



**THE HOUSING CRISIS IN INDIGENOUS  
COMMUNITIES IN CANADA:  
INJUSTICE AND DISCRIMINATION.**

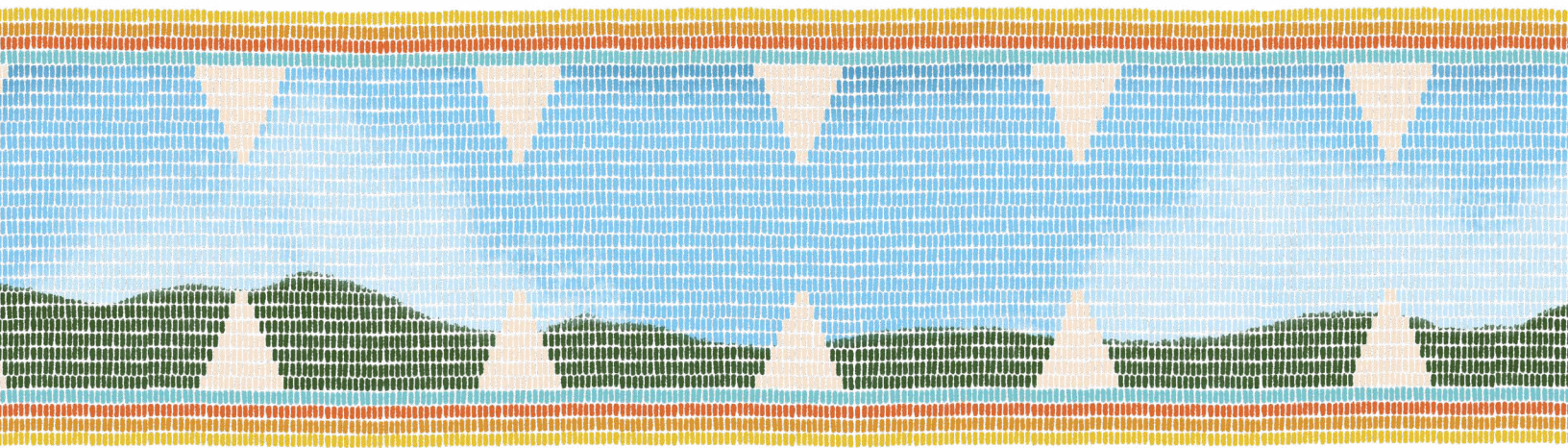
**THE EXAMPLE OF MANAWAN**



**AMNISTIE  
INTERNATIONALE**



**Amnesty International is a movement of 10 million people which mobilizes the humanity in everyone and campaigns for change so we can all enjoy our human rights. Our vision is of a world where those in power keep their promises, respect international law and are held to account. We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion and are funded mainly by our membership and individual donations. We believe that acting in solidarity and compassion with people everywhere can change our societies for the better.**



© Amnesty International 2026

Except where otherwise noted, content in this document is licensed under a Creative Commons (attribution, non-commercial, international 4.0) licence (see [creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode)).

Where material is attributed to a copyright owner other than Amnesty International, this material is not covered by the Creative Commons licence.

The original publication was published in 2026 by Amnesty International Ltd  
Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street  
London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom

Index: AMR 20/0870/2026  
Original: French

[amnesty.org](https://www.amnesty.org)



Illustrations  
© Méline Quitich Niquay



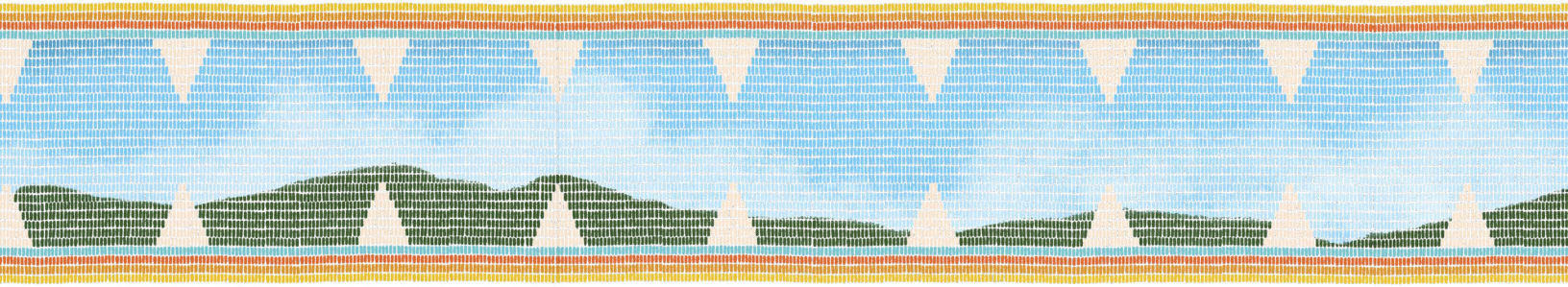
# CONTENTS

<b>SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH REPORT ON HOUSING IN MANAWAN</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Acronyms</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. Manawan, an Atikamekw community in Canada</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2. Housing and infrastructure on reserves in Canada</b>	<b>11</b>
a. Colonialism, systemic racism and property access	12
b. Intersectional discrimination against Indigenous women and girls	13
<b>3. Adequate housing and homelessness: regional, international and Canadian laws and standards</b>	<b>14</b>
a. Regional and international laws and standards	14
b. Laws and standards governing adequate housing in Canada	15
<b>4. Homelessness in Canada and Indigenous perspectives</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>5. Lives and housing in Manawan</b>	<b>19</b>
a. