled colleagues. He was able to get a job at a diamond mine with a 2 week in/out rotation, but was laid off when the mine began to wind down production. Joe finds work in construction, but it's very seasonal, which means he works long hours during the spring, summer and fall, and makes a decent living. During the winter, however, it can be more difficult to get by. His annual income, however, is high enough that he is not eligible for income assistance. This, combined with the fact that he is a single man, makes it impossible to access public housing. His only rental housing option therefore is private rental housing. Private rental housing in Yellowknife is dominated by one larger company, and overall rents are very high. Joe rents a modest apartment in one of their units, but it's very expensive on his income and he worries every month about being able to pay his rent.



### LOW-INCOME RENTALS

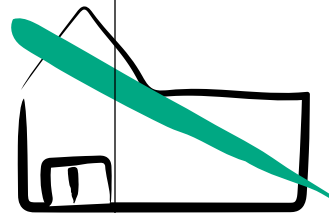
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### PRIVATE RENTALS

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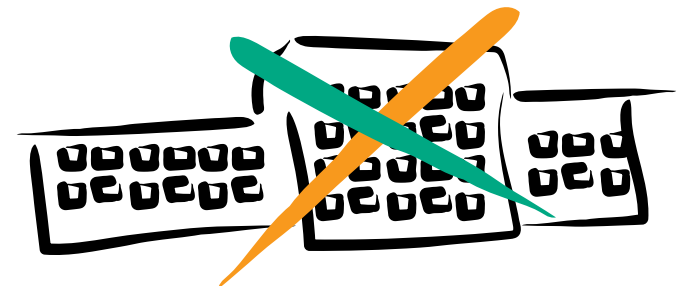
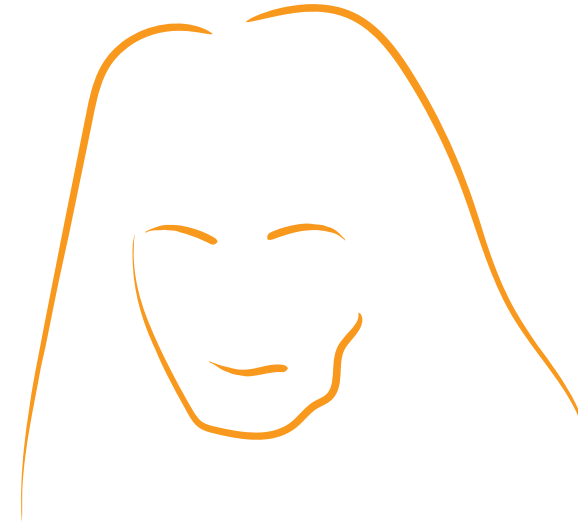


### SHELTERS AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

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## Hi, I'm Paula.

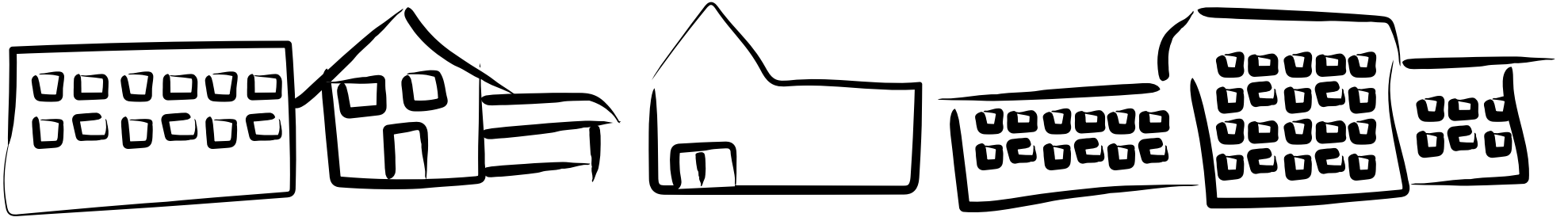
Paula is a woman in her late 30s who lives at the women's shelter in a transitional housing unit. She enjoys living there because she feels lonely when she is on her own, and likes living with other women who she considers friends. Her two children are grown up now and also live in Yellowknife. She likes being able to have a relationship with them. Paula moved to Yellowknife several years ago in order to be able to access social and health supports that she needed in her life, and she has stayed in the city ever since, even in spite of her difficulties in finding housing. She feels that she gets the supports she needs in Yellowknife and does not want to go back home.



### INTERMITTENT HOUSING

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# BARRIERS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING



## PRIVATE HOUSING MONOPOLY

A monopoly on private rental marking impacts single-individuals most acutely, and racialized (Indigenous) individuals the most.



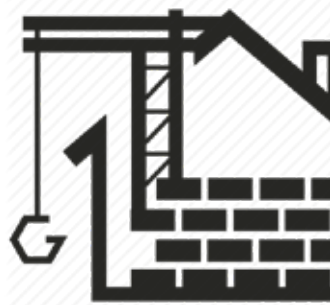
## INDUSTRY

Non-renewable resource development impacts affordable housing. The intermittent demand for housing raises property values and the demand for rental housing. It has a lasting impact.



## HIGH COSTS

Private rental market rates are very high and for many people, are quite inaccessible.



## COST OF CONSTRUCTION

Building new housing is challenging in the NWT due to prohibitive cost (and travel) of materials, lack of trained labour, and transportation expenses.



## ARREARS

Tenants with rental arrears with Housing Corporation limited access to affordable housing for tenants across the NWT. Tenants with arrears find it challenging to access private market housing as a result.

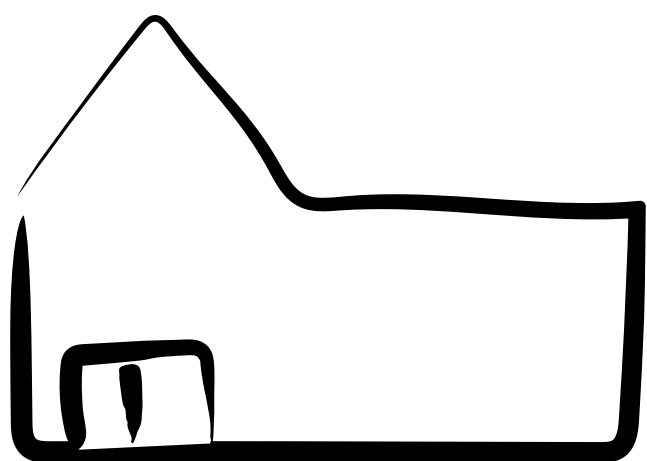


## TRAUMA

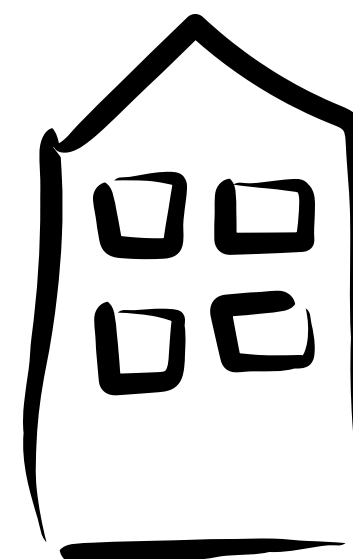
Housing for women needs to take into account experiences of trauma. Women do not feel safe in a unit by themselves. Our models of housing need to reflect the trauma that women experience in the NWT.



