

## The Aboriginal Housing Experience of NIMBYISM in Calgary

28 July 2016

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Community Partner/s	Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness (ASCHH)

### 1. Rationale

Across Canada, large and small urban centres are confronted with growing numbers of homeless individuals and decreasing supply of affordable housing. Studies of urban degeneration and social upheaval mark this social dilemma as complex, problematic and difficult to correct. Therefore, developing findings that speak to possible intervention strategies is an important goal of this research. Currently urban Aboriginal populations fall into a policy vacuum characterized by variability in policy formulation, overlap and gaps in policy areas in different cities, and a mismatch between policy areas and community needs of urban Aboriginal peoples not currently addressed by provincial or federal officials. There is an identified need for intervention strategies in Calgary based on anecdotal reports and limited research findings citing landlord discrimination directed at Aboriginal and low income applicants. Paralleling similar trends in Saskatoon and Winnipeg, landlords in Calgary recognize the tenuous position of applicants' seeking housing accommodations resulting in widespread rent competition. These conditions, combined with a general city aesthetic that accepts prejudice against Aboriginal people, have forced many to accept discrimination in order to secure affordable housing. As housing becomes more expensive and less available to marginalized populations, addressing the NIMBY phenomenon is imperative.

This project is a partnership (APPENDIX A) between the Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness (ASCHH) and the primary researcher located at the University of Lethbridge. This research project fits into understanding of barriers that align with goal 1.1 identified in the ASCHH plan. That is, we intend to develop strategies to establish housing prevention strategies targeting "Aboriginal individuals and/or families living on or below LICO ... who should be a main target group for receiving services and holistic supports." As noted in the methodology section, our plan to complete personal and group interviews aligns with ASCHH Goal 3.0: to conduct data research and systems knowledge of the issues under study. The data and findings will be used to support Goal 1.4: to recognize realities of Aboriginal family structure, extended family expectations, rental agencies and private landlords in pursuit of Goal 2.3 seeking to establish ongoing, long-term and sustainable development of affordable housing options with support appropriate for the vulnerable Aboriginal population. Finally, the research will explore the means by which to develop an Aboriginal housing support strategy embracing the following principles: a) cultural competency and safety; b) partnership and relationships between agencies; c) supported Aboriginal governance and coordination services; d) adequate and equitable funding for Aboriginal specific services; e) ongoing research and evaluation to better respond to needs; f) increased number of Aboriginal staff; g) cultural reconnections; h) outreach and cultural services.

### 2. Potential Policy Relevance

The response to Aboriginal homelessness and housing has been less than stellar in Calgary. Events take precedence over altering systemic weaknesses thus perpetuating inequality. This results in socio-spatial inequality in the form of Aboriginal ghettoization and social polarization, limited policy responses due to

the perceived separateness of Aboriginal people in policy and physically (i.e., they are not urban people but rather reserve residents), and less opportunity to reconcile these trends.

In order to strengthen the connection between research, policy and practice, the project seeks to develop and execute a program of research that addresses key policy questions and identifies and highlights effective and sustainable interventions to Calgary's homelessness and housing risk issues. We will create research impacts at provincial and community levels in ways that are timely, useful and reflective of the interests and needs of partners and key stakeholders.

There are clear intellectual, social and economic benefits to this proposed project's development. Good policy, effective service models and professional practice should be informed by quality research. Our ultimate goal of reducing or ending urban Aboriginal homelessness (impact) is the outcome of a carefully coordinated strategy and process that begins with the partner-driven co-creation and implementation of a research agenda.

This project's research agenda will contribute to homelessness solutions that support:

- 1) More effective decision-making by government: Good evidence leads to cost-effective, well thought-out solutions by all levels of government.
- 2) More effective program development by communities and service providers: Service providers can develop evidence-informed homeless interventions.
- 3) Evidence-informed strategic responses to homelessness at the local, provincial and national levels: The project will support the development of integrated & strategic responses to homelessness.
- 4) Public engagement that raises awareness and debate on the causes & potential solutions to homelessness: Mobilizing research leads to a more informed & engaged public.

### **3. Research Questions**

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1. What are the specific Aboriginal experiences related to finding and securing urban housing?
2. What are non-Aboriginal perspectives on urban Aboriginal housing issues?
3. What are the structural patterns and social relations that (a) lead to certain housing occupancy patterns being defined as threatening; and (b) lead to a successful NIMBY campaign?
4. How does community formation arise in the face of NIMBY discourses and campaigns?
5. What are the principles that should ground appropriate intervention strategies to mitigate the potential marginalization of vulnerable populations?

### **4. Specific Fit with the NCRP Objectives & Research Questions**

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This research contributes to the NCRP Aboriginal housing and neighbourhoods theme. It addresses in part many of the NCRP research questions, including:

- What is the extent and spatial distribution of economic inequality, ethno-cultural differentiation, and concentration of characteristics such as Aboriginal identity, youth, ethnicity, immigration status, and poverty in different areas?
- What neighbourhood-level interventions are most effective in mitigating the effects of socio-spatial inequalities?
- How can we ensure that youth, newcomers, low-income households, ethno-cultural minorities, Aboriginal people, and the elderly are successfully included in the mainstream of society?
- How do policies and programs in housing, education, immigration, criminal justice, and income security moderate or exacerbate the impacts of socio-spatial inequality?
- What roles can different levels of government, NGOs, and the private sector play in reducing inequalities?

## 5. Research Design & Methods

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To answer our research questions, we will triangulate three qualitative methods (person-centered interviewing, focus group interviews; and textual analysis) along with the application of two parallel data analysis processes (thematic or qualitative content analysis; and, critical discourse analysis).

These approaches will assist us in identifying and decoding differences among Aboriginal experiences with seeking, securing, and not securing housing (i.e., homelessness) as related by Aboriginal participants. Furthermore, we will come to understand the non-Aboriginal homeowners, tenants, municipal/city, and agency perspectives as expressed through interviews and critical discourse analysis of select provincial and national newspapers. Thus, our proposed method aligns with both the theoretical frame and intent of the study: to understand Aboriginal experiences when seeking and securing housing; to locate their experiences within and responses to social dynamics influencing the quest for housing, and to further understanding of the role of the phenomenon known as “not in my back yard” (NIMBY) in developing or constraining sites of affordable housing.

Aboriginal Housing Experiences: Person-centered interviewing with appropriate participants will serve to generate a foundational understanding of these experiences. These individual interviews will be conducted with select cohorts of Aboriginal renters and owners. We have included Aboriginal students as a distinct cohort because of their transitory need for housing—and the especial difficulties they face in their quest for appropriate housing. Interviews with homeless Aboriginal people will provide insights to catastrophic outcomes related to seeking and securing housing. Data from these interviews will undergo basic qualitative data analysis (thematic analysis) and these findings will assist the research team in formulating focus group interview questions. The focus group interviews (FGI), with approximately 5 people per group, will then serve to engage participants in a dialogical exchange concerning findings from the person-centered interviews, i.e. voiced confirmation, contradictions, tensions, and insights regarding these initial findings. Data generated from the person-centered interviews will undergo qualitative data analysis, and data generated from the FGI will be subject to analysis as per the method of focus groups. In addition, we will examine all textual data using a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach. This dual-track approach to data analysis will enable us to discern not only patterns (themes, taxonomies, exploratory-descriptive accounts) and unique occurrences in the data, but will privilege the ways in which social and political domination are reproduced by text and talk. Therefore, this phase of the project will entail a total of 21 individual interviews and 6 FGIs. Our experiences suggest that a baseline sample of at least 20 quality interviews per participant cohort should produce a robust data set. These are minimal sample sizes; should the data set lack saturation, we will then continue with sampling until a reasonable data set is established.

Non-Aboriginal Perspectives on Aboriginal Housing: To understand non-Aboriginal perspectives on Aboriginal Housing, we will triangulate three qualitative methods: person-centered interviewing, focus group interviews, and newspaper texts. Again, we will employ a dual-track approach to data analysis—thematic analysis/focus group analysis and critical discourse analysis. Thus, this phase of the study includes 20 person-centered interviews and 6 FGIs; and specific texts arising from four newspapers. Our data sets combine to form a network of discourse based on social situations and practices; hence they can be examined together.

Newspaper texts: During the past decade, the NIMBY phenomenon has been well-recorded in *The Calgary Herald*, as have Aboriginal housing issues (also catalogued in the *Edmonton Journal*, *National Post* and *Globe and Mail*). In addition to journalistic accounts, numerous citizens have written *Letters to the Editor* in full support of NIMBY perspectives. These stories and the *Letters to the Editor* will undergo critical discourse analysis to better fathom the historical, contextual, and social factors informing the NIMBY phenomenon. The Canadian Reference Centre, a search agent that catalogues all news stories and letters to the editor will be employed using keywords. This search will be supplemented by holdings of the University of Lethbridge as needed. The most appropriate approach for our analysis is critical discourse analysis (CDA), a method that simultaneously examines social situations and texts. CDA has been used effectively to analyze newspapers, verbal and written texts of city planners and residents, and public policy. CDA permits

integration of a political economic perspective (focusing on structure, process and outcomes) with the social construction of identity as gendered and ‘raced’, community and ‘otherness’. CDA can be adapted to study racist discourses in a method that has been labeled “discourse-historical approach”. CDA will permit us to integrate an analysis of structures and process of political economy. In sum, unique to this proposed study are the two perspectives regarding Aboriginal housing; Aboriginal experiences in seeking, securing, and not securing housing; and, non-Aboriginal perspectives concerning housing for Aboriginal people. The dual-track approach to data analysis holds much promise in revealing not only the everyday experiences of participants, but the social and political domination replicated in talk and text.

## 6. Role of Community Partners

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist with project management;</li> <li>• build local support;</li> <li>• secure interview participants;</li> <li>• coordinate focus groups;</li> <li>• assist with formulating data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>collection instruments;</li> <li>• assist with data interpretation;</li> <li>• mobilize research;</li> <li>• disseminate findings;</li> <li>• engage key players to support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>communities and governments in the development of effective, sustainable responses to homelessness.</li> </ul>
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## 7. Role of Students / Research Assistants and Contributions to Training

- Conducting person centered interviews and collecting newspaper-based textual data;
- Coding, analysis and interpretation of qualitative text-based data (thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis);
- Participate in the generation of findings;
- Participate in the process of manuscript writing—and thereby earning a placement on the authorship byline;
- Development/involvement with podium and poster presentations, and organizing and leading community education/information dissemination workshops;
- Learning how a research team functions, what is required to become a team leader, and how a grant is operationalized, through participating in research team meetings;
- Helping to produce a professional ethics proposal; and,
- Discovering the relationship-work of university researchers and community-based representatives.

## 8. Schedule (timeline of research tasks, including deliverables submission dates)

**May, June 2016:** stakeholders meeting; submit for ethics to conduct research with human subjects; conduct and finalize literature review; establish key questions for focus groups and subject interviews; revise and finalize; begin establishing potential participant interview list; begin discourse analysis of newspaper texts; once interview sample is established, initial interviews to determine adequacy; receive ethics clearance; finalize interview participant list.

**July:** conduct interviews and focus groups; begin transcribing interview data and consolidating demographic data; team meeting at the end of June to debrief, disseminate early findings, general continuity; transcribe interview and focus group data; data analysis; integrate literature review; develop outline for final report.

**August:** final data analysis and writing final report; presentations to local organizations and Calgary agencies; prepare op-eds and see TV and newspaper stories produced; prepare briefing note for Calgary City Council, the Alberta premier’s office, the provincial Interagency Council on Homelessness (IAC); brochure writing and production; develop best practices checklist and policy recommendations; finalize academic paper topics and initiate manuscript writing.

