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# Federal Housing Advocate's Observational Report: Inuit Housing

**Nunatsiavut: October 16-22, 2022**

**Nunavut: October 23-29, 2022**



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## Foreword by the Federal Housing Advocate

As Canada's first Federal Housing Advocate (the Advocate), my role is to be an independent, nonpartisan watchdog. The goal of the Advocate's work is to drive change on key systemic housing issues and to hold government decision-makers to account for their human rights obligations related to housing and homelessness.

The human right to adequate housing means that all people are equally entitled to live in dignity in a safe and secure home, and that everyone should be able to access housing that meets their needs without discrimination or harassment. Recognizing housing as a human right means that government "duty bearers" at all levels have legal obligations to protect this right for everyone, and especially for people whose right to housing is being violated.

During October 2022, I traveled to the traditional territory of Labrador Inuit, Nunatsiavut ("our beautiful land" in Inuktitut), and to the Inuit territory of Nunavut ("Our Land," in Inuktitut). These visits were based on an invitation from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), the national representational organization protecting and advancing the rights and interests of Inuit in Canada, to come and see the housing conditions in Inuit Nunangat. This report summarizes what I heard and witnessed.

Nunavut and Nunatsiavut are two of the four regions that make up Inuit Nunangat. Nunavut is the largest region while Nunatsiavut, represents a smaller Inuit region. Together, they provide a portrait of the scope of Inuit housing needs across Inuit Nunangat.

In working with the Inuit regional governing entities, we were clear that the agenda was to be set by them. I was not going to pick the communities on a map and impose myself and my schedule upon the Inuit governing entities, nor the communities. The Housing Directors for both areas carved out a week in their schedules to lead a program of visits to a variety of housing types so I could bear witness and hear directly from Inuit community members about the dire housing realities. For this opportunity to be present in Inuit Nunangat, to be invited into people's homes and to hear their stories, I am grateful.

The housing conditions that the Inuit inhabit are the direct result of colonialism and a staggering failure by successive federal, provincial, and territorial governments over many decades to invest in and respect the human right to adequate housing of Inuit. I heard the exhaustion and the urgent need for change both from people who are unhoused and those who are stressed and living in precarious housing circumstances. The level of distress cannot be understated, nor can the toll that being unhoused or precariously housed has on one's physical, mental, and emotional health.

I also heard about the challenges that Inuit service providers are facing as they struggle to meet the overwhelming and diverse needs of the residents they serve amidst lack of funding and staffing issues.

I want to recognize and express deep gratitude to the tireless advocates, including Inuit community members and leaders, Inuit government officials, hamlet officials, and community service providers who took the time to meet and share their insights with me. I appreciate the rich contributions made to this report by the tireless advocates working on the frontlines of the housing crisis in Nunatsiavut and Nunavut.

I would like to recognize and thank all the territorial and municipal officials who shared their time and expertise.

Most importantly, I want to recognize and express deep gratitude to the individuals and families who shared their stories.

I acknowledge that some of you may be curious, hopeful, and/or skeptical of systemic change that the Federal Housing Advocate can bring. I want you to know that I share these feelings. Trust must be earned. I am deeply committed to leveraging what you have shared with me and advocating with you to all government duty bearers to hold them to account for human rights-based approaches to ensure that nobody is left behind in Canada's housing policies and laws.

For Inuit, the right to housing has been too long out of reach. The information and personal testimonies shared with me often echo findings made by earlier reports, including the 2017 report by the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples and Former Nunavut New Democratic Party member of Parliament Mumilaaq Qaqqaq's documentation of "inhumane" housing conditions in several communities in March 2021. Inspired by the photo essay format of Mumilaaq Qaqqaq's report, this report includes a photo essay format to fully convey the gravity of the housing conditions the Inuit face and the violation of their human right to adequate housing.

In recognition of the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples and the federal UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) Act, the text and recommendations in this report have been collaboratively developed with Inuit governing entities. Common recommendations have also been reviewed by ITK, which found the recommendations to broadly apply and benefit all Inuit regions. The report also contains recommendations that are specific to the housing conditions and human rights considerations in Nunavut and Nunatsiavut separately.

This report reflects how the Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments have failed to uphold every element of the right to housing for Inuit. All governments should heed this call to uphold the human right to adequate housing in Nunatsiavut and Nunavut. The recommendations below, and elsewhere in this report, aim to set out a clear path to achieve this:

- **Consistent with rights to self-determination and self-government, the Federal Government should work with Inuit Governments to enable them to assume jurisdiction over Inuit housing programs and services, while also ensuring that funding for Inuit housing is adequate for Inuit needs by:**
  - In cooperation with Inuit governments, establishing appropriate funding levels for Inuit housing programs that account for Northern realities and Inuit cultural practices and values, with built-in program escalators that account for inflation and population growth;
  - Establishing a process to transfer care and control of program funds from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and other existing programs to Inuit Governments; and
  - Reallocating funding from other existing programs to Inuit governments according to their preferred method.
- **All levels of government should publicly recognize housing as a human right and ensure that this recognition is reflected in the development of their legislation, policy, and programs.**
- **Alongside the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, Provincial, Territorial and Inuit Governments should explore the creation of independent Inuit housing advocates or ombudspople to amplify the voices of Inuit and their municipalities in the timely creation of a**

rights-respecting, culturally appropriate housing system and to ensure oversight of efforts to uphold the human right to housing for Inuit across regions.

- **The Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments should work in consultation and cooperation with Inuit Regional Organizations to develop and implement housing options that address current gaps in the housing continuum and ensure people in all circumstances and stages of life have access to safe, adequate and affordable housing, by:**
  - Taking urgent action to support the immediate development of Elder housing and Long-term Care Centers so that Inuit can age in dignity in their communities;
  - Increasing access to transitional and supportive housing for Inuit who require housing with supports;
  - Expanding emergency shelter space in Inuit communities for men, women, and youth; and
  - Developing purpose-built, affordable rentals for Inuit looking to live independently, as well as pathways to affordable home ownership.

As part of these housing solutions, governments should support the development of local building enterprises, skills training opportunities, and access to goods and materials. In addition, governments should ensure housing funds are invested and retained in the community economy.

- **The Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments should work in consultation and cooperation with Inuit Regional Organizations to develop addictions treatment plans that ensures access to treatment in Labrador and Nunavut.**
  - Federal, provincial, and territorial governments should focus on ensuring each hamlet has access to a Community Wellness Hub that would provide continuing support to individuals returning to their home communities after taking part in an addictions programme elsewhere such as a Regional Hub.
- **To ensure Inuit communities are tuberculosis free by 2040, or sooner, Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments should allocate the funds needed to enable Inuit Governments to prioritize construction of new housing, and ensure robust health-related supports for areas experiencing tuberculosis outbreaks.** Smaller centres with tuberculosis outbreaks should be prioritized for new housing construction, accompanied by aggressive health-related supports, to ensure the tuberculosis crisis is resolved and there is no further loss of life.

I ask that all levels of governments carefully consider and urgently implement the recommendations found in this report. I encourage all interested readers who may be unhoused or precariously housed to assert your human right to housing by making a submission<sup>1</sup> to our office and advocating to your government representatives to uphold the human right to adequate housing. Change will rely on all of us working at all levels, starting in our own communities!

Sincerely,

Marie-Josée Houle,  
Federal Housing Advocate

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<sup>1</sup> Submission form: <https://www.housingchrc.ca/en/housing-submission>



## Foreword from Nunatsiavut President

Nunatsiavut Government was pleased to host the Federal Housing Advocate on one of her first official visits following the creation of the role itself. No part of Canada better exemplifies the housing crisis than Inuit Nunangat. Inuit in all four regions live with housing outcomes that I think can be difficult to conceptualize from southern Canada. It is why I always say, “Come and see.” We will always welcome visitors from Canada who wish to bear witness to the human rights crisis within our region.

In Nunatsiavut, there are critical shortages of every type of housing, from shelters to transition housing, to affordable rentals, to market housing. The housing that exists was not built with an eye to the unique climatic circumstances of the North, and the complex ways it is rapidly changing, resulting in the homes that do exist disintegrating around their residents. Labrador Inuit have lived with these housing conditions for generations, especially when many were forcibly relocated from Nutak and Hebron in the 1950s to other settlements further south. Housing was never built to accommodate the influx of those who were relocated, and has never kept pace with the rapidly growing population into modern day. This has left Labrador Inuit in Nunatsiavut to live in increasingly overcrowded conditions, in housing that is neither healthy nor adequate and is, in fact, growing steadily worse. These conditions violate the dignity and rights of Labrador Inuit. The spillover effects of these living conditions range from health problems like tuberculosis, to separation of families due to inadequate housing assessments, to family violence, to name a few. Housing is the foundation of many of the struggles facing our people, and this report demonstrates how every Inuk in Nunatsiavut is impacted by these shortages; from women fleeing violence, to children aging out of foster care with nowhere to go, to men exiting the criminal justice system with no supports. Our communities suffer every day, and have for generations, due to these shortages and indignities.

We are pleased to see what has been known by Inuit for decades reflected in this report and the recommendations made by the Advocate. We are especially heartened to read that she is naming this a human rights crisis, which we know to be deeply true. Reconciliation with Canada and with Newfoundland, for Nunatsiavut particularly, cannot be meaningful until every Inuk can live in dignity. We currently are far from this goal. I hope that, in reading this report, you hear our calls for change and are moved to act with us to correct the wrongs of the past and walk forward together.

Nakummek,

Johannes Lampe  
President of Nunatsiavut



Marie-Josée Houle with the Government of Nunatsiavut Executive.

## Foreword from Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. President

Inuit are experiencing an acute housing crisis. Most live in overcrowded conditions. Furthermore, most Inuit communities don't have enough housing to rent or own and lack shelters and supportive and transitional housing. This crisis is a major impediment to healthy living, education, and employment for Inuit.

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) welcomes the Federal Housing Advocate's efforts to focus attention on this crisis. It is important that all governments recognize that the lack of access to adequate and affordable housing in Inuit Nunangat is a dire human rights violation, as so clearly documented in the Advocate's report, and respond accordingly.

Transformational change is needed to improve the living conditions of Nunavut Inuit. This will require a sustained effort that goes far beyond a short-term construction campaign. What is required is the ongoing prioritization of Inuit values and traditions and the mobilization of Inuit knowledge and capacity toward providing secure, adequate, accessible, affordable and equitable housing for all.

Intergovernmental collaboration is key in making a difference to Inuit communities, families, and individuals across Inuit Nunangat. NTI hopes this report will spark action by all levels of government to ensure Inuit everywhere have safe, healthy, and affordable homes that meet our unique needs. This is our human right.

Aluki Kotierk  
President, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.



# Introduction

## The Human Right to Adequate Housing

The human right to adequate housing is an obligation affirmed in international human rights standards, including treaties, which Canada has signed and ratified.<sup>2</sup> With the National Housing Strategy Act, the human right to adequate housing is now enshrined in Canadian law.<sup>3</sup> Recognizing housing as a human right means that governments at all levels have legal obligations to respect, protect, fulfill and promote this right for everyone. These obligations are heightened in respect to those vulnerable to violations of their human rights.

The standard of “adequacy” means that housing must be:

- **Secure** – security of tenure provides protection from arbitrary eviction, forced relocation or harassment;
- **Provide availability to basic services** – including safe drinking water, sanitation, heating, lighting, and emergency services;
- **Affordable** – housing costs should not be a barrier to meeting other basic needs such as food, and costs should be protected against unreasonable increases;
- **Habitable** – dwellings should have adequate space for the inhabitants, be properly maintained, and provide protection from the elements and other threats to health and well-being;
- **Accessible** – for people of all abilities, particularly those experiencing discrimination or living in vulnerable circumstances;
- **In a location** - that is close to employment and basic social services such as childcare, education and healthcare, and is not located in a polluted or dangerous area; and
- **Culturally adequate** – respects and is appropriate for the expression of the inhabitants’ cultural identity and ways of life.<sup>4</sup>

All people should have equitable access to adequate housing, without discrimination based on gender, race, disability, faith, place of birth, age, sexual orientation, and other grounds.

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<sup>2</sup> *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, adopted December 10, 1948, G.A. Res. 217A(III), U.N. Doc. A/810 at 71 (1948), art. 25; *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR), adopted December 16, 1966, G.A. Res. 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 49, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), 993 U.N.T.S. 3, entered into force January 3, 1976, art. 11(1). See also, *UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (CESCR), General Comment No. 4, The Right to Adequate Housing, U.N. Doc. E/1992/23 (1991).

<sup>3</sup> See, *National Housing Strategy Act*, S.C. 2019, c. 29, s. 313, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/n-11.2/FullText.html> (accessed December 14, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> United Nations. The Right to Adequate Housing, Fact Sheet 21.

[https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf)

## Engaging with Rights Holders

The Federal Housing Advocate (the Advocate) has a legislated duty under the National Housing Strategy Act<sup>5</sup> to engage with “rights holders”, or people whose human right to adequate housing has been violated, such as those who are unhoused or precariously housed.

While hearing from groups working at the national-level was an important first step to understand some of the current common systemic housing issues that Canadians face, the Advocate is also committed to understanding the unique social, economic, cultural and geographic realities faced by people in different parts of the country.

In October 2022, the Advocate traveled to Nunatsiavut and Nunavut to speak with Inuit about their housing experiences. She visited Nain, Hopedale in Nunatsiavut, Happy Valley-Goose Bay in Newfoundland and Labrador where many Nunatsiavut beneficiaries live, and Pangnirtung, Rankin Inlet, and Iqaluit in Nunavut.

The engagement with Inuit and their governments is an opportunity to confront long-standing issues of Inuit being denied the human right to adequate housing, including self-determination over housing policy and programs. The aim of the engagement is to learn about and amplify Inuit housing priorities through a number of means. This includes most formally through the Advocate’s legislated reporting duty to the federal Minister responsible for housing who is legally required to respond.

The Advocate recognizes the limitations of this visit both in terms of time and place and that the housing crisis is being felt across all of Inuit Nunangat, and by Inuit across Canada who are facing unique and extremely challenging circumstances.

## Why Nunatsiavut and Nunavut?

Despite repeated documentation of government failures to uphold the right to housing for Inuit, harmful housing conditions in the North persist, and in some cases, have worsened. Data from the 2021 census show almost a third of the nearly 49,000 Inuit in Inuit Nunangat were living in dwellings in need of major repairs, a 1.2 percent increase from 2016 census data. Meanwhile the number of Inuit living in overcrowded homes has only marginally decreased (by 1.2 percent between 2016 and 2021) according to census data, with 53 percent of Inuit in Inuit Nunangat living in crowded housing in 2021.<sup>6</sup>

The Federal Housing Advocate met with ITK President Natan Obed on May 19, 2022, where discussions were held about a possible trip to visit Inuit Nunangat. ITK subsequently provided advice on opportunities for community engagement and meetings with Inuit government officials. Nunavut and Nunatsiavut were selected based on this advice. The communities of Nain, Hopedale, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Pangnirtung, Rankin Inlet, and Iqaluit were chosen to ensure diverse perspectives on the lack of housing options, including for Elders, people with disabilities, and youth. These communities also

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<sup>5</sup> National Housing Strategy Act, 2019: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/n-11.2/FullText.html>

<sup>6</sup> “Housing conditions among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada from the 2021 Census,” Government of Canada, September 21, 2021, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021007/98-200-X2021007-eng.cfm> (accessed May 5, 2023).

represent a variety of housing experiences, including of overcrowding, unaffordability, lack of funding and access to technical resources, and differing access to social services.

## **Purpose of Report**

The Advocate visited Nunatsiavut and Nunavut to listen, observe, and bear witness to the housing challenges unhoused and precariously housed Inuit in both regions are facing. This report is a summary of what was heard from meeting participants during the Advocate's time in Inuit Nunangat. It does not provide a comprehensive analysis of the issues, but rather highlights the opinions and concerns of rights holders, Inuit Government officials, service providers, and others who met with the Advocate regarding their experiences and/or observations of violations to the right to housing.