**ENCOURAGE TINY HOMES**



**RETHINK TRANSITIONAL HOUSING**



**ENCOURAGE CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING**

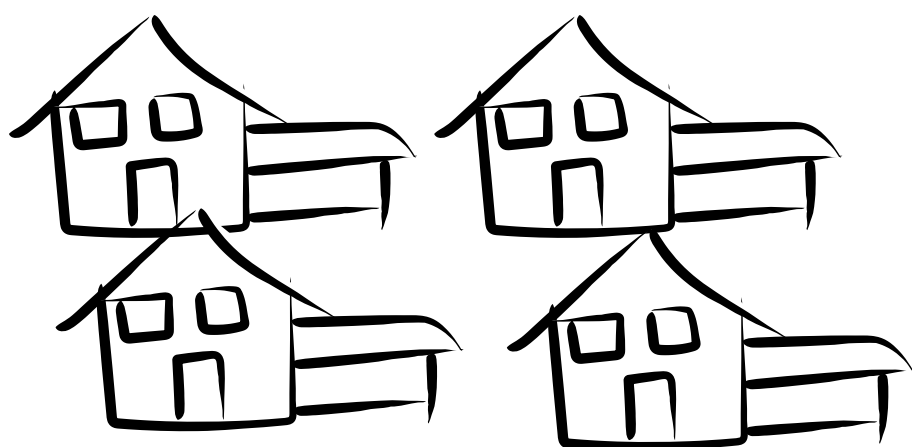


**“RE”USING VACANT RESIDENTIAL SITES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMS**

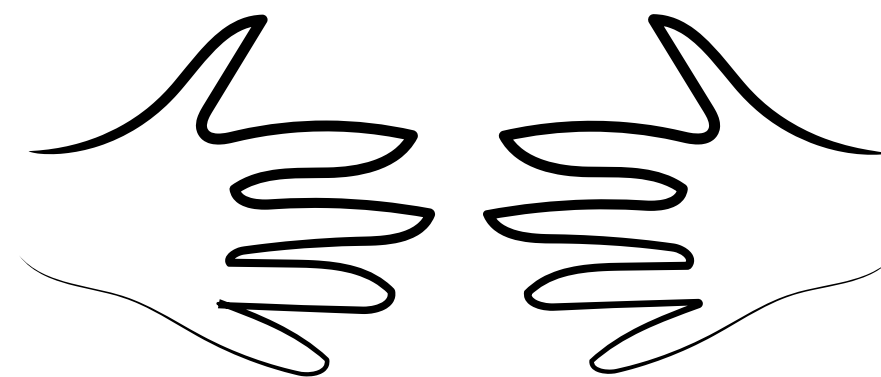
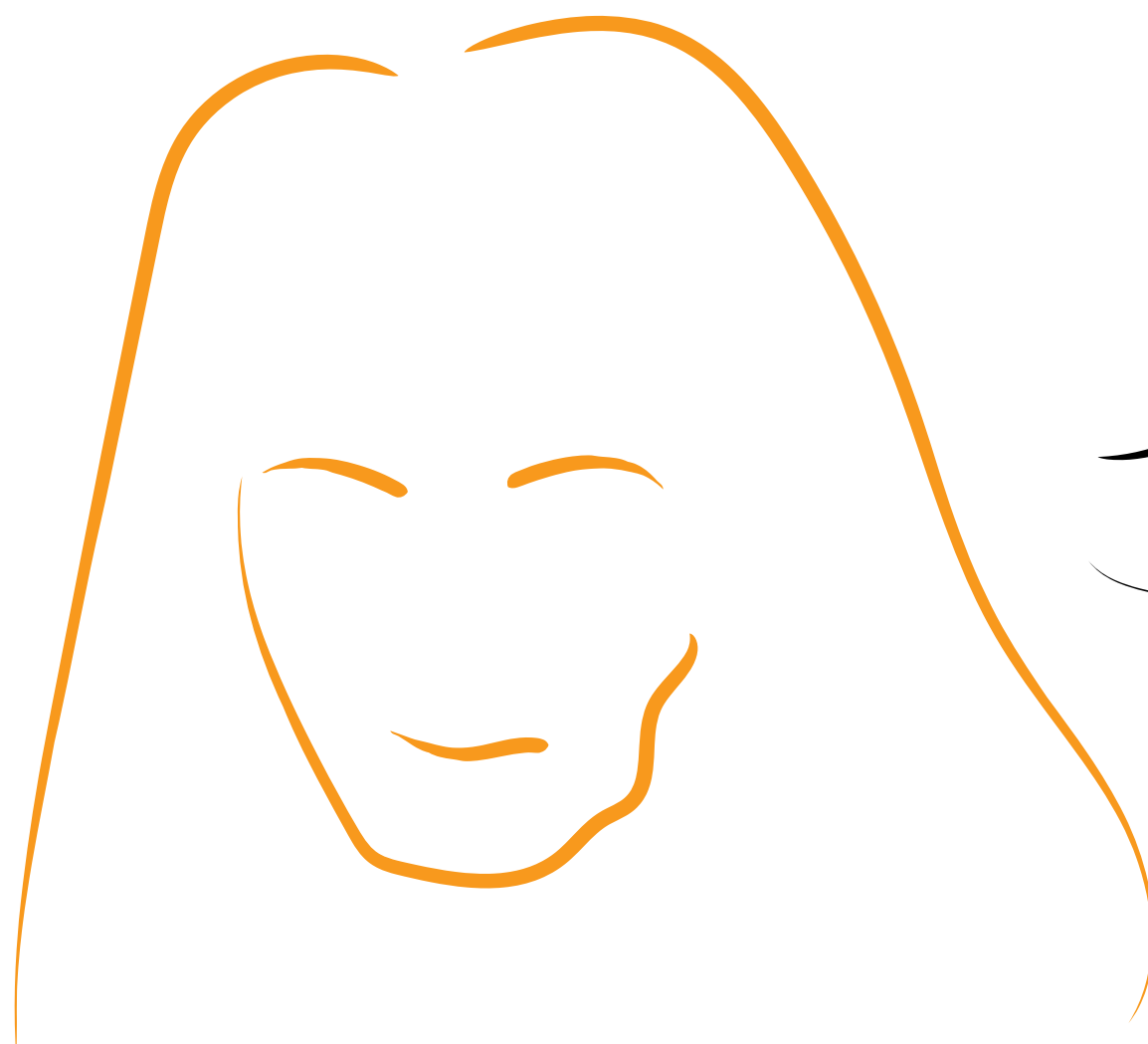
# Alternatives and solutions



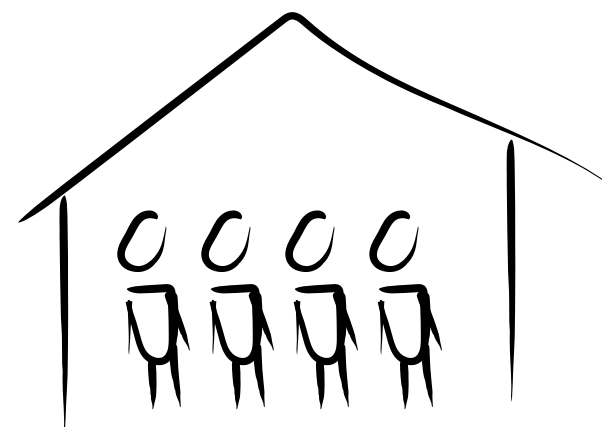
**RENT CONTROL**



**HOUSING THAT PROMOTES COMMUNITY BUILDING (I.E. COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP, COMMUNAL SPACES)**



**BUILD PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**



**OFFERING LONG-TERM GROUP LIVING PROGRAMS**

# What you can do

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# About this publication

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