## 9. Outcomes / Deliverables

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The specific products to emerge from this project include:

- 1) A final report in the English and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) languages that fully describes and integrates the extant literature, our project methodology, how the data was collected and analyzed, our pertinent findings, and general recommendations for the participant communities;
- 2) The findings will be contextualized provincially and federally, with a discussion of its broader implications;
- 3) A PowerPoint presentation will be developed for mass distribution that will be suitable for various agencies, Ministerial purposes, and community groups;
- 4) An abridged version of the final report will be produced for mass distribution to interested community members, and the project participants, which will emphasize the final recommendations and available resources for those interested in pursuing similar research;
- 5) A report/brochure highlighting the Aboriginal voices, with a section detailing existing resources for those in need;
- 6) Several academic papers; and
- 7) A stand-alone checklist of best practices from the evaluation of programs, strategies, and services.

## 10. Budget Explanation (and fill in separate budget worksheet page below)

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Roughly 70% of the proposed budget will be spent on the salaries of the research assistants. Just over \$7,600 is designated for advanced undergraduate students to pay for their RAs' work that are mostly mechanical in nature and do not require discretionary judgments on their parts (i.e., making the arrangements to acquire data sets, coordinating schedules with the interviewees, transcribing interviews). But that will also lead to capacity building from learning how to conduct basic thematic analysis of newspaper texts, survey data collection of an SPSS data collection instrument, and inputting and coding those data.

A total of \$840 has been allocated to travelling, both for research data collection and dissemination.

A total of \$1,646 has been set aside for Niitsitapi translation of the final report that will be delivered by mail (printed hard copy) in addition to being made available electronically via the University of Lethbridge institutional depository, email communications, and dissemination by various brokers including the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH), Homeless Hub, the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH), and Alberta's Interagency Council on Homelessness (IAC), in addition to the sponsoring towns and orbiting municipalities (Lethbridge, Medicine Hat).

Roughly \$10,000 is assigned for other expenses, including for transcription services from an advanced undergraduate student, and the purchase of two digital sound-recorders for the recording the interviews.

A total of \$1,050 has been set aside as honoraria for the Aboriginal community participants for thanks for providing the knowledge they will provide.

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|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sent to the NCRP's Research Advisory Board for comment: date _____ deadline: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Funding approved by the NCRP's Board: \$ _____ date _____                          |

## SSHRC Budget Worksheet

	Amount requested from NCRP	Contributions (In-Kind / Cash)	Contribution source	Total Project Cost
<b>Personnel costs</b>				
<b>Student salaries and benefits/Stipends</b>				
Undergraduate *	\$7,670.00 (\$20/hr) (conducting and coding interviews)			
Masters *				
Doctorate *				
<b>Non-student salaries and benefits/Stipends</b>				
Postdoctoral				
Other: Transcription	\$9,800			
<b>Travel and subsistence costs</b>				
<b>Applicant/Team member(s)</b>				
Canadian travel				
Foreign travel				
<b>Students</b>				
Canadian travel	\$840.00			
Foreign travel				
<b>Other expenses</b>				
<b>Non-disposable equipment (specify)</b>				
2 digital recorders	\$300.00			
<b>Other expenses (specify)</b>				
Informant honoraria	\$1,050.00			
Focus Group Costs	\$1,800.00			
Niitsitapi translation	\$1,000.00			
Print final report	\$650.00			
Phone, office space, copying		\$5,000	ASCHH	\$5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$23,110</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>		<b>\$28,110</b>

\* Hourly rates for students:



## APPENDIX A



**February 21, 2016**

**Yale Belanger**

University of Lethbridge

Re: Approval of NIMBY research

Dear Yale;

On behalf of the Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness, we as the Co-Chairs represent the committee's consent to approve our participation and partnership in regards to the Calgary NIMBY research project.

We would like to have an outline of the project's next steps, what aspects of the committee's participation are expected and needed to fulfill this project effectively, and what volunteer roles you will require here in Calgary. In this manner we will be able to prepare efficiently to support the research project and ensure that this project is impactful and meaningful to both researcher and the Aboriginal community.

Thank you;

Katelyn Lucas and Cherri Lowhorn

Co-Chairs of the Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness