

# Housing and Homelessness in Moosonee, Ontario: Experiences of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous People

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# Background

- Homelessness is evident in northeastern Ontario communities.
- Yet little published research on housing circumstances of poor and homeless people in communities of northern Ontario.
- Notably lacking is information about northern Indigenous communities.

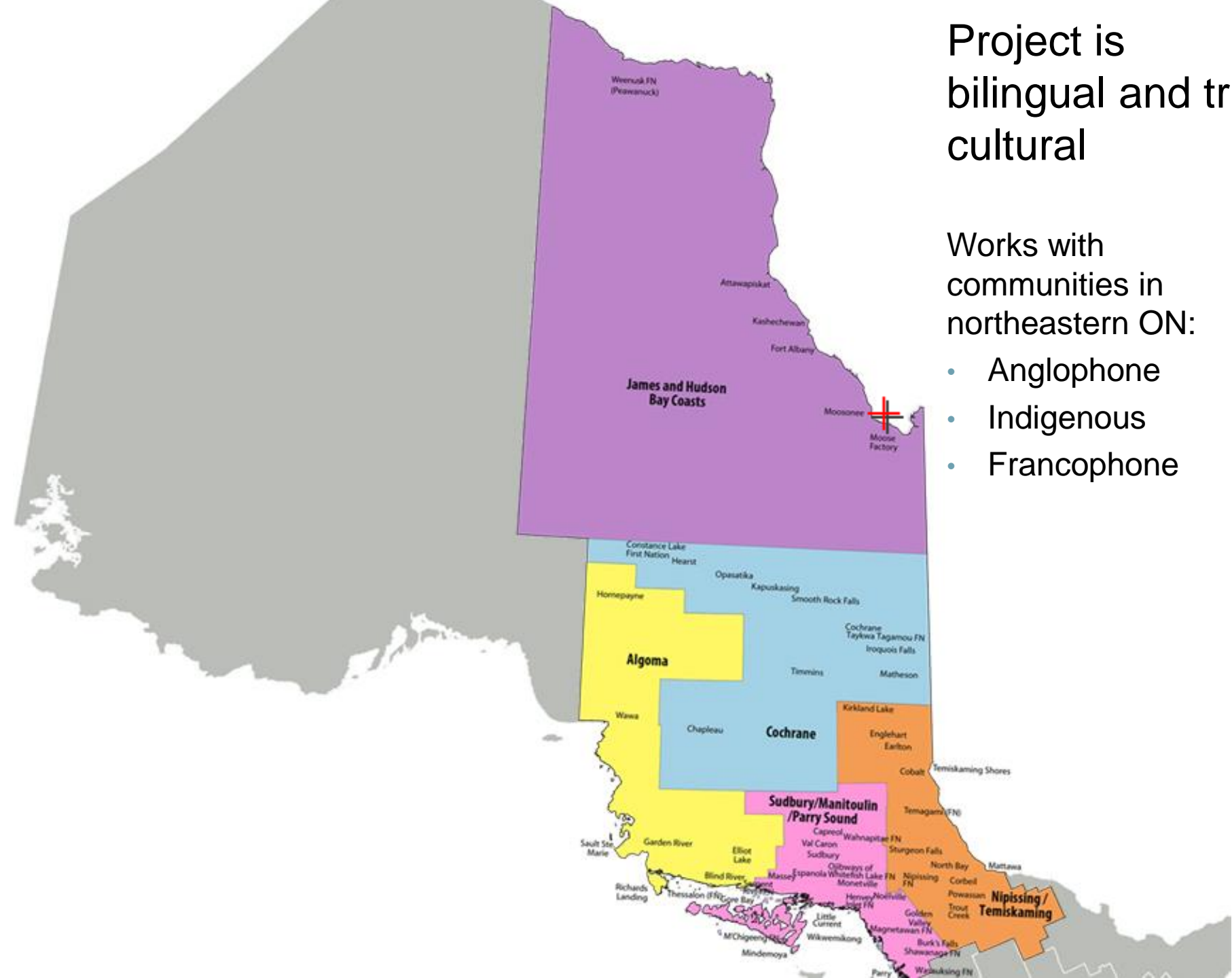
# Background – food insecurity and homelessness

- Little research on issues related to homelessness, migration, food insecurity in northeastern Ontario.
- Given the gaps in previous research, this study explores poverty, homelessness and food insecurity among homeless and housed individuals residing in Moosonee.

