

# HOMELESSNESS IN YELLOWKNIFE

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# My past research

- Arlene Haché
- SSHRCC
- Frances Abele
- Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition

# My past research (cont'd)

- Two reports in 2011
- Initial steps towards some historical work
- 2017 10-year plan (led by Dr. Alina Turner)
- Julia Christensen (UBC Press)

# Methods

- Key informant interviews (2009-11) and lit review
- I've since done further readings, asked key informants to review last report and comment on recent developments, and had tel. conversations to gather background material (and updates).
- I've also incorporated Yellowknife's 10-year plan.

# Previous research q's

1. What does the face of homelessness look like in Yellowknife?
2. What have been the major public policy responses?
3. What's lacking/needed in terms of public policy?

# Previous findings

- Crowded shelter conditions (one staff person)
- Lack of harm reduction
- Possibly the North's only supportive housing
- Transitional housing

# Previous findings (cont'd)

- Governance challenges
- Mining company as key funder
- Rural vs. urban division in NWT
- Most homeless persons in Yellowknife have great difficulty accessing public housing.

# Post-2011 developments

- At Home/Chez Soi study
- Ongoing popularity of Housing First
- National Housing Strategy
- GNWT policy developments
- Yellowknife's 10-yr plan



# High-acuity clients

- Old thinking: don't waste tax dollars on 'high acuity' clients
- New thinking: invest in 'high acuity' clients and save tax dollars!

# Context

- NWT has about 40,000 ppl, 1/2 of whom are in Yellowknife.
- Across the territory, about ½ of residents are Indigenous.
- Within Yellowknife, Indigenous ppl are outnumbered by non-Indigenous ppl by 3:1.
- More than 90% of persons experiencing absolute homelessness in Yellowknife are Indigenous.

## Context (cont'd)

- No on-reserve housing in the NWT
- No on-reserve income assistance in the NWT

## % of pop. with a high school diploma

NWT	Beaufort-Delta	Sahtu	Dehcho	South Slave	Tlicho	Yellowknife
73	59	57	57	72	41	86

## Unemployment rates across NWT regions

NWT	Beaufort-Delta	Sahtu	Dehcho	South Slave	Tlicho	Yellowknife
<b>11</b>	16	16	24	11	21	6

## Avg (annual) personal income across NWT regions

NWT	Beaufort-Delta	Sahtu	Dehcho	South Slave	Tlicho	Yellowknife
<b>\$62K</b>	<b>\$49K</b>	<b>\$59K</b>	<b>\$44K</b>	<b>\$59K</b>	<b>\$40K</b>	<b>\$74K</b>

## % of tax filers in Low Income (after tax) across NWT regions

NWT	Beaufort-Delta	Sahtu	Dehcho	South Slave	Tlicho	Yellowknife
<b>16%</b>	23%	18%	26%	16%	30%	11%

## Violent crime rate per 1,000 persons

NWT	Beaufort-Delta	Sahtu	Dehcho	South Slave	Tlicho	Yellowknife
<b>78</b>	106	73	143	77	182	47



# High rent in Yellowknife

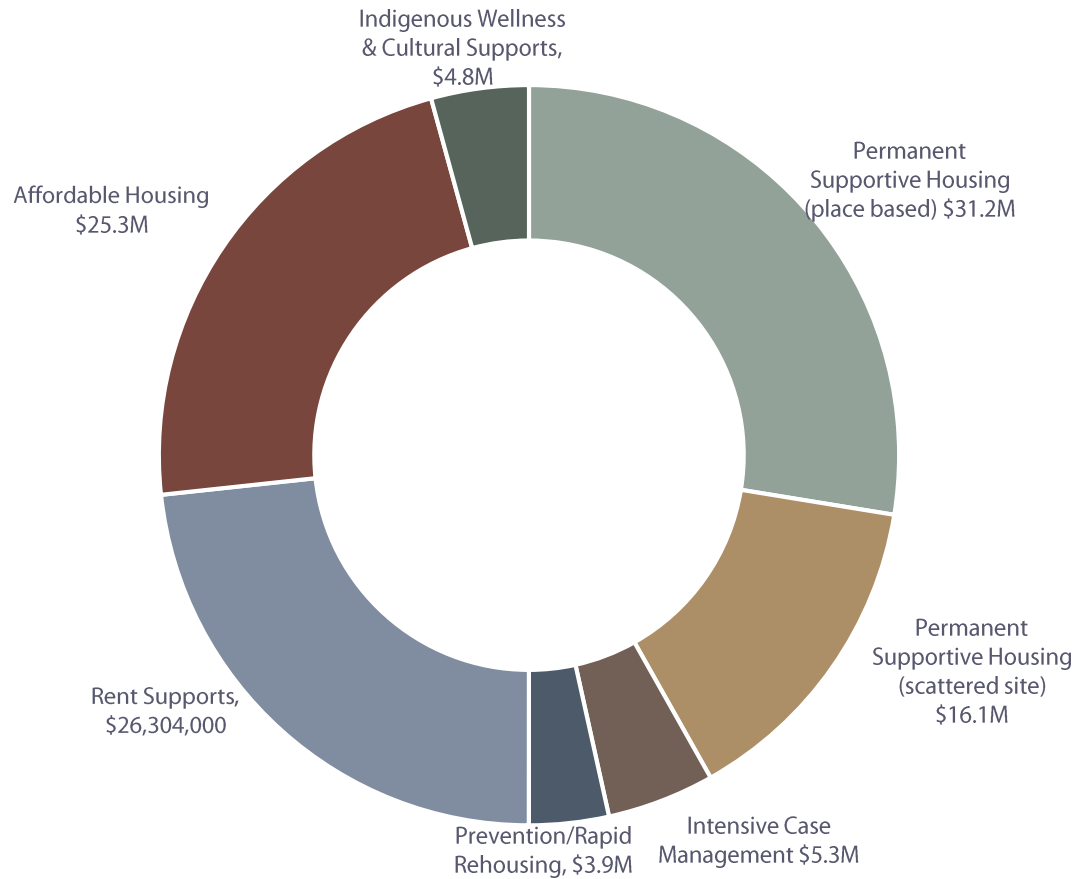
	Bachelor	1-bedroom	2-bedroom
Yellowknife	\$1,132	\$1,453	\$1,699
Vancouver	\$1,060	\$1,223	\$1,552
Toronto	\$1,013	\$1,194	\$1,404

# Housing First

Lots of new HF initiatives in Yellowknife over past decade:

- HF for singles
- HF for families
- HF for youth

# Proposals in Yellowknife's 10-yr plan



# Learning #1: Social assistance eligibility

- Ppl experiencing homelessness in Yellowknife are eligible for social assistance (even without a diagnosed disability).
- Assuming no additional income sources, it's common for a single adult without dependants staying in a Yellowknife homeless shelter to receive \$300-\$400 monthly in social assistance benefits.

# Learning #1: Social assistance eligibility (cont'd)

- No diagnosed disability required.
- This reflects a recent policy change, extending eligibility for social assistance for food money and incidentals to people residing in homeless shelters.

# Learning #2: Removal of rent cap

- In April 2018, 'rent cap' for single social assistance recipients without dependants was removed.
- Previously, this group had been allocated a maximum of \$900/month for rent from social assistance.
- But now, each recipient household is provided w a rental allowance large enough to secure a housing unit that meets nationally-accepted suitability standards.

## Learning #2: Removal of rent cap (cont'd)

- Now, it is not unheard of for a single employable social assistance recipient without dependants to have a \$1,500/month one-bedroom housing unit fully covered by the rental portion of their social assistance benefits.

# Acknowledgements

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- Arlene Haché
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# Thank you

- To see an early draft of this chapter, please email me at [falvo.nicholas@gmail.com](mailto:falvo.nicholas@gmail.com)