The testimonies shared with the Advocate during her visit contribute to a body of evidence that will support and inform the ongoing advocacy work of the Federal Housing Advocate in the following areas:

- Engagement efforts with rights holders and Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Government duty bearers;
- Research activities;
- Monitoring the progressive realization of the right to housing in Canada and the related goals and outcomes of the National Housing Strategy;
- Reporting and recommendations to the federal minister responsible for housing; and
- Systemic reviews and referrals made to the National Housing Council, where relevant to the issue.

The report also includes recommendations for governments. These recommendations were co-developed with Inuit partners, and should be urgently acted on by all relevant governments. While provincial and territorial governments do not have the same legislated duty to respond to the Advocate, it is hoped that the lived testimonies and recommendations contained in this report will be heard and responded to accordingly.

## **Methodology**

The Advocate was accompanied at all times by knowledgeable, trauma-informed community members or service providers.

Lived and living experts who attended meetings with the Advocate were compensated by the Inuit regional organizations according to Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) guidelines.

Sharing of information was on a voluntary basis. When visiting Elders in Pangnirtung, a community meal was provided.

Photographs of people collected for the purposes of this report required signed consent for release.

## UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The UN Declaration provides a framework for “the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous peoples of the world.” (article 43) Adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007, it sets out a constellation of rights, including those related to self-determination and self-governances, rights to lands, territories and resources, and rights to equality and non-discrimination in the enjoyment of human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights.

On June 21, 2021, the Parliament of Canada enacted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, which commits the federal government to achieving full implementation of the UN Declaration, including by ensuring that federal laws, regulations and policies are consistent with the requirements of the Declaration. The government of British Columbia had previously adopted provincial legislation with similar requirements and intent.

In relation to the right to housing, there are several key provisions:

**Articles 1 and 2:** The rights to equality and non-discrimination, as individuals and as peoples

**Article 3:** The right to self-determination

**Article 4:** The right to self-government

**Article 8:** The right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or cultural destruction

**Article 10:** The right not to be forcibly removed from Indigenous lands or territories

**Article 21:** The right to be free from discrimination

**Article 22:** A focus on the rights and special needs of Indigenous Elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities; the right of Indigenous women and children to live free from violence

**Article 23:** Right to development, including housing programmes

**Article 40:** Right to just and fair procedures for the resolution of conflicts and disputes

**Article 44:** Equal guarantee of rights to male and female Indigenous individuals.

## Nunatsiavut

The right of Inuit in Nunatsiavut to adequate housing is being violated. None of the seven elements of the right to housing have been upheld in Nunatsiavut.

In October 2022, the Federal Housing Advocate visited Nunatsiavut - the autonomous Inuit region in Labrador - traveling to Nain and Hopedale, as well as to Happy Valley-Goose Bay outside Nunatsiavut, where a significant number of Nunatsiavut Beneficiaries reside.

The Advocate met with frontline service providers and was welcomed into homes to see the reality of housing in Nunatsiavut. She witnessed the incredible strength of Inuit in the region and the power of collective community care, but also the awful toll of decades of government neglect and underfunding that has resulted in many Labrador Inuit facing houselessness or living in uninhabitable conditions that threaten their health and lives, and undermine their right to live in dignity.

Under international human rights law, the federal government is the ultimate duty-bearer to uphold the human right to housing in all of Canada. Other governments in Canada, including Indigenous governments, also have obligations to uphold human rights, including the right to adequate housing.<sup>7</sup>

The Nunatsiavut Government's Constitution guarantees the right to housing. It also includes a provision setting out the concurrent responsibility of every Labrador Inuk "to provide for his or her own housing needs in accordance with his or her own means."<sup>8</sup> This aspect of personal responsibility is generally accepted by Labrador Inuit as being fair.<sup>9</sup> However, in the face of decades of underinvestment in housing and adverse climate conditions, this responsibility is too often difficult to uphold at the household level.



Nain mostly features single family homes; most are older with some newer home builds.

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<sup>7</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Leilani Farha, A/HRC/28/62, 22 December 2014, <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/28/62> (accessed January 17, 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Section 2.4.28.

<sup>9</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1.

The violation of the right to housing of Labrador Inuit is not new. As Brenna Jarrar, the Nunatsiavut Housing Commission's Director of Housing, has stated, "Beneficiaries of Nunatsiavut have known that they've been living in conditions that are a violation of their dignity and their rights since colonization, since settlement, especially since the 1950s when people were forcibly relocated."<sup>10</sup>

The Advocate heard from Nunatsiavut community leaders how funding for housing is not only inadequate, but also inaccessible. Funding applications can require an excessive amount of work and take too long to deliver urgently needed funds. Further, in a number of cases, housing programs have not been designed to account for realities on the ground in the North, including the heightened cost of construction and the very limited construction season.<sup>11</sup> The shortcomings and inefficiencies of the current funding dynamic reflect a need for a broader paradigm shift, consistent with Inuit rights to self-determination and self-government, whereby federal and provincial governments move away from program-based funding and directly support Inuit-led housing plans.

### **A New Inuit-Crown Fiscal Relationship**

The Government of Canada has committed to achieving reconciliation with Inuit through a renewed government-to-government, and Inuit-Crown relationship "based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership as the foundation for transformative change that moves away from colonial systems of administration and governance."<sup>12</sup>

In February 2017, the Prime Minister of Canada and Inuit leaders from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Inuit Regional Organizations met in Iqaluit to sign a declaration establishing a new permanent bilateral mechanism to facilitate cooperation. The Inuit Nunangat Declaration on Inuit-Crown Partnership recognizes the "disproportionate socio-economic and cultural inequity facing Inuit compared to most other Canadians," and commits the parties to "working in partnership to create socio-economic and cultural equity between Inuit and other Canadians."

The resulting Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee (ICPC) has helped identify and secure federal funding to address complex issues like housing. As of 2022, housing is a "stand-alone Priority Area" of the ICPC. The Committee is also working to shift the Inuit-Crown fiscal relationship, with more funds flowing directly to Inuit Land Claim Organizations.<sup>13</sup>

The Inuit Nunangat Declaration on Inuit-Crown Partnership is consistent with the Government of Canada's approach through the 2019 "collaborative self-government fiscal policy." The policy includes critical recognition of the close tie between adequate funding and upholding the right to self-government, as well as the importance of ensuring Indigenous Governments have access to the resources needed to maintain their cultures and provide equitable public services:

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<sup>10</sup> Mike Moore, "Housing conditions in Nunatsiavut a 'human rights failure,' says federal housing advocate," CBC, December 21, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/nunatsiavut-federal-housing-advocate-1.6693397> (accessed January 21, 2023).

<sup>11</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.

<sup>12</sup> "Canada's collaborative self-government fiscal policy," Government of Canada, 2019, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1566482924303/1566482963919#4> (accessed July 4, 2023).

<sup>13</sup> "Building a Partnership for Transformational Change: Evaluation of the First Five Years of Implementation of the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee," Government of Canada, May 12, 2023, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1683645861474/1683645887481> (accessed July 5, 2023).



14. The fiscal relationship among Canada and Indigenous Governments is fundamental to the success of self-government. The fiscal relationship should seek to ensure that:
- 14.1. Indigenous Governments have sufficient fiscal resources to fulfill their responsibilities under their agreements and the associated expenditure need, and to provide public services that are reasonably comparable to public services available to other Canadians
  - 14.2. Indigenous peoples have equal opportunities for well-being as other Canadians and that governments work to achieve and maintain socio-economic equity between Indigenous peoples and other Canadians
  - 14.3. Indigenous Governments have the means to preserve, protect, use, develop and transmit to present and future generations their languages and the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures.

The new fiscal policy recognizes the need to support Indigenous Governments to meet housing needs, including through access to public housing. It further underscores the importance of collaborative action to close the housing gap in Indigenous communities.<sup>14</sup>

### **Responsibility for Housing for Nunatsiavut Beneficiaries**

Housing is a shared responsibility between the Nunatsiavut Government, the Newfoundland and Labrador Government, and the Federal Government.

In March 2019, the Nunatsiavut Assembly enacted legislation to govern all housing development and programs within the Labrador Inuit Land Claim Agreement Area. This legislation came into effect in November 2022, with the creation of the Nunatsiavut Housing Commission (NHC) as a self-determined Nunatsiavut Government Agency responsible for housing.<sup>15</sup>

The NHC has a mandate to “acquire, construct, develop, maintain, manage and supply housing in Nunatsiavut for Inuit families and individuals.” The Commission is particularly directed to “respond to the housing needs of Inuit who are vulnerable, meaning those living with addictions, homelessness, disabilities, violence in the home, or those who are on a fixed income or low-income, elders, youth, children in need of social protection, and families at risk of being separated from their children.”<sup>16</sup>

The Newfoundland and Labrador Government continues to operate public housing within the region and has additional obligations to Inuit who are residents of Newfoundland. The Newfoundland and

<sup>14</sup> “Canada’s collaborative self-government fiscal policy,” Government of Canada, 2019, <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1566482924303/1566482963919#4> (accessed July 4, 2023).

<sup>15</sup> An Act Respecting Housing In Nunatsiavut and to Establish a Nunatsiavut Housing Commission, 2019. IL 2019-03. Nunatsiavut Government, “Nunatsiavut Government disappointed in TRHA’s decision to dispose assets,” August 27, 2020, <https://nunatsiavut.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NEWS-RELEASE-Nunatsiavut-Government-disappointed-in-TRHAs-decision-to-dispose-assets.pdf> (accessed January 21, 2023); Nunatsiavut Housing Commission, “Nunatsiavut Housing Commission officially established, marking new era of housing self-determination for Inuit,” November 30, 2022, <https://nunatsiavut.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/MEDIA-RELEASE-Housing-Commission-officially-established.pdf> (accessed February 7, 2023).

<sup>16</sup> Nunatsiavut Housing Commission, “Nunatsiavut Housing Commission officially established, marking new era of housing self-determination for Inuit,” November 30, 2022.

Labrador Housing Corporation – a provincial crown corporation operating under the authority of the Housing Corporation Act – is the main entity responsible for implementing the province’s public housing policy and programs. It operates 57 housing units in Nunatsiavut.<sup>17</sup> In the wake of the Federal Housing Advocate’s visit, Newfoundland and Labrador’s housing minister toured Nunatsiavut and pledged further housing support, saying, “We know we have a lot more work to be done. And that’s why we want to make sure we can work with the [NHC] to come up with a joint approach so that we can address all the housing needs in the Nunatsiavut area.”<sup>18</sup>

The Federal Government, meanwhile, is under an obligation to provide funding for housing related programs and projects in the region to uphold the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement.<sup>19</sup>

Nunatsiavut has a funding arrangement with the federal government to support the implementation of their self-government agreement. The arrangement consists of fiscal funding agreements that set out a renewed fiscal relationship, developed in collaboration with Nunatsiavut, to support the political, economic, and cultural development of Nunatsiavut. With the advent of the newly created NHC, there is a need for Canada to work with the NHC to transfer the care and control of housing and homelessness program funds from Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation and Infrastructure Canada.

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<sup>17</sup> Exchange with Brenna Jarrar, March 2023.

<sup>18</sup> “Abbott pledges support for Nunatsiavut housing after federal advocate calls it ‘abominable,’” CBC, January 11, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/nunatsiavut-housing-abbott-support-1.6710155> (accessed April 29, 2023).

<sup>19</sup> Federal funds are funneled through the Newfoundland and Labrador government via the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation (NLHC), and the NLHC further administers funds from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). “Northern Housing Policy Recommendations,” May 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/polar-knowledge/publications/northern-housing-forum-knowledge-products/policy-recommendations.html#h5-26> (accessed January 21, 2023).

## I. Security of Tenure

**“[H]ousing is not adequate if its occupants do not have a degree of tenure security which guarantees legal protection against forced evictions, harassment and other threats.”**

— Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>20</sup>

Social housing in Nunatsiavut includes a subsidized rental housing and a subsidized rent-to-own programme, as well as other supports for low income homeowners.<sup>21</sup> However, far too many remain unhoused, which is a violation of their right to housing, as well as violating a number of other human rights, including non-discrimination, health, water and sanitation, security of the person and freedom from cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment.<sup>22</sup>

The Advocate heard from Labrador Inuit how a shortfall in housing supply is an important contributing factor in people being unhoused, resulting in some being forced to leave their communities to seek housing elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> In 2012—the most recent year for which there is data—there were 196 families in need of housing, according to Nunatsiavut Government data.<sup>24</sup> The Advocate heard from Labrador Inuit who have been waiting for years - over five years in some cases - to obtain housing. Some live in their cars, others are forced to sleep outside for months, unable to retain adequate shelter. One resident, frustrated at the long wait, said they were contemplating buying a tent and claiming an empty piece of land.<sup>25</sup> While the wait for housing impacts everyone, single men, in particular, have little hope of ever achieving secure housing as they were left out entirely from the application criteria.<sup>26</sup>

The full scale of the housing shortfall is difficult to assess. The extent of houselessness is hidden in the high levels of overcrowding (discussed at Part IV on habitability), and in the number of Inuit who are forced to leave their home communities (discussed at Part II on availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure). Happy Valley-Goose Bay - a hub for Inuit who have left Nunatsiavut, some due to lack of housing, some in order to access services - has shockingly high rates of homelessness. Brenna Jarrar, Director of Housing with the Nunatsiavut Housing Commission, shared that the most recently available data on homelessness indicates at least 96 individuals were unhoused in 2021-2022 in the Upper Lake Melville Region, or roughly 1.8 percent of the total population of the Town of Goose Bay, more than quadruple the rate in Toronto or Vancouver at the same point in time. Jarrar noted that not all of these individuals are Nunatsiavut beneficiaries, but some undoubtedly are. She described them as experiencing a doubled houselessness, being forced to leave Nunatsiavut because they had no housing and still not being able to access housing in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, 2009, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) (accessed December 8, 2022).

<sup>21</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building. The Torngat Regional Housing Association, supported by the Nunatsiavut Government, provided subsidized housing through a rent-to-own model in Nunatsiavut communities. Government of Canada, “2019 Inuit Nunangat Housing Strategy,” <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1554820296529/1554820324561> (accessed January 21, 2023).

<sup>22</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, A/HRC/43/43, para.30.

<sup>23</sup> Meeting 5 - Nunatsiavut Government - Housing Hub.

<sup>24</sup> “We Can Do Better: Housing in Inuit Nungat,” p. 14

[https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/APPA/Reports/Housing\\_e.pdf](https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/APPA/Reports/Housing_e.pdf) (accessed May 5, 2023).

<sup>25</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 3 – Hopedale Meeting (Unprocessed).

<sup>26</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 4 - Hopedale Meeting (Unprocessed).

<sup>27</sup> Exchange with Brenna Jarrar, March 2023.



The landscape around Hopedale is beautiful, bringing to mind the meaning of “Nunatsiavut,” or “our beautiful land” in Inuktitut. But when temperatures drop, or rain or snow sets in, access to shelter is critical.

Lack of secure housing and resulting displacement echoes the trauma of forced relocation many Labrador Inuit experienced in the 1950’s. The Provincial Government forced Inuit in northern Labrador to abandon their communities, thrusting many families into cycles of dislocation and lack of access to secure housing that continue through to today.<sup>28</sup> The Advocate heard from Labrador Inuit how the trauma of relocation continues to be felt, and how lack of current government support not only prolongs related harms, but adds insult to injury.<sup>29</sup> Out of 57 Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation units, for example, around 20 percent sit vacant, some for years, unable to address the housing shortfall due to lack of repair and inadequate investment by the Newfoundland government.<sup>30</sup>

There are numerous barriers to construction of housing that need to be addressed in order to remedy current shortfalls in Nunatsiavut. One barrier is ongoing confusion regarding unknown or encumbered ownership of the underlying land title.<sup>31</sup> The Advocate heard that the Nunatsiavut Government is working in cooperation with Inuit Community Governments to buy unused land to more easily facilitate future public housing and infrastructure development, but there is also a broader shortage of land suitable for construction.<sup>32</sup> Another barrier is lack of funds and slow construction timelines tied to funding shortfalls as well as challenges in sourcing materials and necessary skilled labour.<sup>33</sup> The

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<sup>28</sup> See, e.g. Carol Brice-Bennett, *Dispossessed: The Eviction of Inuit from Hebron, Labrador, 2017*, <https://archipel.uqam.ca/9324/1/171101%20Dispossessednum%C3%A9rique.pdf> (access May 5, 2023).

<sup>29</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 4 - Hopedale Meeting (Unprocessed).

<sup>30</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 3 – Hopedale Meeting (Unprocessed); Exchange with Brenna Jarrar, March 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 6; Nunatsiavut Meeting 4 - Hopedale Meeting (Unprocessed).

<sup>32</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 4 - Hopedale Meeting (Unprocessed); Exchange with Brenna Jarrar, March 2023.

<sup>33</sup> Nunatsiavut House visit 11; Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.



Advocate heard that in the past, a “sweat equity” program helped Labrador Inuit build their own homes, and allowed for home ownership within 25 years.<sup>34</sup> While the Advocate heard interest expressed in such a program being reintroduced, concerns were also raised about the need for specialized labour and oversight to ensure construction is up to Code so as to ensure safety and insurability of homes.<sup>35</sup>

Those who do own homes in Nunatsiavut also face serious obstacles to secure tenure because of the lack of accessible, affordable mortgages and home or tenant insurance.<sup>36</sup> According to the Nunatsiavut Executive Council, 78 percent of the population cannot access home insurance.<sup>37</sup> Jarrar described how this lack of access reflects a widespread lack of access to banking services in general: “Not only are banking services scarce,” she said, “there are no banks. The most access is an ATM in two of the five communities.” This lack of access and exposure to banking services makes Labrador Inuit vulnerable to predatory lending practices, she warned.<sup>38</sup>



Nain is the largest northern-most community in Nunatsiavut. Pictures show typical housing within the town.

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<sup>34</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.  
<sup>35</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building; Exchange with Brenna Jarrar, March 2023.  
<sup>36</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.  
<sup>37</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.  
<sup>38</sup> Exchange with Brenna Jarrar, March 2023.

## II. Availability of Services, Materials, Facilities and Infrastructure

**“[H]ousing is not adequate if occupants do not have safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, or energy for cooking, heating, and lighting, as well as means of food storage, and refuse disposal.”**

— Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>39</sup>

The Advocate visited and spoke with Labrador Inuit who did not have any water or sanitation in their homes, as well as people who did not have reliable access to heat or energy, severely impacting their right to housing and to water and sanitation, and putting their right to the highest attainable standard of health at risk.

For some, washroom fixtures such as the bath, shower, or toilet were inoperable or ran constantly.<sup>40</sup> Such persistent leaks cause water damage to homes, increase the cost of supplying water for hamlets, and increase moisture levels tied to health harming mould issues.

One resident had no hot water tank and had to heat water on a wood stove for cleaning, bathing, and cooking.<sup>41</sup> The Advocate also visited two houses without any access to water or sanitation whose residents had to rely on nearby family or community services for basic sanitation and food preparation. Some used a honey bucket, which carries increased health risks from contact with sewage.<sup>42</sup>



Homes without adequate access to water and sanitation. Several homes with water lacked access to hot water.

Wood stoves are used to heat most homes in Nunatsiavut, roughly 54 percent according to the Nunatsiavut Government’s most recent data.<sup>43</sup> The Advocate repeatedly heard how these stoves keep the common areas overly warm, but fail to heat adjacent bedrooms.<sup>44</sup> In one home the Advocate visited, the heat from the central wood stove was unforgiving in the main room and central kitchen, but left the bedrooms down the hall noticeably cool.<sup>45</sup> One resident also stated he had developed asthma from

<sup>39</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, 2009, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) (accessed December 8, 2022).

<sup>40</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 2; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 10.

<sup>41</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 2.

<sup>42</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 5; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 6.

<sup>43</sup> Exchange with Brenna Jarrar, March 2023.

<sup>44</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 10; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 11.

<sup>45</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 8.



breathing in the smoke in the house coming from the wood stove.<sup>46</sup> Wood stoves can also be expensive and difficult to operate. Families must either purchase wood or gather it themselves using snowmobiles and sleds during the winter months, which is not possible for all community members, depending on factors such as length of distance to wood sources.<sup>47</sup>

The Advocate heard from one Inuk who resorted to burning the doors, window frames and furniture from his house for heat because he did not have other wood resources available and lacked a working snowmobile. The man reported that it required 15 sled loads of firewood to keep warm each winter, not including the material he burned from the house.<sup>48</sup> Given the short supply of available housing, it is unlikely the man's housing situation will change any time soon before the winter and he will need to work on emergency heating plans to ensure his survival, likely relying more heavily on family or emergency facilities in the community.<sup>49</sup> He will not be alone. The emergency shelter in Nain, for example, reported they are usually at full capacity in winter due to the extreme cold.<sup>50</sup>



Wood is stockpiled beside homes in Nunatsiavut to prepare for cold weather ahead.

<sup>46</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 5.

<sup>47</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 8.

<sup>48</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 5.

<sup>49</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 5.

<sup>50</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 3 - Emergency Shelter Visit.

Some families the Advocate spoke with and visited also had oil furnaces as an alternative to their wood stoves, but almost none made use of them because they were too expensive to operate.<sup>51</sup> One family expressed great frustration at the high cost: to maintain a comfortable ambient temperature in January required roughly five gallons of oil a day, translating to \$57 a day or over \$1,500 a month.<sup>52</sup>

The supportive living facility in Hopedale relies solely on oil for heat, using three drums per month in the winter, at an approximate cost of \$1,000 each month. In the summer, the house is heated using two oil drums over the entire season.<sup>53</sup>

The high cost of heating is exacerbated by lack of adequate insulation and drafts from broken doors and windows.<sup>54</sup> The high level of moisture in houses also contributes, requiring maximum use of the air exchange system, which lets in cold air.<sup>55</sup>



Broken windows, as well as warped window and door frames, allow heat to escape, driving up heating costs.

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<sup>51</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 9; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 10; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 11.

<sup>52</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1.

<sup>53</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 7 – Supportive Living House.

<sup>54</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 10.

<sup>55</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1; Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.



Nain is powered by diesel generator.

Hydro electricity rates are also high in Nunatsiavut relative to the South. Residents reported paying as much as \$300 a month to light their houses and run basic appliances.<sup>56</sup> One family that had an electric baseboard heater as a back-up heating supply, reported that it would cost as much as \$2,000 per month in electricity costs, even after accounting for a rebate provided by Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro.<sup>57</sup> By contrast, the average residential cost of electricity in Newfoundland and Labrador was \$138 per month in 2021.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to prohibitive cost, electricity is not reliable for some residents. During multiple home visits, the Advocate heard about and saw evidence of power surges. Electricity surges damage appliances and are a serious fire risk.<sup>59</sup>



Home without power, water and sanitation. The wiring is a fire hazard and a stove was removed.

The Advocate was informed of the use of new energy technologies such as heat pumps and solar power to help offset energy and heating costs.<sup>60</sup> Solar panels have been installed in all Nunatsiavut communities in 2022 as part of the Nunatsiavut Government’s efforts to eliminate dependence on diesel power and achieve energy independence. The panels are expected to meet between 20 to 90 percent of community needs during peak the summer season. More plans are underway to address remaining energy needs.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, the Advocate heard how climate change impacts such as permafrost thaw, mean people can no longer store harvested food in makeshift freezers dug into the ground as was done in the past.<sup>62</sup> Such changes increase the need for large community freezers, particularly for traditional hunters, creating another energy expense.

<sup>56</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 9.

<sup>57</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 8.

<sup>58</sup> “Electricity Prices in Canada 2021,” <https://www.energyhub.org/electricity-prices/> (accessed April 8, 2023).

<sup>59</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 6; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 2.

<sup>60</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 8; Nunatsiavut Meeting 3 – Hopedale Meeting (Unprocessed).

<sup>61</sup> Heidi Atter, “Solar panels installed in all Nunatsiavut towns as Inuit government eyes energy independence,” CBC, August 31, 2022, <https://nlhydro.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2021-Sustainability-Report.pdf> (accessed January 21, 2023).

<sup>62</sup> Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.



### III. Affordability

**“Housing is not adequate if the cost threatens or compromises the occupants’ enjoyment of other human rights.”**

— Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>63</sup>

The Advocate repeatedly heard how unaffordable it is for Labrador Inuit to undertake necessary maintenance and house repairs.

The level of serious repairs needed for many houses presents a significant financial obstacle to home ownership.<sup>64</sup> For those on a fixed income, repairs can be completely out of reach.<sup>65</sup> Repair costs are very high as most materials must be shipped in, and those without good credit are not able to order housing supplies online.<sup>66</sup> The absence of local construction capacity in most communities likely also adds to the cost and difficulty of undertaking repairs, requiring materials to be flown in from the South, adding time and costs.<sup>67</sup>

At the time of the Advocate’s visit, a Nunatsiavut Government program existed to support repairs and renovations, but the income cut-off restricted access. Any family with an annual total household income over \$70,000 did not qualify.<sup>68</sup> As one family described to the Advocate, they wanted to access the program to address the structural and interior deficits affecting their quality of life, but they were a few hundred dollars over the cut-off, rendering them ineligible. Without funding, their family finances were too tight to allow for the purchase of material and labour.<sup>69</sup>

Positively, the Nunatsiavut Housing Commission reformed the program to make funding for repairs available to all.<sup>70</sup> As of 2023, all Beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement residing in the Labrador Inuit Communities of Nain, Hopedale, Postville, Makkovik, and Rigolet are eligible to receive support for repairs, though households with over \$200,000 in annual income must provide “proof of changing or extenuating circumstances to justify why they cannot provide for themselves despite their comparative financial prosperity.” Repair costs are shared between the Nunatsiavut Housing Commission and the homeowner on a sliding scale, depending on total household income.<sup>71</sup> This reform resulted in a five-fold increase in applications, reflective of the overwhelming demand.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, 2009, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/solar-nunatsiavut-1.6565534> (accessed December 8, 2022).

<sup>64</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.

<sup>65</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.

<sup>66</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 8.

<sup>67</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 8.

<sup>68</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1.

<sup>69</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 9.

<sup>70</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 9.

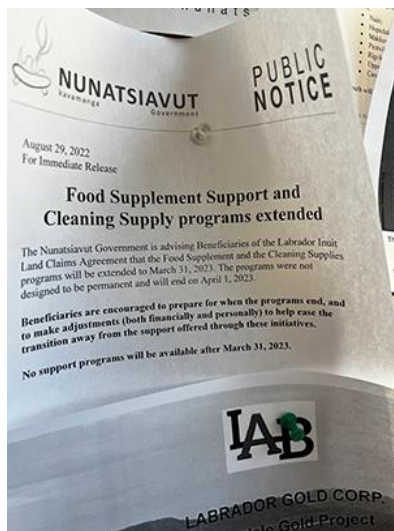
<sup>71</sup> Nunatsiavut Housing Commission, “Media Release: The Nunatsiavut Housing Commission is pleased to announce new Home Repair Program,” December 19, 2022.

<sup>72</sup> Exchange with Brenna Jarrar, March 2023.

Recognizing that the costs of home ownership will not work for everyone, the Nunatsiavut Housing Commission also introduced an Affordable Rental Program in December 2022. It offers flexible rental housing with fixed costs and utility supports and is intended for Inuit households with low and fixed incomes.<sup>73</sup>

Inuit who leave Nunatsiavut to find housing can face serious housing affordability problems. The Advocate heard, for example, how rent in Goose Bay is generally between \$800-1500 /month, and can be as high as \$3,000/month.<sup>74</sup>

The Advocate was warned that housing costs in Nunatsiavut must be understood within the context of other socio-economic challenges, particularly food insecurity. There is an ongoing ban on hunting caribou - put in place ten years ago due to sharp declines in caribou populations - that has cut Inuit off from a key source of traditional food and cultural connection.<sup>75</sup> At the time of the Advocate's visit, the Nunatsiavut Government was offering food vouchers as COVID-19 relief measures.<sup>76</sup> Frontline service staff expressed concern that the end of these measures in March 2023 would lead to more food insecurity, particularly in households struggling with alcohol dependency.<sup>77</sup>



Notice food supplement program which ended, contributing to increased food insecurity.

In addition to lack of banking services, the Advocate was appraised of how limited access to federal services contributes to affordability challenges for Labrador Inuit. In response to Nunatsiavut government organizing efforts, Service Canada has moved to provide on-the-ground tax filing support for a limited period. The Advocate heard about the need for greater federal support for access and delivery of federal programs. For example, there is no Service Canada office in Nunatsiavut to improve service delivery, including income support provision. While Nunatsiavut has a self-government agreement in place, the Federal Government still has a role and responsibility in providing and ensuring access to income support programs and other programs of general application.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Nunatsiavut Housing Commission, "Media Release: The Nunatsiavut Housing Commission is pleased to announce New Affordable Rental Program," December 7, 2022.

<sup>74</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 5 - Nunatsiavut Government - Housing Hub.

<sup>75</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 8; David Borish et al., "What the declining caribou populations — and total hunting ban — mean for Inuit communities in Labrador," Dal News, August 25, 2022, <https://www.dal.ca/news/2022/08/25/what-the-declining-caribou-populations--and-total-hunting-ban--.html> (accessed January 21, 2023).

<sup>76</sup> Nunatsiavut Government, "COVID-19 Food Supplement Program in place for Labrador Inuit in Constituency of Canada," April 24, 2020 <https://nunatsiavut.com/covid-19-food-supplement-program-in-place-for-labrador-inuit-in-constituency-of-canada/> (accessed January 21, 2023). Confirmed with Brenna Jarrar that these measures ended in March 2023.

<sup>77</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 4 - Youth Centre.

<sup>78</sup> Exchanged with Brenna Jarrar, March 2023.

## IV. Habitability

**“[H]ousing is not adequate if it does not guarantee physical safety or provide adequate space, as well as protection against the cold, damp, heat, rain, wind, other threats to health and structural hazards.”**

— Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights <sup>79</sup>

Many Labrador Inuit have homes that are not big enough to allow for their families to live in comfort and dignity. Far too many homes in Nunatsiavut are not habitable, posing an imminent and ongoing threat to the lives, safety, and dignity of their residents. The Advocate was deeply shocked by the level of disrepair and unsafe housing conditions that so many Labrador Inuit are forced to face, in large part because of inadequate provincial and federal government resourcing of housing in the region.

The Advocate visited one family living in a condemned house. The condition of the house is typical of the builder, and of other housing in Nunatsiavut built over the past decades. While the building had been condemned years prior in 2010, this fact was not disclosed to the family before they took possession in 2016. The situation was supposed to be temporary. However, seven years later, the family still waits, forgotten, and no other home is made available for their use.<sup>80</sup>

In the home, black stains are everywhere accompanied by a musty smell and a high moisture levels. The family suspects that the stains are black mould. One of the residents has developed significant breathing difficulties and believes mould is to blame. These black stains cover mattresses, and are particularly present in the only bathroom in the house that the family of seven also uses for laundry. High levels of traffic and water use mean this bathroom actively contributes to the extraordinary moisture in the house. To make matters worse, the toilet is broken and constantly runs, causing condensation on the outside of the bowl, which runs down and damages the subfloor. The subfloor is exposed, spongy, and black.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, 2009, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) (accessed December 8, 2022).

<sup>80</sup> The Family became aware of the condemned status by way of the Federal MP. Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1.

<sup>81</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1.





Black stains were evident throughout the house, including in the washroom along the base of the bathtub. Water damage was also apparent around the woodstove chimney, as is the case in many houses in Nunatsiavut.

The family recounted how the moisture on windows and doors turn to ice, rendering them inoperable during the winter, and posing a major safety risk. The family experiences regular electrical surges, which may be caused by property damage from shifting land as well as excessive moisture in the house, raising the risk of a house fire. The seized doors and windows mean that the family has no means of egress in the event of a fire. This issue is a source of a lot of unnecessary stress on the entire family, causing recurring nightmares.<sup>82</sup>



Elevated moisture levels in homes. Improper drainage compromises the wood foundations contributing to mould.

The lot on which the house sits is not appropriately graded to direct runoff water away from the house, and puts the family at risk of regular flooding. The family had to abandon a key storage space previously used for winter items such as clothing after it flooded, destroying expensive personal items. Since then, the house has flooded twice. After the first flood, the family began to rely on the back-door space as a

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<sup>82</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1.

storage area, which, according to the Fire Code, must be kept clear to provide an escape in the event of an emergency.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to now lacking space for storage, the house is already too small to comfortably house the family. All family members are not able to gather in the house's common living space at one time, nor is there space for the whole family to sleep in beds.<sup>84</sup>

Further, the house is cold, in stark contrast to the family's warm welcome. Broken window seals, inadequate ventilation, visible gaps between the door and the frame, all contribute to inadequate protection against the cold and damp.<sup>85</sup>

The family has tried to get their house repaired, but to no avail. The Nunatsiavut Government's constitution guarantees the right to housing but there is a provision that every Inuk must provide for themselves within their own abilities. This aspect of personal responsibility is generally accepted by Labrador Inuit as being fair, but the extent of repair this family, and many others confront far exceed their individual resources. Further, for years the family did not qualify for repair assistance. In the midst of the extreme housing shortage, the family has no options for alternative housing.<sup>86</sup>

The issues facing this family are not unique in Nunatsiavut. Data suggests that habitability concerns are widespread and severe in Nunatsiavut. A 2018 housing needs assessment undertaken by the Nunatsiavut Government found that 78 percent of homes need major repairs. Of the homes surveyed, 41 percent reported mould, the highest instance across Inuit Nunangat. The assessment also reported high levels of overcrowding, almost four times the national average, with 29 percent of homes housing more than one family in a single-family dwelling, and over seven percent housing two to three families in one unit.<sup>87</sup>

The Advocate visited a number of homes with serious habitability concerns such as overcrowding, suspected mould contamination, water damage, and fire safety concerns.<sup>88</sup> For some, broken or inadequately sealed windows contribute to moisture problems and drafts.<sup>89</sup> Many deal with leaks around chimneys and added moisture from broken toilets and washroom facilities.<sup>90</sup> All the toilets in the homes visited in Nunatsiavut had large water tanks, which likely contributes to the high level of water use and moisture present in the homes.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1.

<sup>84</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1.

<sup>85</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1.

<sup>86</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1.

<sup>87</sup> Exchange with Brenna Jarrar, March 2023.

<sup>88</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 2; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 6; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 9; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 10; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 11.

<sup>89</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 5; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 10; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 11.

<sup>90</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 5; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 9; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 10; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 11.

<sup>91</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1.



Improperly sealed windows.



Running toilets lead to condensation on the outside of the bowl, which over time, compromises the integrity of the subfloor around the toilet and creates mould.

In many instances, these severe habitability issues are attributable to inadequate construction,<sup>92</sup> exacerbated by overcrowding.<sup>93</sup> The use of exposed wood foundations, coupled with inadequate drainage or grading, for example, make moisture damage and related mould seemingly inevitable, not to mention structural damage as houses shift with the spring rains and winter freeze. The Advocate saw houses whose foundations were stained, bowed, and rotting with moisture from the outside.<sup>94</sup> Inside, water stain and likely black mold covered ceilings, walls, and other surfaces in many houses.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> The Council discussed how some builders have tried to cut corners and costs, with improperly laid foundations, installation of air exchange not done correctly, and the use of cheap or sub-standard material that is not equipped for Northern climates. Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.

<sup>93</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 9; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 11.

<sup>94</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 11; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 5; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 6.

<sup>95</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 2; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 6; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 9; Nunatsiavut Home Visit 11.





Bowed and water stained exposed wood foundations are a common sight in Nunatsiavut communities.



Despite evidence of failures of exposed wood foundations, the practice is still continued for new foundation.



Water collects around a house that has not been graded to allow for adequate drainage.



Water staining and likely black mould covers the ceiling in multiple houses.



Cracked wall.





A mattress, black with mould, is leaned against a damp exterior wall in a bedroom.



A bathroom shows obvious signs of water damage and mould.

Even new constructed homes show signs of shoddy construction. The Advocate visited a house more recently built. The ceiling revealed evidence of the house shifting significantly. The residents were worried about the shifting foundation and resulting cracks in the walls, ceilings, and bending doorways. They were also worried about the mould. They said that while they clean and disinfect the window casings regularly to eliminate mould, it comes back quickly given the high moisture levels in the house.<sup>96</sup>



A gap in a new house has begun to appear where the ceiling is bowing away from the wall.



The window casings throughout this house show damage from condensation and black mould from sitting moisture.

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<sup>96</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 8.



It is believed that permafrost thaw, increasingly due to climate change, has greatly affected the stability of some houses and caused them to shift significantly.<sup>97</sup> The Advocate visited one house, built by the resident's grandfather, that was visibly slanted causing gaps between the floor and the walls. Permafrost thaw likely contributed to the shift in the house's foundation, and transformed this family's home, once a source of pride, into a place that is no longer livable.<sup>98</sup> Another house the Advocate visited appeared to be on the verge of collapse. It is speculated that the permafrost change has greatly affected the stability of the house and caused it to shift significantly. Foam insulation is used to fill the huge gap between the floor and walls, and the ceiling and walls throughout the house. In some areas, these gaps are as big as four inches.<sup>99</sup> The floor has bowed so drastically that the two support beams on either side of the wood stove have completely pulled away from the ceiling, exposing long nails once used to hold the structures together. For the resident, the fear of the house's imminent collapse is magnified by the lack of alternative living options available.<sup>100</sup>



Homes with mould and cracks due to shifting.

<sup>97</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.

<sup>98</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 5.

<sup>99</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 2.

<sup>100</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 2.

## V. Accessibility

**“Housing is not adequate if the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups are not taken into account.”**

— Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>101</sup>

The Advocate heard how the housing needs of particular groups are not being met, as set out below.

### People facing mental health and substance use challenges

The Advocate was concerned to hear how Labrador Inuit facing mental health and substance use challenges have limited housing options. In some instances, Inuit ending up unhoused after being kicked out of homes by family members.<sup>102</sup> Individuals seeking drug and alcohol treatment support have few options. There are some residential nursing stations within communities, but people must generally leave their communities to access treatment services outside of Nunatsiavut and Labrador. Due to the housing shortage when residents return, they are often forced to return to the same housing environment they left, which can make recovery difficult and put people at risk of relapse.<sup>103</sup>

Positively, the Advocate did hear from and visit a number of frontline service organizations working to provide support and emergency shelter in the face of limited funding and resources and the ever-present housing shortage. An emergency shelter in the community of Nain operates with federal government funds. The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation helps fund a Supportive Living unit in Nain and Hopedale for individuals with multiple and complex needs.<sup>104</sup>



Supportive group home.



The Advocate talking with resident of supportive group home.

<sup>101</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, 2009, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) (accessed December 8, 2022).

<sup>102</sup> Meeting 5 - Nunatsiavut Government - Housing Hub.

<sup>103</sup> Home Visit 7 - Supportive Living House.

<sup>104</sup> Nunatsiavut Government, “Social Development,” <https://nunatsiavut.com/department/health-and-social-development/6063/> (accessed January 21, 2023).

The Advocate visited the Supportive Living Unit in Hopedale, which was fully occupied with three residents at the time of the visit. Residents must pay \$800/month to stay, which is generally taken from their income support payments, leaving approximately only \$50 or \$60 a month for personal expenses. Despite the success of this support model, the lack of access to other group homes limits the number of people the organization can assist. There was a waitlist of approximately seven to eight people at the time of the Advocate’s visit, requiring people to find other supports within the community or travel elsewhere. If people do leave, it is often to Goose Bay where they find themselves among many other people from other areas who are in search of urgently needed supportive housing, and where the demand greatly surpasses the supply. Further, the Supportive Living Unit in Hopedale is limited to only housing single residents, not couples or people with children.<sup>105</sup>



The Advocate also visited the emergency shelter in Nain. The low barrier shelter allows clients over the age of 18 to access the shelter under the influence; however, respectful and non-violent behaviour is required for a stay, and there is no space to use any substances or alcohol. The shelter has three bedrooms and can accommodate up to seven people, eight if someone sleeps on the couch in the common room. The centre’s funding does not permit them to provide meals for residents, but does keep some food on hand, and also receives food donations for those who need it. Average stay varies from upwards of a year to just a few days. The absence of a rental market to transition people into independent living is a major complicating factor for the shelter and its residents.<sup>106</sup>

The Advocate and staff visit the shelter in Nain.

In Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador, the Nunatsiavut Government manages an emergency shelter, the Housing Hub, on behalf of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. Clients of the Housing Hub voiced their appreciation for such a facility, with staff that really care and listen, and emphasized the importance of having a safe place where they have access to peer support and have hope for the future.<sup>107</sup> The Hub is meant to accommodate eight people, but often exceeds double this capacity at night. Sometime over 40 people will drop in throughout mealtimes and to access washrooms and laundry. This facility - a converted dance studio on a side street across from offices and an auto garage - is not purpose-built, nor designed to handle such high demand.<sup>108</sup>

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the distancing requirements in congregate living facilities, and increased homelessness led the province to use the Labrador Inn, a privately-owned hotel, for overflow emergency housing.<sup>109</sup> The Inn continues to provide food and shelter to unhoused people who are referred to the Inn by the province when the Housing Hub is filled to capacity. The Advocate was told that this overflow emergency housing is an essential service. However, the use of the Inn for this

<sup>105</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 7 – Supportive Living House.

<sup>106</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 3 – Emergency shelter visit.

<sup>107</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 5 - Nunatsiavut Government - Housing Hub.

<sup>108</sup> Exchange with Brenna Jarrar, March 2023.

<sup>109</sup> “Provincial Government Working with Community Partners to Support Vulnerable Populations and Public Safety,” Newfoundland and Labrador, November 2, 2022, <https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2022/exec/1102n07/> (accessed May 5, 2023).

purpose places a significant burden on staff at the Inn who are acting as informal counsellors and social workers without training and adequate resources. The Advocate was informed that staff turnover is very high. Further, the Inn is not equipped to deal with mental health and addictions issues, so if someone is intoxicated, the RCMP can be called to take them to the “drunk tank.”<sup>110</sup> As CBC reported in 2022, the Inn is a stop-gap measure in a system that is “chronically overcapacity and overburdened.”<sup>111</sup>

### **Happy Valley-Goose Bay: A Case Study**

There is a serious housing crisis in Happy Valley-Goose Bay (HV-GP) that requires urgent action at the municipal level. Labrador Inuit are uniquely impacted. Unfortunately, the Advocate has heard how the municipality has failed to take measures that could prevent further human rights harm and alleviate suffering for many.

The overlapping and interrelated difficulties of extreme housing shortages, lack of access to addiction treatment and healthcare services, and inter-generational trauma ripple outwards from each corner of Nunatsiavut. The services and infrastructure available in HV-GB, and the lack of such facilities in Nunatsiavut, mean that Inuit have to travel to HV-GB, sometimes for long periods of time, to obtain the supports and resources they need. Lack of affordable and public housing in HV-GB means these individuals face grim circumstances, often waiting for months or years for public housing, and being forced to rely on local shelters until permanent housing is made available.

In addition to high housing costs, discrimination also prevents Labrador Inuit from finding secure housing in HV-GB. In a rental market with few vacancies, and largely consisting of informal subleases or ad hoc arrangements found through personal networks or direct application to individual landlords, applicants must undertake significant groundwork to find lodging, sometimes with no result. Renters can be forced into unsafe and undesirable living conditions, such as renting un-winterized sheds or couch surfing. They also have little protection against discrimination or predatory practices. The Advocate heard how Nunatsiavut Government housing support workers who attempt to make connections with private landlords and find placements for clients transitioning to independent living encounter discrimination based on family name, association with being “from the Coast,” and assumptions about drinking.

In winter, unhoused members of the community have died by freezing to death outdoors. Many of the deceased have been Inuit from across Nunatsiavut. Recently, the province has been advancing plans to build an emergency shelter, with longer-term units for single people and couples who are able to live independently. The shelter would be operated by the Nunatsiavut Government. “This facility,” Brenna Jarrar shared, “promises to be transformative, with space for cultural programming, and a managed alcohol program.”<sup>112</sup>

However, a vocal minority of business owners have organized against the shelter, and the HV-GB Town Council has failed to advance the planned construction, withholding basic permits.

<sup>110</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 6 - Labrador Inn.

<sup>111</sup> Ariana Kelland, and Rafsan Faruque Jugol, “I struggled the same way they do’: Inside the Labrador shelter that isn’t,” CBC, February 24, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/labrador-inn-homeless-1.6358081> (accessed January 21, 2023).

<sup>112</sup> Exchange with Brenna Jarrar, March 2023.



On April 6, 2023 provincial government ministers issued a joint statement expressing “disappointment” at the town council’s response to the province’s efforts, stating:

The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, working with its Indigenous and community partners, continues to advance plans for an integrated health, housing and supportive services facility in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The preliminary design for the facility includes a 30-bed emergency shelter, 20 modest transitional housing bedrooms and 20 affordable supportive housing units, along with mental health and addictions and other wrap-around supports to improve housing stability and wellness. Budget 2023 has allocated over \$30 million to build this facility on government land on Hamilton Road, but the town needs to support its construction to avoid further delays in putting in place a long-term solution to many of the issues facing the community.<sup>113</sup>

## Women and children

The Advocate also heard about the lack of housing for single mothers with children, some of whom must reapply for housing year after year.<sup>114</sup> Positively, the Nunatsiavut Government supports a seven-plex in Nain and in Hopedale for families at risk of having their children taken into the care of the Newfoundland Government Department of Children, Seniors, and Social Development (CSSD), or who potentially could have their children returned to them if they demonstrate they have appropriate housing and supports in place.<sup>115</sup> But, it is not able to accommodate all those in need of this support. Lack of long-term housing options continues to put Inuit women in Nunatsiavut at risk of having their children seized by the state.<sup>116</sup>

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has made clear that poverty, including lack of access to adequate housing, is not a justification for separating children from their parents. The Committee has emphasized, that family separation should be viewed as a “last resort measure: because of the “gravity of the impact on the child of separation from his or her parents.” The Committee adds, “Before resorting to separation, the State should provide support to the parents in assuming their parental responsibilities, and restore or enhance the family’s capacity to take care of the child.”<sup>117</sup> In the case of Indigenous children, maintaining family ties is even more essential to uphold the child’s rights to health and culture.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> “Statement on Commitment to Work with Town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay to Address Concerns,” Newfoundland and Labrador, November 2, 2022, <https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2023/jps/0406n06/> (accessed May 5, 2023).

<sup>114</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 3 – Hopedale Meeting (Unprocessed).

<sup>115</sup> Nunatsiavut Government, “Social Development,” <https://nunatsiavut.com/department/health-and-social-development/6063/> (accessed January 21, 2023).

<sup>116</sup> Exchange with Brenna Jarrar, March 2023.

<sup>117</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 14 on the Right of the Child to Have His or Her Best Interests Taken as a Primary Consideration, U.N. Doc. CRC/C/GC/14 (2013), <https://www.refworld.org/docid/51a84b5e4.html> (accessed May 2, 2023), para. 61.

<sup>118</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment No. 11: Indigenous Children and their Rights under the Convention*, UN Doc CRC/C/GC/2009/11 (2009), at para 46.



Nain women and family shelter.

Women and people fleeing family violence also face limited housing options. Currently there are two Nunatsiavut communities without women’s shelters. The Advocate visited a shelter in Nain, which provides a safe space for women and children for stays up to eight weeks. Most users stay up to six weeks. The province funds the shelter’s operations at a fixed rate that has not increased on par with inflation. Each year, the funding covers less and less.<sup>119</sup>

The Advocate heard anecdotes of many women enduring violence in the household rather than seeking help from the shelter for fear of having their children taken from them. The Advocate also heard how lack of privacy exposes women to social stigma and increased risks of violence. Because the communities are small, when a woman accesses the shelter, the entire community knows, including the abuser. The centre would like to be able to operate in a network across Nunatsiavut’s five main communities to be able to move willing families to areas away from their abusers, and to preserve the anonymity of those who seek their assistance.<sup>120</sup>

The lack of transitional housing also presents a serious challenge to being able to successfully help and house people on a permanent basis. Many women leave the shelter and have no choice but to return to the same living situation they fled, or other, overcrowded housing options with family. In some cases, the Nunatsiavut Government has paid for hotel stays, but this is not a long term or sustainable solution.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.

<sup>120</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 3 – Women’s Emergency Shelter.

<sup>121</sup> Exchange with Brenna Jarrar, March 2023.

## Elders and people with disabilities



The Advocate was also informed about the severe lack of accessible housing for Elders and people with disabilities. Some residents have made applications for accessibility assistance to pay for renovations required to adapt their homes to meet the residents' needs, but that help has not been provided.<sup>122</sup> The Advocate was told that a seniors housing complex is being built in Hopedale in 2023, but more housing is needed, along with medical services, to ensure that older Inuit and Inuit with disabilities in Nunatsiavut are not forced to leave their communities to access housing and needed care.<sup>123</sup>

The need for more assisted living options within Nunatsiavut has been a long-running issue.<sup>124</sup> Many Elders and others with chronic health conditions are forced to leave because of lack of adequate housing. Happy Valley-Goose Bay is one hub, but also lacks adequate accessible housing and supports to accommodate Labrador Inuit forced to move there. The Advocate heard, for example, that there are about 600 people on a waitlist for assisted living at the Labrador Inn.<sup>125</sup>

Home with poor construction material.



Few homes have ramps to accommodate people with disabilities.

<sup>122</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 3 – Hopedale Meeting (Unprocessed).

<sup>123</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 3 – Hopedale Meeting (Unprocessed).

<sup>124</sup> John Gaudi, "This Hopedale senior had to choose between health and home. He's not the only one," June 24, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/nunatsiavut-seniors-housing-challenges-1.5619640> (accessed May 2, 2023).

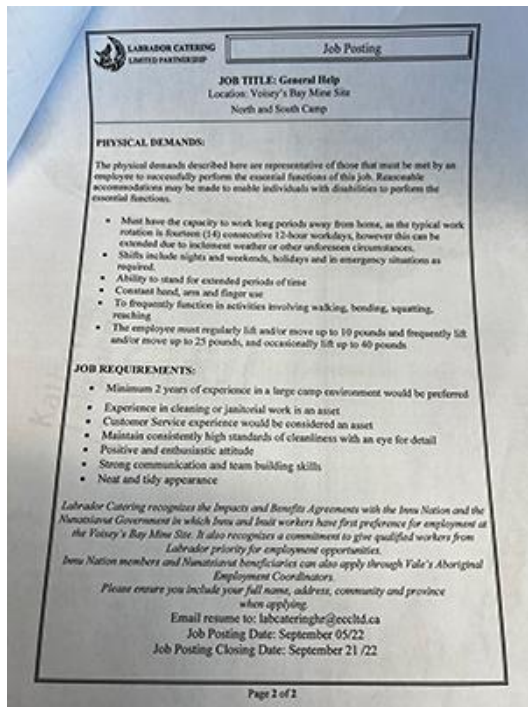
<sup>125</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 6 - Labrador Inn.



## VI. Location

**“Housing is not adequate if it is cut off from employment opportunities, health-care services, schools, childcare centres and other social facilities, or if located in polluted or dangerous areas.”**

— Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>126</sup>



The Advocate learned how lack of access to education and employment opportunities, as well as housing and healthcare, result in youth leaving Nunatsiavut. Those who wish to later return to their communities are often unable to do so due to lack of housing. Many do not want to move back in with family, which is often the only option. Quite often, during their absence, their families have continued to grow, therefore when they want to return, there is not enough room to accommodate these youth in the family home.

The Advocate was also informed about the impact of a lack of mental health services in Nunatsiavut.<sup>127</sup> For example, while some communities have supportive living housing, this form of housing is in limited supply, and overcrowded housing exacerbates underlying issues, thereby increasing community need.<sup>128</sup>

For people in Nunatsiavut, the Voisey's Bay mine is an important source of employment.

Positively, the Advocate, learned of the important work being done by Youth Centre staff in Nain, through support from ITK's Inuit Suicide Prevention Program and the Nunatsiavut Government. The Centre provides youth with a safe space to escape from overcrowded or unsafe housing, and facilitates access to after school programming, meals, and informal counseling and land-based education. No youth is turned away, and the Centre practices harm reduction approaches to assist youth who may be intoxicated. Having seen the amazing impact of being able to offer culturally relevant, land-based education and healing activities, the Centre is hoping to expand access to land-based programming for youth by obtaining or refurbishing a cabin with good access to water and fishing.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, 2009, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) (accessed December 8, 2022).

<sup>127</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 4— Youth Centre.

<sup>128</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 4— Youth Centre.

<sup>129</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 4— Youth Centre.

## VII. Cultural Adequacy

**“Housing is not adequate if it does not respect and take into account the expression of cultural identity.”**

— Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>130</sup>

The Advocate heard from Labrador Inuit how a historic lack of consultation and engagement between their communities and federal and provincial housing authorities has yielded housing stock that fails to align with Inuit culture and does not facilitate continued cultural practices such as hunting and fishing.<sup>131</sup> For example, the majority of the population have a truck, quad, boat or snowmobile, which serve as a lifeline for all families in the area to hunt and forage for food and fuel for heat.<sup>132</sup> Having a large shed allows for adequate space for maintenance and storage of the equipment.<sup>133</sup> However, houses in Labrador are generally built close together to reduce the cost of the water and sewer infrastructure. Consequently, there isn't room for the sheds that are needed by Inuit families.<sup>134</sup> Those who lack space to store their vehicles are forced to find alternatives, such as one Inuk who used one of his home's precious bedrooms as a snowmobile repair space.<sup>135</sup> Space is also needed to process fish and seals.<sup>136</sup>



Housing with storage for hunting, fishing and foraging equipment, and processing.

<sup>130</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, 2009, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) (accessed December 8, 2022).

<sup>131</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.

<sup>132</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.

<sup>133</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 8.

<sup>134</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.

<sup>135</sup> Nunatsiavut Home Visit 5.

<sup>136</sup> Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 - NG - Executive Council at Nain Building.

# Nunavut

The right of Inuit in Nunavut to adequate housing is being violated. None of the seven elements of the right to housing have been upheld in Nunavut.

In October 2022, the Federal Housing Advocate visited the territory of Nunavut, traveling to Iqaluit, Pangnirtung (“Pang”), and Rankin Inlet.

The Advocate was welcomed into homes and by frontline services to witness the reality of housing in Nunavut. She observed the incredible resilience and strength of the people of Nunavut and the power of collective community care, but also the awful toll of decades of government neglect and underfunding that has resulted in many in Nunavut facing houselessness or living in uninhabitable conditions that threaten their health, lives, and impact on their right to live in dignity.



A sunny day in Rankin Inlet, but the weather can turn quickly.

In Nunavut, housing is a shared responsibility between the territorial and federal governments, with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Nunavut Housing Corporation (NHC) working together to increase access to housing, reduce housing need, and achieve better housing solutions.<sup>137</sup> Funding comes from the federal government as well as through cost-matched funding from the Territory and municipalities.<sup>138</sup>

Under international human rights law, the federal government is the ultimate duty-bearer to uphold the human right to housing in all of Canada. Sub-national governments also have obligations to uphold human rights, including the right to adequate housing.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> CMHC – Nunavut Bilateral Agreement, 2018, <https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sites/cmhc/nhs/fpt-housing-agreements/cmhc-nunavut-bilateral-agreement-en.pdf?rev=914812c3-3719-4649-b48f-d220eeda2f3b> (accessed January 21, 2023).

<sup>138</sup> CMHC – Nunavut Bilateral Agreement, 2018.

<sup>139</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Leilani Farha, A/HRC/28/62, 22 December 2014, <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/28/62> (accessed January 17, 2023).

Inuit in Nunavut recognize that they have long faced a human right crisis because of inadequate housing and question the lack of government response. One Inuk described it as “the slowest humanitarian crisis,” noting it has taken years to build to this point through a series of policy choices.<sup>140</sup> They observed that people in the North see Canada rolling out significant humanitarian responses abroad, and wonder why the same resources are not available to them.<sup>141</sup>



The snow-covered cliffs circle Pang.

### **Responsibility for Housing for Inuit in Nunavut**

Housing is a shared responsibility between Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), the Nunavut Government, and the Federal Government.

Through the Nunavut Housing Corporation, the Government of Nunavut provides public housing for Inuit and non-Inuit in the 25 communities in Nunavut. The Nunavut Housing Corporation also provides supports for purchasing and maintaining a house.

Inuit founded NTI to protect and foster Inuit interests and implement the 1993 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement.<sup>142</sup> In 2019, NTI led the co-development of a Nunavut housing strategy in collaboration with the Federal Government, the Government of Nunavut, and the Regional Inuit Associations of Nunavut. Angirratsaliulauqta, the Nunavut Inuit Housing Action Plan (NIHAP), is intended to coordinate and guide the resources and actions of Regional Inuit Organizations and all levels of government related to investment, construction, and capacity development.

As part of the NIHAP, NTI is seeking to create a new Inuit housing entity to manage funds and collaboration with partners.<sup>143</sup> The transfer of care and control of housing and homelessness programming from federal entities such as Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Infrastructure Canada to the new Inuit housing entity will also be key. This is consistent with the Inuit Nunangat Declaration on Inuit-Crown Partnership.

<sup>140</sup> Community Talk #4 – Pang - Nunavut- LHO Board.

<sup>141</sup> Community Talk #4 – Pang - Nunavut- LHO Board.

<sup>142</sup> “About NTI,” NTI, <https://www.tunngavik.com/about/> (accessed May 5, 2023).

<sup>143</sup> “What is the NIHAP,” NTI, <https://nihap.tunngavik.com/> (accessed May 5, 2023); “Innovation and Partnerships to Expand Nunavut’s Housing Continuum,” Igluliuqatigiingniq, <https://www.igluliuqatigiingniq.ca/> (accessed May 5, 2023).



## I. Security of Tenure

**“[H]ousing is not adequate if its occupants do not have a degree of tenure security which guarantees legal protection against forced evictions, harassment and other threats.”**

— Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>144</sup>

For many in Nunavut, coping with issues related to security of tenure triggers serious trauma tied to forced relocation and colonial policy. In Pang, for example, the Advocate learned about a decades-long broken promise of secure housing made to Inuit in the 1960s. Elders recounted how their families had been forced to relocate to the hamlet as part of the Canadian government’s efforts to assert sovereignty over the territory. Elders recalled how the government promised that in exchange, the relocated Inuit families that they would have housing, for which they would pay \$2 a month in perpetuity. This treaty-like promise was repeated by all the Elders the Advocate encountered throughout Pang.<sup>145</sup>

In addition to the promised housing some recalled promises of an additional family allowance for parents with children who relocated, as well as threats that families who opted not to move would be cut off from access to help, that if their children were sick, they would have no access to medical care.<sup>146</sup>



A poster shows the history of the Inuit of Pang, including traditional homes and reliance on sled dogs.

<sup>144</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, 2009, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) (accessed December 8, 2022).

<sup>145</sup> Home Visit 2 - Pang - Nunavut - Elder – Downtown; Community Talk #4 – Pang - Nunavut- LHO Board; Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting.

<sup>146</sup> Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting.



Elders also recalled the trauma of the RCMP slaughtering their sled dogs to force them to stay in Pang. The dogs were companions as well as the only source of transportation to get onto the land to harvest food. To provide for the community was an important act of pride, and masculinity for Inuit men. Stripped of their only means to get out on the land also stripped them of their sense of community, belonging, culture, dignity, independence, and purpose. To find other means of transportation onto the land also forced Inuit into a wage economy where one had to purchase machinery and fuel in order to get out on the land. For many Inuit, relocation is thus tied up with multiple layers of trauma related to specific events, including the slaughter of their dogs, the relocation itself, and the ongoing failure to deliver on the promised housing and family supports.<sup>147</sup>



Dogs in Inuit Nunangat.

Current severe shortages of affordable housing mean many do not have secure housing tenure. In 2022, the Government of Nunavut (GN) announced the Nunavut 3000 Plan, a 10-year action plan to build 3,000 a spectrum of social housing units by 2030.<sup>148</sup> In parallel, NTI and the Government of Nunavut have submitted a joint proposal for \$500 million in federal funding to support the delivery of Angirratsaliulauqta – the Nunavut Inuit Housing Action Plan (NIHAP) over 25 years. Half of this funding would be allocated to create a long term, reliable funding mechanism in the form of an Inuit Housing Fund. NTI has already allocated \$56 million of its own funding to create this fund. NTI states that the Nunavut 3000 Plan is a necessary crisis mitigation measure, whereas NIHAP represents a long term transformative strategy to decolonize housing and reclaim Inuit self-determination and agency in the development of communities that will enable Inuit not just to survive, but to thrive.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community; Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting.

<sup>148</sup> "Innovation and Partnerships to Expand Nunavut's Housing Continuum," Igluliuqatigiingniq, <https://www.igluliuqatigiingniq.ca/> (accessed May 5, 2023).

<sup>149</sup> NTI Infrastructure and Housing Advisory Committee Briefing Note, "Business Case to Address Gap in Inuit Housing Funding," July 28, 2022; "Housing Opportunities and Challenges," NTI PowerPoint.



Houses in Pang.

In Pang, there have been no new builds in around ten years.<sup>150</sup> While a new construction project was planned for 2021, the Covid-19 pandemic put a halt to it.<sup>151</sup> The Advocate heard of the extreme frustration felt with 120 families on the waiting list for public housing alone in Pang as of March 2022, some waiting for over 10 years.<sup>152</sup> Many of these families are multi-generational. In a hamlet with a population of 1,504 in 2021 and an average census family size of 3.6, this translates to over 28 percent of the population in limbo waiting for public housing.<sup>153</sup> The lack of change in the housing situation has meant that few people see any hope or point in applying for housing. The result, the Advocate was told, is a lack of clarity in the full extent of housing need as people in need do not apply or give up and leave.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community; Community Talk #5 – Pang - Nunavut - Hamlet Council meeting.

<sup>151</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>152</sup> Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting, Community Talk #4 – Pang - Nunavut- LHO Board; IGLULIUQATIGIINGNIQ “Building houses together” NUNAVUT 3000: Innovation and Partnerships to Expand Nunavut’s Housing Continuum, Nunavut Housing Corporation and Igluliuqatigiingniq (2022), p. 8, [https://www.igluliuqatigiingniq.ca/Nunavut3000\\_PublicPlan\\_EN\\_WEB\\_updated.pdf](https://www.igluliuqatigiingniq.ca/Nunavut3000_PublicPlan_EN_WEB_updated.pdf) (accessed June 20, 2023).

<sup>153</sup> “Pangnirtung, Hamlet Nunavut,” Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population, Statistics Canada, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Pangnirtung&DGUIDist=2021A00056204009&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0> (accessed June 21, 2023).

<sup>154</sup> Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting; Community Talk #4 – Pang - Nunavut- LHO Board.

NTI points to a long-standing discrepancy in how the Federal Government contributes to the cost of housing in Nunavut. Between 2016 and 2019, Canada transferred \$490 million in housing funding to the other three Inuit regions but none to Nunavut Inuit. The Inuit Housing allocation in Budget 2022 failed to address this funding discrepancy.<sup>155</sup>

The dire need and ongoing frustration have resulted in community members lashing out at Local Housing Organization (LHO) representatives, the Advocate heard. With almost no housing stock to allocate, LHO board members are placed in a very difficult, and sometimes dangerous position as the direct community interface for decades of failed housing policy and lack of funding over which they have had little power or influence. As one board member described, the people responsible for funding adequate housing in the territory, or who design federal housing programs do not see the effect of their decisions. It is the LHO and maintenance staff who must answer to their community members. Some have experienced bullying and threats, and many described the emotional toll of being unable to help when meeting after meeting, they hear from people seeking a home, a place to call their own, when there is no housing stock available.<sup>156</sup> Not only have they been set up for failure, they have been created to bear the brunt of burden placed on them to manage the housing crisis in their community while being given no resources to do so by funders and decision-makers.

In Rankin Inlet, some housing has been built in recent years: 15 units in the form of 3 triplexes in 2022 (a mix of 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units), and 20 units are planned for 2023.<sup>157</sup> Nevertheless, housing need remains, and the Advocate heard how people feel abandoned, with no hope of getting housing based on current waiting lists.<sup>158</sup> Rankin Inlet's housing board uses a point system to allocate priority housing. If you are housed with family, then you are deprioritized, whereas if you have a mouldy house, or have housing related health issues, you can bring in two support letters per year to get points and increase your priority level.<sup>159</sup> The Advocate was told that lack of transparency in this housing allotment process contributes to frustration and anxieties. Further, having to go before the LHO and disclose personal details can be a source of added discomfort, especially for a community where you most likely know and interact with everyone on the housing board. It also raises risks of retraumatization.<sup>160</sup>

For single men in particular, the Advocate learned, security of tenure is almost entirely out of reach, because of how limited housing is allocated. They are "deprioritized" in housing compared to the needs of families and women and children, something that is understood and seen as a fact of community life. However, the mental health toll for these men is extremely heavy. With nowhere for them to go beyond couch surfing or remaining in overcrowded family homes, lack of hope for future independence and security contributes to high suicide rates. The Advocate was told that suicide notes often mention lack of housing.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> NTI Infrastructure and Housing Advisory Committee Briefing Note, "Business Case to Address Gap in Inuit Housing Funding," July 28, 2022.

<sup>156</sup> Community Talk #4 – Pang - Nunavut- LHO Board.

<sup>157</sup> Community Talk #7 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – LHO.

<sup>158</sup> Housing Story #3 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet.

<sup>159</sup> Community Talk #7 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – LHO.

<sup>160</sup> Housing Story #3 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet.

<sup>161</sup> Community Talk #8 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet - Friendship Centre.

The Advocate was also very concerned to hear about the risk of evictions for community housing residents amidst the pervasive lack of housing. For those who face eviction, including due to inability to pay, there is nowhere to go. The Advocate heard of one instance of an individual being evicted and being forced to move back in with family. The family had no bedroom for him, but made room rather than allow him to become unhoused, improvising sleeping space in laundry rooms and hallways.<sup>162</sup> Positively, the Advocate was told that the Territory will work to cover missed payment costs to help avoid evictions.<sup>163</sup> However, with \$248,000 reported for arrears in non-payment of rent in Pang alone, this has serious ramifications for community resources.<sup>164</sup>

The Advocate was also deeply concerned to hear of individuals who are effectively banned from public housing, kicked out by family, and left with no options, who end up unhoused and sheltering in shacks. In several such cases, the Advocate was told that addiction and mental health challenges were the underlying issue that need to be addressed.<sup>165</sup> The Advocate also heard about tenants who experience house fires are then banned from public housing. This response implies the tenant is to blame for the fire. Regardless of fault, this is a harsh punitive measure that risks unhousing individuals and families, inconsistent with human rights.<sup>166</sup>

For residents who are homeowners and hold a mortgage, the Advocate was also concerned regarding the risk of insecure tenures. In Nunavut, the Advocate was informed it is common for people to hold mortgages with term leases in perpetuity.<sup>167</sup> Because the mortgage is tied to the building, not the land, if the house burns or sustains serious damage, the resident can be left with high debts and no capital.<sup>168</sup> Further, while mortgages generally have longer terms than are standard in the South to accommodate lower payments, the amount is still too much for many people, resulting in defaults and loss of homes.<sup>169</sup>

Some people the Advocate spoke with expressed an interest in private land ownership as a way to provide greater security of tenure.<sup>170</sup> However, this conflicts with the cultural value of collective land ownership and risks significantly reducing the amount of land within Inuit collective ownership once land is privatized and able to be sold to other third parties, including businesses.

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<sup>162</sup> Community Talk #7 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – LHO.

<sup>163</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>164</sup> Community talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>165</sup> Housing Story #2 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – GN Liaison officer / Rankin Resident; House Visit 4 – Rankin Inlet – Nunavut – Recently Rented Unit – 2 Bedroom; Community Talk #8 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet - Friendship Centre.

<sup>166</sup> House Visit 4 – Rankin Inlet – Nunavut – Recently Rented Unit – 2 Bedroom.

<sup>167</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community; Home Visit 1 – Pang – Nunavut.

<sup>168</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>169</sup> Home Visit 1 – Pang – Nunavut.

<sup>170</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

## II. Availability of Services, Materials, Facilities and Infrastructure

**“[H]ousing is not adequate if occupants do not have safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, or energy for cooking, heating, and lighting, as well as means of food storage, and refuse disposal.”**

— Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>171</sup>

As one resident noted, housing cannot happen without infrastructure.<sup>172</sup> And the Advocate consistently heard how lack of adequate water and sanitation infrastructure, in particular, is an obstacle to adequate housing in Nunavut.

In Rankin Inlet, further housing construction is at an impasse because the existing water and sewer infrastructure is at maximum capacity.<sup>173</sup> Either new, expanded water and sewer infrastructure needs to be built or an additional system needs to be added to transport in water and truck out waste from tanks in individual homes.<sup>174</sup> The Hamlet determined that expanding the existing system would be the most cost-effective option, requiring \$181 million in specific capital investment. Because of budget shortfalls, the Hamlet still requires additional funding to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is in place.<sup>175</sup>



Rankin Inlet’s water and waste water treatment center.

<sup>171</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, 2009, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) (accessed December 8, 2022).

<sup>172</sup> Community Talk #8 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet - Friendship Centre.

<sup>173</sup> Community Talk #8 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet - Friendship Centre.

<sup>174</sup> Community Talk #7 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – LHO.

<sup>175</sup> Community Talk #9 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet - Hamlet discussion.



Lack of access to essential services is not only an obstacle to new housing being built, it also impacts current housing stock in Rankin Inlet. The Advocate spoke with one Inuk who described the state of her current housing unit: the electrical outlets do not work, the heat only works part of the time, and when the heat goes on, it reaches uncomfortable levels, and a wrench must be used to turn the water on and off.<sup>176</sup>

When the Advocate visited Pang, there were five units with no water, and three with no heat. Housing staff emphasized that this tally was for that day alone, with winter still on the horizon. Lack of water and heat are expected to be reoccurring problems throughout the winter months.<sup>177</sup> Residents of Pang - who rely on trucks to deliver water and to pump out and remove sewage and waste water - also expressed frustration with the lack of proper infrastructure to ensure adequate access to water and sanitation.<sup>178</sup> The LHO Board noted that numerous repairs and changes are needed to address the full list of water and sanitation issues, such as water pump replacements, septic tank upgrades, and repairs to sewage outage nozzles and transport trucks.<sup>179</sup>



The water truck makes its way through Pang.

Troublingly, the budget - at the territorial and local levels - cannot accommodate the full spectrum of needed work. The Advocate was concerned to hear reports that essential needs of water and wastewater are not given funding priority.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Housing Story #3 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet.

<sup>177</sup> Community Talk #4 – Pang - Nunavut- LHO Board.

<sup>178</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>179</sup> Community Talk #4 – Pang - Nunavut- LHO Board.

<sup>180</sup> Community Talk #4 – Pang - Nunavut- LHO Board; Community Talk #5 – Pang - Nunavut - Hamlet Council meeting; Community Talk #9 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet - Hamlet discussion.

### III. Affordability

**“Housing is not adequate if the cost threatens or compromises the occupants’ enjoyment of other human rights.”**

— Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>181</sup>

In Pang, social housing rent is typically around \$60 per month. Approximately 40 households are not paying their rent and have arrears, totaling roughly \$248,000.<sup>182</sup> In Rankin Inlet, there are 56 households in rental arrears totaling \$60,000.<sup>183</sup> These figures hint at the many social and economic pressures that contribute to the inability to make rent payments, such as high food and utilities costs.<sup>184</sup>

The \$60 rate in Pang is also problematic in light of past promises made during relocation. This betrayal is deeply felt given the number of Elders who must now help house and feed their extended families who are struggling to afford housing and other basic life necessities.<sup>185</sup>

Utilities are also a heavy financial burden on many families in Nunavut. In Pang, the average cost of diesel-powered electricity for a family with no employment is \$150 per month.<sup>186</sup> When it comes to water, Pang residents are \$2.8 million in arrears.<sup>187</sup> In Rankin Inlet, it costs about \$500 of oil per week to heat a house. Water costs an average of \$172 per month, and electricity may cost as high as \$1,000 for a single month.<sup>188</sup>



Oil tanks used to heat homes.

<sup>181</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, 2009, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/solar-nunatsiavut-1.6565534> (accessed December 8, 2022).

<sup>182</sup> Community Life – Pang Life - Truck tour and Administrator Chats; Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>183</sup> Community Talk #7 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – LHO.

<sup>184</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community; Community Life – Pang Life - Truck tour and Administrator Chats.

<sup>185</sup> Community Talk #5 – Pang - Nunavut - Hamlet Council meeting; Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting.

<sup>186</sup> Community Life – Pang Life - Truck tour and Administrator Chats.

<sup>187</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>188</sup> Housing Story #1 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet - Housing Story 1.



Home in need of repairs in Rankin Inlet.

Home repairs further add to the cost of Nunavut housing. Homeowners may not have the resources to be able to cope with the cost of repair,<sup>189</sup> and it is difficult to get financial and technical support for individual home repairs.<sup>190</sup>

Another critical expense is the purchase of all-terrain vehicles or quads. Quads are essential for community life, transport, and engaging in traditional land-based practices. However, the financing for these machines can result in serious financial hardships for community members. With interest rates of 13 percent or higher, it can be challenging to stay on top of the regular payments. If someone defaults on their payments, the machines are often seized and the individual's credit rating is negatively impacted, which in turn affects their ability to obtain a credit card and order supplies.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>190</sup> Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting; Housing Story #2 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – GN Liaison officer / Rankin Resident.

<sup>191</sup> Community Life – Pang Life - Truck tour and Administrator Chats.





Northern Store - that supplies everything from groceries to loans.

The Advocate was also concerned to hear about the lack of affordable housing insurance options available in Nunavut. In Pang, the Advocate heard there are no insurance companies willing to offer policies to residents.<sup>192</sup> In Rankin Inlet meanwhile, where insurance is available, some suggested the rates are higher compared to the South due to risks of natural disasters.<sup>193</sup> As a result, the Nunavut Housing Corporation insures its own properties, including public housing.<sup>194</sup> Privately owned homes, by contrast, are usually insured against the building itself as residents cannot own the land. In the case of an accident or disaster that results in the destruction of the home, residents are usually “left out to dry,” says Cecile Lyall, the housing and homelessness policy analyst at Nunavut Tunngavik.

Affordability is determined not just by the cost of housing, but also by other economic pressures faced by Inuit, including high cost of living, high unemployment rates, and lack of access to daycare. NTI is currently working with Inuit Tapariit Kanatami, Makavik Corporation, the Government of Nunavut, CMHC, Statistics Canada, McGill University and the Association for Canadian Studies and the Metropolis Institute to develop a Nunavut Inuit Sustainable Housing Index. The index is intended to enable a multidimensional assessment of economic, social, cultural and health-related outcomes for Inuit. NTI sees such assessment as a critical foundation for the NIHAP.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Community Life – Pang Life - Truck tour and Administrator Chats.

<sup>193</sup> Community Talk #7 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – LHO.

<sup>194</sup> Community Life – Pang Life - Truck tour and Administrator Chats.

<sup>195</sup> “Nunavut Inuit Sustainable Housing Index,” ACS-Metropolitan Institute, 2022, <https://acs-metropolis.ca/acs/nishi/> (accessed June 29, 2023); “Housing Opportunities and Challenges,” NTI PowerPoint.

## IV. Habitability

**“[H]ousing is not adequate if it does not guarantee physical safety or provide adequate space, as well as protection against the cold, damp, heat, rain, wind, other threats to health and structural hazards.”**

— Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>196</sup>

To Inuit in Nunavut, it is painfully clear that the right to habitable housing is intricately connected to other human rights, including the right to the highest attainable standard of health. One Inuk emphasized that any investment in housing should rightly be understood as preventative healthcare.<sup>197</sup> The Advocate was told how the interconnected problems of overcrowding, disrepair, mould, and lack of habitability are having significant physical and mental health impacts on Inuit in Nunavut.

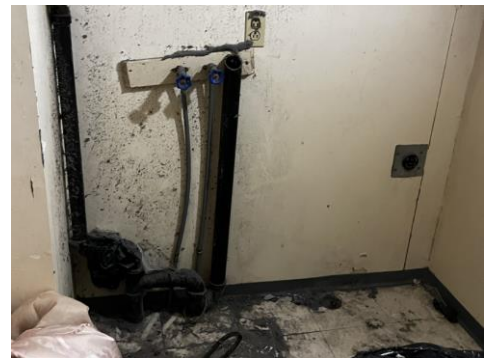
### Overcrowding

Many Inuit in Nunavut do not have adequate space in their homes. Lack of public housing contributes to overcrowding as multiple generations remain in grandparents’ homes while stuck on housing waitlists.<sup>198</sup> The result is serious overcrowding in housing units that are too small to accommodate all the family members, such as families of eight in a two-bedroom unit.<sup>199</sup>

The severe housing shortage makes effective allocation of social housing extremely difficult. Despite the overall situation of overcrowding, there may be instances where families and individuals have more room than they require (e.g. one person in a four-bedroom unit), but without an alternative for them to move to, the space can’t be made available to families who need it.<sup>200</sup>



Undue wear and tear due to overcrowding.



Signs of an improvised bedroom in Rankin Inlet.

<sup>196</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, 2009, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) (accessed December 8, 2022).

<sup>197</sup> Community Talk #5 – Pang - Nunavut - Hamlet Council meeting.

<sup>198</sup> Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting.

<sup>199</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>200</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.



The Advocate was deeply concerned by the multiple ways in which overcrowding caused by the housing shortage is impacting the health and wellbeing of Inuit in Nunavut.

The Advocate heard how overcrowding is contributing to serious health impacts in Inuit communities, including the spread of tuberculosis (“TB”), Covid-19, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), which particularly affects infants under a year old.<sup>201</sup> Between 2015 and 2019, the rate of TB in Inuit Nunangat was more than 300 times higher than in the Canadian-born, non-Indigenous population.<sup>202</sup> In 2021, in fact, Pang’s TB rate, was one of the highest in the world.<sup>203</sup> At the time of the Advocate’s visit, the Nunavut’s Department of Health indicated that a TB epidemic was ongoing.<sup>204</sup>

The Advocate was informed that the Nunavut Housing Corporation’s formula for determining who gets new public housing favours larger communities, and fails to account for the spread of disease. As a result, small communities like Pang are left with very little housing, curtailing their ability to manage the spread of illnesses.<sup>205</sup>

The Advocate also heard from Inuit how overcrowding negatively impacts mental health and wellbeing. Youth shared how having inadequate space at home meant a lack of privacy and inability to do tasks without interruption.<sup>206</sup> School teachers confirmed that no homework is assigned due to lack of space at home.<sup>207</sup> This lack of space can have significant ramifications for children’s health and success in school. The Advocate visited one multi-generational family of 14 who were living together for a period of time due to housing challenges. One member of the family reported how a child in the family was particularly impacted by the overcrowding, and started to skip school and stopped eating normally. Thankfully, when some of the family were able to move back out and the overcrowding was resolved, these issues subsided.<sup>208</sup> More broadly, the severity of these impacts are also reflected in the high school graduation rates in Nunavut, which are among the lowest in Canada.<sup>209</sup>

Children are not the only ones impacted. The Advocate spoke with one woman who had quit her job because of the stress of overcrowding at home, on top of financial stress and food security challenges. This depleted her energy and ability to manage stress in other areas of her life.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting; Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community; Community Talk #5 – Pang - Nunavut - Hamlet Council meeting.

<sup>202</sup> Government of Canada, “Tuberculosis in Indigenous communities,” 2020, <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1570132922208/1570132959826> (accessed January 21, 2023).

<sup>203</sup> Kelly Grant, “Inuit group presses Nunavut government for transparency after major tuberculosis outbreak,” Globe and Mail, November 9, 2022, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-inuit-group-presses-nunavut-government-for-transparency-on/> (accessed January 21, 2023).

<sup>204</sup> Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting.

<sup>205</sup> Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting.

<sup>206</sup> Community Talk #3 – Pang - Nunavut - Youth meeting.

<sup>207</sup> Citation from the Recommendation Section.

<sup>208</sup> Housing Story #1 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet - Housing Story 1.

<sup>209</sup> “Chart 1: On-time high school graduation rates, 2016/2017 to 2019/2020,” Statistics Canada, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221020/cg-c001-eng.htm> (accessed May 11, 2023).

<sup>210</sup> Housing Story #3 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet.

The Advocate also heard how the lack of space and privacy can be suffocating. As one Inuk observed, “How are you going to start your own career or family when you are confined to a living room or bedroom?”<sup>211</sup> Elders also spoke of the difficulty of living with adult children.<sup>212</sup>

These circumstances contribute to stress and anxiety for individuals, but also families and communities as a whole.

Overcrowding also increases risks of abuse, including Elder abuse and sexual abuse.<sup>213</sup>

In Rankin Inlet, people who need a reprieve from overcrowded housing can go to an emergency shelter and stay up to six weeks.<sup>214</sup> However, they often must return to the same environment they initially left. Until adequate housing stock is built, all the attendant problems related to overcrowding cannot be properly addressed.

### **Tuberculosis in Inuit Nunangat**

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease that disproportionately impacts people experiencing social inequalities.<sup>215</sup> Inuit have the highest rates of TB in Canada, and the incidence of active TB in Canada has remained largely unchanged over the last decade.<sup>216</sup> The continued persistence of TB in Inuit communities is a direct result of chronic, inadequate housing, along with other gaps in social determinants of health.<sup>217</sup>

Interventions to uphold the right to adequate housing for Inuit are critical to eliminating TB. Overcrowded housing increases risks of exposure and transmission of TB, and directly leads to increased incidence of TB. Housing habitability issues also contribute, for example, lack of ventilation and dampness are risk factors for TB.<sup>218</sup>

In 2018, the Federal Government promised to eliminate TB in Inuit communities by 2030, and to cut rates at least by half by 2025, but federal funding has not met Inuit needs. In 2023, the Federal Government announced \$16.2 million over three years for “interventions to reduce rates of tuberculosis.” This amount falls far short of the \$131.6 million that ITK requested.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Community Talk #4 – Pang - Nunavut- LHO Board.

<sup>212</sup> Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting.

<sup>213</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community; Housing Story #3 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet; Community Talk #7 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – LHO.

<sup>214</sup> Community Talk #10 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet - Shelter in Rankin Inlet.

<sup>215</sup> “Tuberculosis in Canada, 2021,” Public Health Agency of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/tuberculosis-canada-2021-infographic/tuberculosis-canada-2021-infographic.pdf> (accessed May 5, 2023).

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> Leyland Cecco, “Canadian Arctic tuberculosis outbreak lays bare overcrowded living conditions,” *The Guardian*, May 30, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/30/canada-tuberculosis-outbreak-nunavut> (accessed May 5, 2023).

<sup>218</sup> Ju-Yeun Lee et al., “Inadequate housing and pulmonary tuberculosis: a systematic review,” *BMC Public Health*, 22:622 (2022), <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-022-12879-6#:~:text=Overcrowded%20housing%20leads%20to%20TB,a%20risk%20factor%20for%20TB.> (accessed May 5, 2023).

<sup>219</sup> Olivia Stefanovich, “Budget erred by suggesting Ottawa backing away from Inuit TB eradication, minister says,” *CBC*, April 3, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/federal-budget-2023-tuberculosis-funding-mistake-1.6797366> (accessed May 5, 2023).

"This modest investment in Inuit health priorities does not fulfil our joint commitment with the Government of Canada to eliminate tuberculosis in Inuit Nunangat by 2030," ITK President Natan Obed said in a statement. "But we remain optimistic that future federal budget cycles will unlock the funding needed to honour this commitment."<sup>220</sup>

Failure to eliminate TB impacts not only the physical health of Inuit, but their mental health as well. For many, it prolongs the trauma of the Federal Government's treatment of Inuit TB patients in the 1940s through 60s. During this time, many Inuit were separated from their families and forced to go to treatment centers in the South, where they faced isolation and abuse. Some were kept away from their communities for years, others never returned home. Families often weren't informed about the whereabouts of their loved ones. In 2019, the Federal Government apologized for this treatment, but while TB persists this apology rings hollow.<sup>221</sup>

## Disrepair and mould

Many Inuit in Nunavut are living in housing that is not in a fit state of repair or habitability. The Advocate heard how inadequate construction, lack of resources for repair and maintenance, damage from the environment and heavy use from overcrowding all contribute to inadequate habitability of housing in Nunavut.<sup>222</sup>

Lack of financial support for repairs and maintenance, along with a shortage of technical capacity in many communities means some things go unrepaired for long periods of time.<sup>223</sup> Budgeting issues, competing labour and financial priorities, and the amount of time it takes to order and receive materials mean a unit, once vacated, can sit vacant for a very long time while waiting for repairs and maintenance. The Advocate visited one house she was told would sit vacant for about 9 months before it would be ready for a new family to take up residence. Meanwhile, with repair costs totaling \$110,000, this one project would draw more than 10 percent of the total annual community budget of \$1 million.

Balancing such expensive repairs required to house a single family with other pressing community needs (for example, the need to address larger structural repairs due to shifting of the Elder's Lodge at a cost of \$600,000) pose huge challenges to program administrators. There are simply not enough funds to address all issues as they arise, much less to undertake preventative maintenance that could guard against greater, more costly damage.<sup>224</sup> These same challenges that result in units sitting empty and

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<sup>220</sup> Emily Blake, "COVID-19 pandemic stalled progress on eliminating tuberculosis among Inuit: officials," *CTV News*, April 17, 2023, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/covid-19-pandemic-stalled-progress-on-eliminating-tuberculosis-among-inuit-officials-1.6358365> (accessed May 5, 2023).

<sup>221</sup> Brittany Guyot, "Inuit patients taken home 'like a pet' by southern staff part of TB outbreak legacy of 1950s," *APTN*, May 22, 2020, <https://www.aptnnews.ca/investigates/inuit-patients-taken-home-like-a-pet-by-southern-staff-part-of-tb-outbreak-legacy-of-1950s/> (accessed May 5, 2023); Kelly Grant, "Spread of tuberculosis in Baffin Island hamlet the largest reported in Nunavut since 2018," *The Globe and Mail*, February 27, 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-spread-of-tuberculosis-in-baffin-island-hamlet-the-largest-reported-in/> (accessed May 5, 2023).

<sup>222</sup> Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting.

<sup>223</sup> Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting.

<sup>224</sup> Home Visit 1 – Pang – Nunavut.

unused also result in residents having to put up with lack of repairs, particularly in community housing.<sup>225</sup>



A house sits boarded up waiting for repairs.

Need for repairs in some cases is exacerbated by the historic use of low-quality or inadequate materials.<sup>226</sup> In particular, the Advocate was told about long-term issues with toilet leaks, and lack of proper use of ventilation.<sup>227</sup> Further, in many cases, the housing stock is old, dating back to the 60s and 80s. Long-term use and the elements have taken their toll.<sup>228</sup>

Older builds were also not well designed for the environment. Standard awning windows on older homes are often broken by strong winds. Because the wind is very strong in this region, new window casings have been designed to be very deep, with the bottom exterior lip slanting downwards to prevent snow accumulation.<sup>229</sup>

Broken windows are a frequent concern in houses in Nunavut. Clothes are stuffed in a broken window to prevent drafts and the window is wired shut.

Now, with climate change accelerating permafrost thaw, some houses are also increasingly shifting. The Advocate visited one house that was built over 30 years ago, whose foundation was becoming unstable. The residents could not afford needed repairs and did not qualify for financial assistance through the housing office. The walls of the house are cracking, and the floor is dropping. The residents also reported sewer smells.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Housing Story #2 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – GN Liaison officer / Rankin Resident.

<sup>226</sup> Community Talk #4 – Pang - Nunavut- LHO Board.

<sup>227</sup> Home Visit 1 – Pang – Nunavut; Community Talk #4 – Pang - Nunavut- LHO Board.

<sup>228</sup> Home Visit 1 – Pang – Nunavut; Home Visit 2- Pang - Nunavut - Elder – Downtown; Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting; Community Talk #4 – Pang - Nunavut- LHO Board.

<sup>229</sup> Home Visit 1 – Pang – Nunavut; Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>230</sup> Housing Story #1 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet- Housing Story 1.

Broken windows and inadequate ventilation contribute to another pervasive issue: mould. The Advocate heard how mould contributes to health problems for some community members. One Inuk described how she uses chlorine to kill mould so often that it hurts her hands and lungs. Yet, despite her efforts, the mould still comes back, and makes the children in the home sick.<sup>231</sup>



Rankin Inlet: Clothes stuffed in a broken window to retain heat.



Low quality window hardware.

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<sup>231</sup> Housing Story #1 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet - Housing Story 1.





Signs of mould in bathroom in Pang.

In Pang, the Advocate heard how the symptoms associated with mould may also mask a tuberculosis outbreak. Furthermore, when there is a tuberculosis outbreak, there is an increased cost for housing inspection and repair of all houses in the community. There are also additional logistical challenges because of the increased protection needed in case of tuberculosis.<sup>232</sup> Health authorities do not release information about who is TB-affected in the community to protect against stigma. As a result, tuberculosis protocols have to be applied to every house in a hamlet.

Finally, the Advocate was deeply concerned to learn that, in Rankin Inlet, families who fall into arrears on rent and utilities are unable to apply for housing transfers to other units.<sup>233</sup> Given the uninhabitable and in some cases dangerous state of housing in the community, it is unacceptable for families to be trapped because of financial challenges. Further, given the high cost of food and other life necessities, it is concerning that families may be put in a position where they must compromise on other necessities in the hopes of being able to transfer units and escape an untenable housing situation. The Advocate spoke with one Inuk who described the emotional and mental health toll of repeatedly paying off arrears to be able to transfer units.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>233</sup> Housing Story #1 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet - Housing Story 1; Community Talk #7 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – LHO.

<sup>234</sup> Housing Story #1 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet - Housing Story 1.

## V. Accessibility

**“Housing is not adequate if the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups are not taken into account.”**

— Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>235</sup>

The Advocate heard how the housing needs of particular groups are not being met, as set out below.

### Unhoused people and people facing substance use challenges

The Advocate heard about the dire need for emergency shelter space and increased public housing to accommodate unhoused people and precariously housed people.

In Pang, the Advocate was alarmed by reports of people being found outside, hypothermic and suffering from frostbite. As one frontline worker observed, “You don’t need to be exposed to -60°C for long before frostbite sets in.” The Advocate heard that often, those most impacted are struggling with addictions and substance use.<sup>236</sup>

In Rankin Inlet, the Advocate heard how the women’s shelter has felt compelled to take in women who are unhoused, depleting community resources to deal with violence against women.<sup>237</sup> Further, it was reported that some people end up unhoused, particularly those dealing with addictions, and seeking shelter in shacks.<sup>238</sup>



Shacks in Rankin Inlet.

Positively, the development of a planned Nunavut Recovery Centre in Iqaluit will at least provide in-Territory treatment options. However, this development still means that individuals seeking treatment will need to leave their community, and face a lack of proper supports upon their return home. Lack of community-based housing options for people facing substance use challenges, means those who return from treatment will likely be forced to return to the same conditions that contributed to their substance use in the first place.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, 2009, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) (accessed December 8, 2022).

<sup>236</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>237</sup> Community Talk #10 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet - Shelter in Rankin Inlet.

<sup>238</sup> Housing Story #2 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet – GN Liaison officer / Rankin Resident; Community Talk #9 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet - Hamlet discussion.

<sup>239</sup> Citation from the Recommendation Section.

## Elders and people with disabilities

The Advocate was warned about the severe need for accessible housing to accommodate Elders and people with disabilities.<sup>240</sup> Elders, as well as family members and caretakers, spoke of the challenges of not being able to get in and out of their bathtub without assistance, of not being able to climb stairs in their housing units as they age, and of being wheelchair users in non-accessible housing units.<sup>241</sup> Far too often, Elders must leave their families and communities and travel far away to be able to live in comfort and dignity.<sup>242</sup> The distance and cost of travel prevent family members from being able to visit them and maintain ties in some cases.<sup>243</sup>

Positively, the Advocate learned Pang is planning for a new Elders Center, which is offering hope to the community. The Hamlet hopes the building will be operational in two to three years, pending access to the over \$5 million it will cost to build. Currently, two buildings offer row housing for Elders. The construction of the Centre would increase the capacity to house Elders in the community by ten units.<sup>244</sup>



Proposed site for Elders House.



Rare to see housing with ramps.



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<sup>240</sup> Community Talk #5 – Pang - Nunavut - Hamlet Council meeting.

<sup>241</sup> Home Visit 2- Pang - Nunavut - Elder – Downtown; Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting; Community Talk #3 – Pang - Nunavut - Youth meeting; Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>242</sup> Home Visit 2- Pang - Nunavut - Elder – Downtown.

<sup>243</sup> Community Talk #5 – Pang - Nunavut - Hamlet Council meeting; Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>244</sup> Community Talk #6 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Centre, Elder housing, Accessible housing.

## Women and children

The Advocate heard about the lack of housing options for women with children, particularly those fleeing family violence.<sup>245</sup> In Pang, Inuit observed that police have nowhere to take a family escaping violence, noting that taking them to a friend's house is demeaning. In some cases, the Advocate was warned, the abuser will be removed from the home and end up homeless, in which case the victim may allow their abuser to return home out of a sense of guilt or obligation.<sup>246</sup> A shelter, by contrast, would provide a space for women and children fleeing violence to recover and move on to independent living.<sup>247</sup>

Positively, in order to help address the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, the federal government has committed to supporting the construction of five shelters in Nunavut. People in Pang felt that these funds will make a significant difference in the various hamlets, but expressed concern that the application process is complex. Pang is working to get a shelter built. In the interim, a safe sober drop-in centre is being used by families escaping violence.<sup>248</sup>



Drop-in centre in Pang used to escape violence.

Beyond shelter space, there is also a need for single housing units. In Rankin Inlet, the shelter is not able to accommodate all those who need help, in part because it has been forced to operate as a general emergency shelter for individuals in need of housing.<sup>249</sup> Community leadership observed there is widespread need for housing units that can accommodate single parents and allow for permanent independent living.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community; Community Talk #3 – Pang - Nunavut - Youth meeting.

<sup>246</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>247</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>248</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community; Community Life – Pang Life - Truck tour and Administrator Chats.

<sup>249</sup> Community Talk #10 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet - Shelter in Rankin Inlet; Community Talk #7 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – LHO.

<sup>250</sup> Community Talk #7 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – LHO.



## VI. Location

**“Housing is not adequate if it is cut off from employment opportunities, health-care services, schools, childcare centres and other social facilities, or if located in polluted or dangerous areas.”**

— Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>251</sup>

The Advocate heard many Inuit do not have access to employment opportunities. Young people in particular described the difficulties of lack of employment options within their communities due to the small number of businesses and favouritism.<sup>252</sup> For both higher education and employment, leaving home is seen as a necessity.<sup>253</sup> One hopeful development that the Advocate learned of is the work being led by the Kivalliq Inuit Association, to increase workforce education and grow trade and apprenticeship opportunities.<sup>254</sup>

In Pang, youth also lack safe places for recreation. While some get out on the land if they have access to a boat or snowmobile, there are otherwise few options available. A space once used for community activities has been converted to a tuberculosis clinic. Similarly, the main community center is often used for official functions, such as court sessions.<sup>255</sup>



Play structures in Rankin Inlet and Pang.

Inuit also spoke about the need for healing and for resources and spaces to facilitate recovery from trauma, addictions, and mental health impacts. The Advocate was informed how intergenerational trauma from forced relocation and residential schools has fueled substance use, family violence, and related housing damage, and how continued government inaction has perpetuated past harm.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, 2009, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) (accessed December 8, 2022).

<sup>252</sup> Community Talk #3 – Pang - Nunavut - Youth meeting; Community Talk #5 – Pang - Nunavut - Hamlet Council meeting; Housing Story #3 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet.

<sup>253</sup> Community Talk #3 – Pang - Nunavut - Youth meeting.

<sup>254</sup> Community Talk #7 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – LHO.

<sup>255</sup> Community Talk #3 – Pang - Nunavut - Youth meeting.

<sup>256</sup> Community Talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut - Elder Meeting.



In Pang, there is no addiction program, and no dedicated “healing space” to go to.<sup>257</sup> People are sent south out of their community and away from their families to be able to access addiction supports.<sup>258</sup>

In Rankin Inlet, some mental health and healing resources are available through a community wellness worker as well as the Friendship Center, which has an Inuk-speaking crisis response team. Their staff also highlighted the need for dedicated transitional housing with supports as necessary to individual and community healing.<sup>259</sup> The Advocate heard how residents leave Rankin Inlet and the territory in search of needed counselling and supports, including to address residential school trauma.<sup>260</sup> Comparing the support she was able to get in a southern province with that available in Rankin Inlet, one Inuk remarked on the large gap in service delivery, asking “Why is Nunavut so behind, why does no one offer help to Nunavut?”<sup>261</sup>

Similarly, the Advocate heard about the lack of healthcare resources for Elders. Adding to the challenges caused by the lack of accessible housing, lack of adequate medical care increases the number of Elders who must leave their communities and family members behind.<sup>262</sup> Pang community leadership observed that being able to provide Elder care in community would help create jobs as well as improve community wellbeing by maintaining family ties.<sup>263</sup> For Elders in Pang, being forced to leave the Hamlet for medical care triggers memories of their forced settlement, when lack of access to healthcare was part of the threat wielded against those who resisted moving to Pang in the first place.<sup>264</sup> To now be denied care if they remain in their community is a painful, cruel irony.



Signs for mine training, the Friendship Center, and a spousal abuse program in Rankin Inlet.

<sup>257</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>258</sup> Community Talk #1- Pang - Nunavut - Community Front Line Community.

<sup>259</sup> Community Talk #9 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet- Hamlet discussion; Community Talk #8 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet - Friendship Centre.

<sup>260</sup> Housing Story #3 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet.

<sup>261</sup> Housing Story #3 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet.

<sup>262</sup> Home Visit 2- Pang - Nunavut - Elder – Downtown.

<sup>263</sup> Community Talk #5 – Pang - Nunavut - Hamlet Council meeting.

<sup>264</sup> Home Visit 2- Pang - Nunavut - Elder – Downtown.

## VII. Cultural Adequacy

**“Housing is not adequate if it does not respect and take into account the expression of cultural identity.”**

— Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>265</sup>

The Advocate heard how housing in Nunavut is often not built to accommodate harvesting needs. Most new houses are multiplexes, which can provide housing for multiple families for less money than separate houses and helps alleviate the waitlist for housing. However, the design does not allow for storage of snowmobiles or boats.<sup>266</sup>

Youth emphasized that their families hunt and need space in a yard or a shed where they can work on seal skins. When someone brings home a seal, there is barely enough room to deal with the seal, youth observed. When asked how they envision their future lives, the response was unequivocal: still hunting and feasting together.<sup>267</sup>



Seal harvesting in Pang.



Storage of sleds away from Rankin Inlet.

Inuit also explained how housing built in such close proximity, or featuring shared walls, does not align with the Inuit cultural need for privacy. Living in close proximity also creates conflicts because of noise levels and differing patterns of home use, with single people wanting to gather at all hours living next to families with children or people with 9 am to 5 pm jobs.<sup>268</sup>

The Advocate was told that past government research related to housing, including research undertaken by CMHC, has centred on appropriate housing design, but without properly considering cultural needs. While research has looked at housing design in the context of climate change, preventing mould, and addressing other structural issues, it has not taken account of community cultural practices and norms with respect to harvesting, gathering, or accommodating people at various stages of life as is needed.<sup>269</sup>

<sup>265</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing*, 2009, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf) (accessed December 8, 2022).

<sup>266</sup> Home Visit 1 – Pang – Nunavut; Community Talk #5 – Pang - Nunavut - Hamlet Council meeting.

<sup>267</sup> Community Talk #3 – Pang - Nunavut - Youth meeting.

<sup>268</sup> Home Visit 1 – Pang – Nunavut.

<sup>269</sup> Citation from the Recommendation Section.



Aerial view of Pang.

# Recommendations

## General Recommendations

- **Consistent with rights to self-determination and self-government, the Federal Government should transfer jurisdiction over Inuit housing programs and services to Inuit governments, while also ensuring that funding for Inuit housing is adequate for Inuit needs by:**
  - In cooperation with Inuit Governments, establish appropriate funding levels for Inuit housing programs that account for Northern realities and Inuit cultural practices and values, with built in program escalators that account for inflation and population growth.
  - In cooperation with Inuit Governments, establishing a process to transfer care and control of program funds from CMHC and other existing programs to Inuit governments according to their preferred methods.
- **All levels of government should publicly recognize housing as a human right and ensure that this recognition is reflected in the development of their legislation, policy, and programs.**
- **Alongside the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, Provincial, Territorial and Inuit Governments should explore the creation of independent Inuit housing advocates or ombudspople** to amplify the voices of Inuit and their municipalities in the timely creation of a rights-respecting, culturally-appropriate housing system and to ensure oversight of efforts to uphold the human right to housing for Inuit.
- **The Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments should work in consultation and cooperation with Inuit Regional Organizations to develop and implement housing options that address current gaps in the housing continuum and ensure people in all circumstances and stages of life have access to safe, adequate and affordable housing,** including by:
  - Taking urgent action to support the immediate development of Elder housing and Long-term Care Centers so that Inuit can age in dignity in their communities;
  - Increasing access to transitional and supportive housing for Inuit who require housing with supports;
  - Expanding emergency shelter space in Inuit communities for men, women, and youth;
  - Developing purpose-built, affordable rentals for Inuit looking to live independently, as well as pathways to affordable home ownership.

As part of these housing solution, government should support the development of local building enterprises, skills training opportunities, and access to goods and materials, as well as ensuring housing investments are invested and retained in the community economy.

- **The Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments should work in consultation and cooperation with Inuit regional organizations to develop addictions treatment plans that ensures access to treatment in Labrador and Nunavut.**
  - Federal, Provincial, and Territorial governments should focus on ensuring each hamlet has access to a Community Wellness Hub that would provide continuing support to individuals returning to their home communities after taking part in an addictions programme elsewhere such as a Regional Hub.



- **To ensure Inuit communities are tuberculosis free by 2040, or sooner, the Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments should allocate the funds needed to enable Inuit Governments to prioritize new housing construction, and ensure robust health-related supports for areas experiencing tuberculosis outbreaks.**
  - Smaller centres with tuberculosis outbreaks should be prioritized for new housing construction, alongside aggressive health-related supports to ensure the tuberculosis crisis is resolved and that there is no further loss of life.
  
- **In responding to the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG), the Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments must address the importance of the right to housing in ensuring the safety of Inuit women and girls, including by:**
  - Supporting a coordinated and adequately funded approach to the development of a network of safe shelter spaces for Inuit women and children fleeing domestic violence.
  - Extending implementation of programs such as the Indigenous Shelter Initiative to ensure every community has a family safety shelter and transitional housing project in operation.
  - Providing funding for training to ensure communities have the capacity to operate shelters with qualified local Inuit staff, trained in trauma-based responses.
  - Consistent with Inuit rights to self-determination and self-government, program and service funding related to violence against women and girls should be transferred via the FFA.
  
- **The Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments should support further research into Inuit housing needs in collaboration with Inuit self-government institutions, including by:**
  - Directing CMHC to carry out research, in partnership with Inuit self-government organizations on housing and houselessness, including on governance and technical solutions, ensuring Inuit ownership and control of any data that is gathered.
  - Providing innovation funding to encourage more Northern-based research takes place with Inuit self-government institutions that responds to the needs of community residents.
  
- **The Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Governments should support the creation of an annual/bi-annual Inuit construction best practices forum similar to the First Nations Technical Housing Conference.** This forum could enable:
  - Inuit regions to talk about the development of Northern housing and construction best practices to better address accessibility for persons who are older or have a physical disability; cultural needs, and climate change adaptation;
  - Leading research to be presented and best practices to be discussed to deal with systemic housing issues that impact Inuit health; and
  - Innovations in community planning and housing design and maintenance.

## Nunatsiavut Recommendations

- **Alongside the Nunatsiavut Government, the Federal and Provincial Governments should convene a bi-annual Nunatsiavut housing roundtable to discuss and collaborate on housing case management and solutions.**
  - As Nunatsiavut service providers work to address urgent individual housing needs with limited resources and housing supply, federal and provincial agencies must be meaningfully present to assist and coordinate additional funding and supports.
  - Provincial and Federal government should ensure a greater presence of senior government officials at these tables.
  - Solutions should be targeted to address gaps in the housing continuum in all five Inuit communities through specific housing construction and development of local building enterprises, skills training opportunities, and support for access to goods and materials.
- **The Federal and Provincial Governments should support a mould remediation program, co-developed with the Nunatsiavut Government.**
  - As part of the mould remediation program, develop a community-based housing supply to provide temporary residences for households who need to relocate during renovation or to avoid exposure. The transfer of provincial units (now awaiting repair), could serve as the immediate swing space to enable the timely start of a program of remediation. However, any transfer would need to ensure housing is habitable and upholds the human rights of inhabitants.
- **Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada should ensure that there is no discrimination in access to loans and insurance for Labrador Inuit.**
  - The federal government should carry out an assessment looking at individuals and collective experience of denial of service and lack of access to tailored mortgage products and/or insurance products.
  - As part of this assessment, the Federal Government should consider funding the creation of an Inuit-owned insurance company to overcome discriminatory banking practices, funded through the Inuit housing fund.
- **The Provincial Government should, in line with the human right to housing, ensure all provincially owned or operated housing units are fit for habitation and fully accessible, and that timely repairs are carried out so that vacant units can be filled in the midst of the housing crisis Inuit face.**

## Nunavut Recommendations

- **The Federal Government must acknowledge its fiduciary responsibility for housing Inuit and honour the treaty-like promise made to Inuit when they were forced into the settlements.** Canada's fiduciary responsibility for Inuit housing is captured in the assurances and promises made to Inuit that they would be charged only a nominal rent in perpetuity, as part of the overall effort during the 1950s and 1960s to force Inuit into a sedentary lifestyle.
- **The Federal Government should engage with NTI and the Regional Inuit Associations in a process to co-design and develop housing programs appropriate to Nunavut's realities.** Too often Nunavut and Inuit Regions are not able to participate in National Housing Programs because they are designed with a Southern perspective, and usually intended for large urban centres. Nunavut needs access to programs that take into consideration the logistical, capacity and climate realities of the Arctic.
- **The Government of Nunavut should revisit its relationship between Local Housing Organizations (LHOs) and the role of LHOs in the delivery of housing at the community level.** The contractual relationship between LHOs and the Nunavut Housing Corporation is too narrow and administratively burdensome. The GN should look at how it can increase the authority and decision-making power of LHOs over the delivery of housing in their communities. More training, administrative support, and budget are required to empower LHOs as effective stakeholders in local housing solutions.
- **The Government of Nunavut should ensure LHOs are properly resourced to meet their contractual obligations. A first step in increase LHO autonomy and capacity to effectively contribute to housing solutions at the community level is to revise the LHO funding formula, which has not been reviewed in 10 years.** The new formula should be recalculated using full-cost accounting to ensure LHOs are adequately and appropriately funded to deliver their mandate. The new formula should be tied to published annual local, regional, and territorial maintenance plans demonstrating and communicating an overall lifecycle management plan for the entire Public Housing stock.
- **The Federal Government should work with NTI and the Government of Nunavut (GN) to support the implementation of a long-term, strategic approach to ensuring the Inuit right to housing, including by:**
  - Ending the inequity between Nunavut and the rest of Inuit Nunangat in federal contributions to distinctions-based housing funding and co-design with NTI an Inuit Housing Fund to support the sustained intervention in the territory's housing crisis by Nunavut Inuit.
  - Co-developing with the GN and NTI, a coordinated implementation plan informed by the Government of Nunavut's Nunavut 3000 Plan and NTI's Angirratsaliulauqta - Nunavut Inuit Housing Action Plan that will provide a realistic approach to delivering on investments in housing for Inuit through Budget 2022 and the National Housing Strategy by 2028.
  - Co-developing with NTI and the GN a funding formula, or other form of long-term funding mechanism that will provide clarity and confidence in planning the sustained, ongoing, delivery of housing initiatives over time required to eliminate Nunavut's

housing crisis. Such a funding mechanism should be robust enough to support both capital and operational needs.

- **Recognizing housing as a social determinant of health, the Federal and the Government of Nunavut should support and assist in NTI's development of a Nunavut Inuit Sustainable Housing Index (NISHI). Designed to measure the link between housing and the other social determinants of health, the NISHI is meant to support Inuit in advocating for the right kind of housing to fulfill their community's housing continuum.**
- **The Federal Government and the Government of Nunavut should ensure there is adequate social infrastructure within each of Nunavut's 25 communities, to guarantee that young Inuit are given every opportunity to not only complete their education but to build whatever life they envision for themselves.**



## Appendix I: List of Community Meetings

### In Nunatsiavut

- Nunatsiavut Home Visit 1
- Nunatsiavut Home Visit 2
- Nunatsiavut Home Visit 3 – Women’s Emergency Shelter
- Nunatsiavut Home Visit 4 – Youth Centre
- Nunatsiavut Home Visit 5
- Nunatsiavut Home Visit 6
- Nunatsiavut Home Visit 7 – Supportive Living House
- Nunatsiavut Home Visit 8
- Nunatsiavut Home Visit 9
- Nunatsiavut Home Visit 10
- Nunatsiavut Home Visit 11
- Nunatsiavut Meeting 1 – NG – Executive Council at Nain Building
- Nunatsiavut Meeting 3 – Emergency Shelter Visit
- Nunatsiavut Meeting 4– Hopedale Meeting (Unprocessed)
- Nunatsiavut Meeting 5 – Nunatsiavut Government – Housing Hub
- Nunatsiavut Meeting 6 – Labrador Inn

### In Nunavut

- Home Visit 1 – Pang
- Home Visit 2 – Pang
- Community Life – Pang Life – Truck Tour and Administrator Chats
- Community talk #1- Pang - Nunavut – Community Front Line Community
- Community talk #2 – Pang - Nunavut – Elder Meeting
- Community talk #3 – Pang - Nunavut – Youth meeting
- Community talk #4 – Pang – Nunavut – LHO Board
- Community talk #5 – Pang - Nunavut – Hamlet Council meeting
- Community talk #6 – Pang - Nunavut – Elder Centre, Elder housing, Accessible housing
- Housing Story #1 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet – Housing Story 1- Overcrowding
- Community Talk #7 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – LHO
- Housing Story #2 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet – GN Liaison officer / Rankin Resident
- Community Talk #8 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet – Friendship Centre
- Community talk #9 - Nunavut - Rankin Inlet – Hamlet discussion
- Community Talk #10 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet – Shelter in Rankin Inlet
- Housing Story #3 - Nunavut – Rankin Inlet
- House Visit 3 – Rankin Inlet – Nunavut – Recently Vacated Social Housing Unit – 3 Bedroom
- House Visit 4 – Rankin Inlet – Nunavut – Recently Rented Unit – 2 Bedroom

## Appendix II

Attached you will find the Land Claims Agreement (the modern treaty with Canada) and the Constitution (see section 2.4.28 on the right to adequate housing for every Labrador Inuk) for some more background information on the structure and powers of Nunatsiavut Government.

### **Housing**

2.4.28 Every Labrador Inuk has the right to have access to adequate housing and every Labrador Inuk has a responsibility to provide for his or her own housing needs in accordance with his or her own means and a responsibility to care for and to maintain housing that is provided to him or her by an institution of Labrador Inuit government or that is funded by or through an institution of Labrador Inuit government.

### **Evictions**

2.4.29 No Labrador Inuk may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished without an order of the Inuit Court which may only be made after considering all the relevant circumstances. No Inuit law or bylaw or an Inuit Community Government may permit arbitrary evictions.