Project is  
bilingual and tri-  
cultural

Works with  
communities in  
northeastern ON:

- Anglophone
- Indigenous
- Francophone



# Background

- **High risk/near homeless:**

- Those who are at risk of losing their housing.
- Those in non-standard or overcrowded housing.

- **Absolute homelessness:**

- Those without shelter.
- No place to call home.
- Staying on the streets.
- Staying with friends or family ('couch surfers', hidden homeless, people 'bunking down' or 'doubling up').

- **Hidden homelessness:**

- Invisible forms of homelessness (e.g., forms of shared accommodation).

# Community surveys and Period Prevalence Counts (PPC)

- Studies provide information about poverty, housing and the number of homeless people:
  - include absolutely homeless, provisionally accommodated/at-risk and hidden homeless.
- Assistance from local agencies in conducting PPCs:
  - shelters, health services, social services, and other services supporting poor and homeless persons.
  - door-to-door community surveys in Hearst, Moosonee, and Cochrane.

# Methodology for PPC in Moosonee

- A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data from people using each service.
- Each study was conducted for 7 consecutive days.
- Community survey conducted over 22 days.
- Differentiated between absolute and near homelessness.
- Study design allows for the exclusion of duplicate cases.

# Moosonee community survey and PPC

## Number of participants

- 574
  - 303 adults and information about 271 children.

## Location of participation

- Health or social services: 163
- Door-to-door survey: 401
- Staying on streets: 10

## Homeless

- 385



# Results: Comparison with previous studies<sup>1</sup>

Location	Total count	As a % of pop.
Vancouver (2012)	1,602	0.27
Kelowna (2007)	279	0.24
Red Deer (2012)	279	0.31
Lethbridge (2012)	99	0.12
Toronto (2009)	5,086	0.19
Hearst (2011)	71	1.40
Moosonee (2012)	385	22.30
Cochrane (2013)	300	5.70
Sudbury (2015)	1,540	0.96

- <sup>1</sup> Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter & Gulliver (2013).  
The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013. Homeless Hub  
Paper #4

# Definitions of homelessness in Moosonee

## **Indigenous**

Five main themes:

- No housing.
- Sleeping outdoors, in car, in jail.
- Wandering the streets.
- Little or no money.
- Not enough to eat.

## **Non-Indigenous**

Five main themes:

- No housing.
- Wandering the streets.
- Sleeping outdoors, in car, in jail.
- No belongings.
- Sad, awful, lonely, dehumanizing.

# Experiencing homelessness in Moosonee: background/FN heritage

- 94% Aboriginal.
- 5% Anglophone of European origins.
- 1% visible minorities.

# Comparison of communities

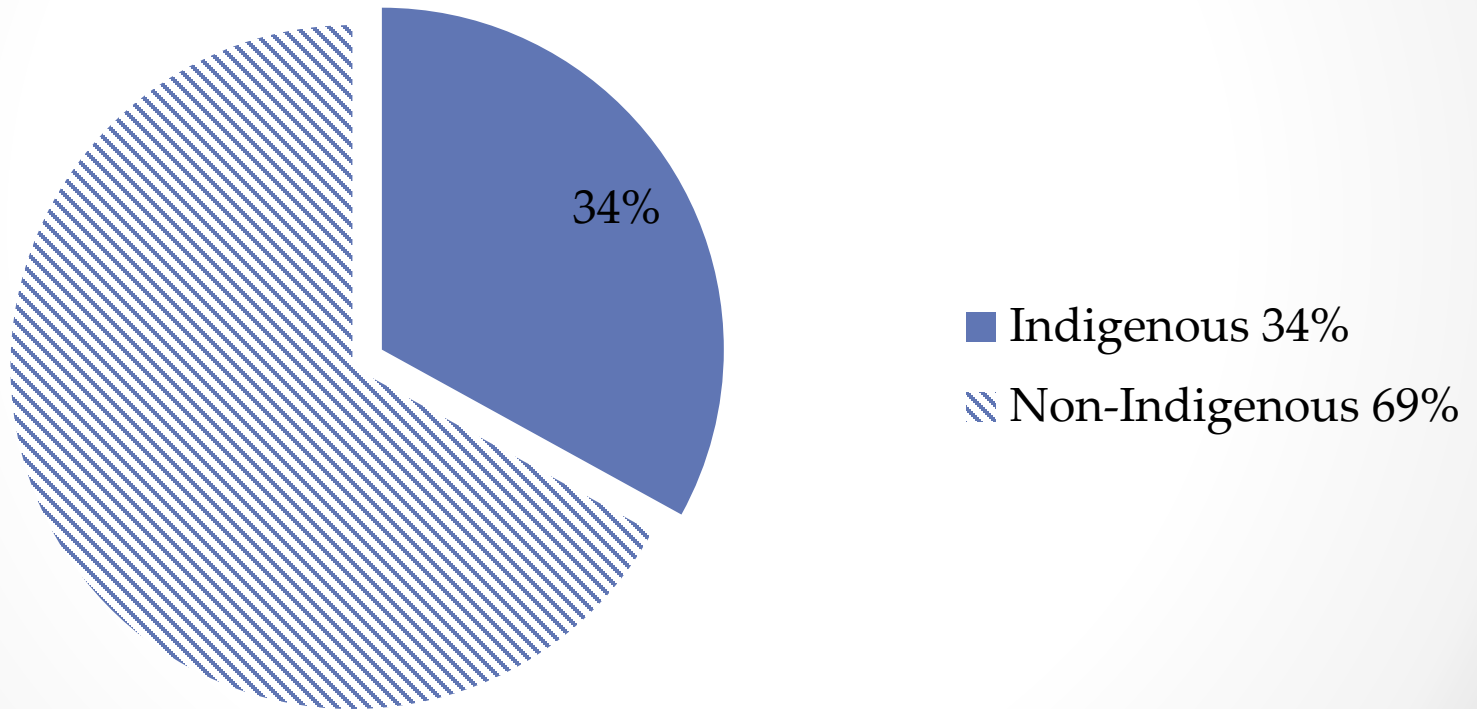
Do you think poverty and homelessness are problems in your community?

% indicating YES

	<b>Hearst</b>	<b>Cochrane</b>	<b>Moosonee</b>
<b>Poverty</b>	69	61	71
<b>Homelessness</b>	21	46	90

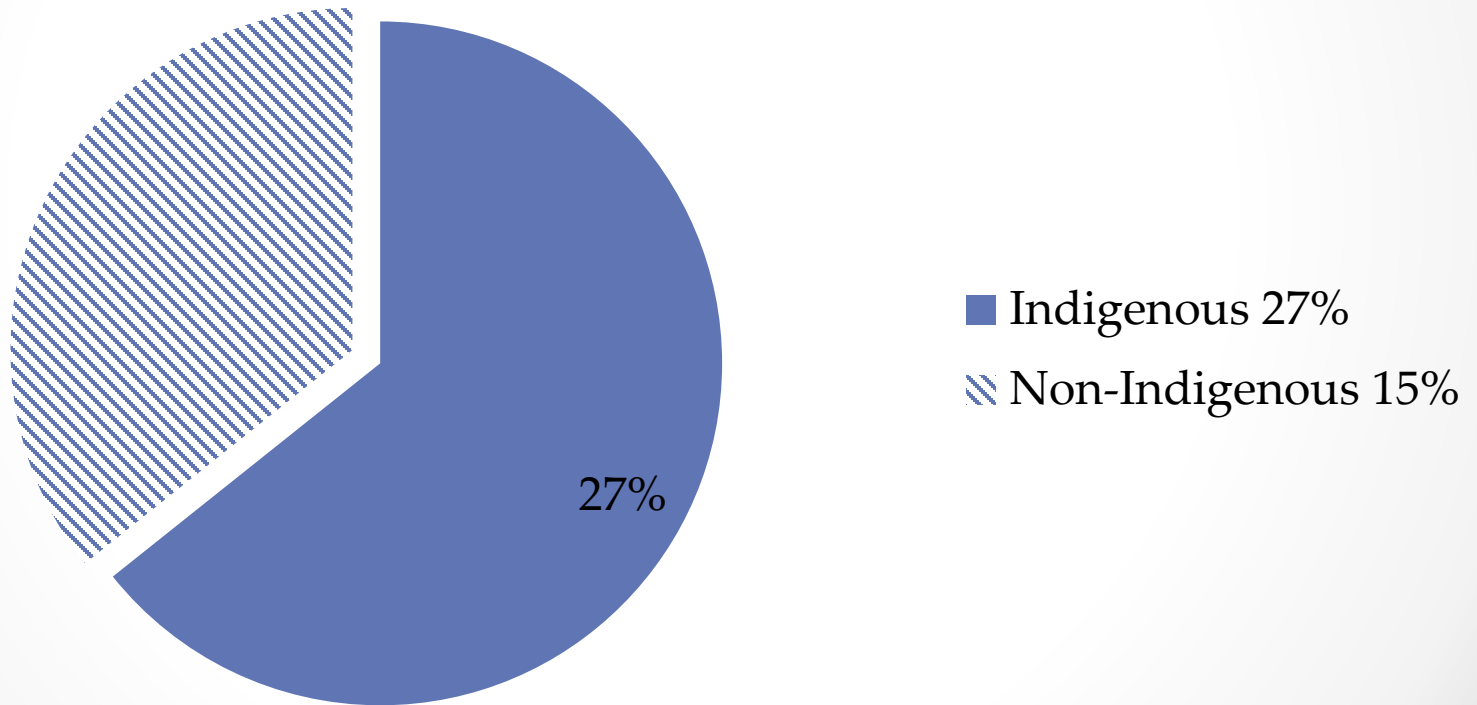
# Currently employed

Yes



# Economic scale

Poor or very poor (p=.001)



# History of homelessness

	Non-Indigenous (%)	Indigenous (%)
In lifetime absolutely homeless	13	40
In the last year absolutely homeless	6	19
In the last year slept outdoors	3	13

Do you think people leave Moosonee because they don't have:

(1) housing?

(2) enough food?

% indicating YES		
	HOUSING	FOOD
Non-Indigenous	83	57
Indigenous	88	57



# Top solutions of local residents

- Build more affordable, decent housing (194 responses)
- Establish a shelter or centre for homeless persons (114 responses).
- More government funding, increase OW and establish more services (46 responses).
- Deal with hunger issues in the community: lower food prices, more free meals, food banks (44 responses).
- Mobilize the community to take action (40 responses).

# Discussion

- **Action is needed:**
  - To inform service planning and delivery to mitigate the issues faced by Indigenous homeless persons.
  - To educate the public about the links between the lives of individuals and the broad social, historical, colonial, legal and economic patterns.
  - To address (i) the challenges that confront systematically disadvantaged people and (ii) how discrimination contributes to homelessness.
  - To advocate for provincial and federal government change in policies address the underlying causes impacting on the lives of Indigenous people.

# Thank you, miigwetch

To

- The people who answered our questionnaires.
- The local team of people who administered the questionnaires.
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- The Town of Moosonee
  
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  - Cochrane DSSAB
  - Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

## QUESTIONS?

# **Social Justice** **Justice sociale**

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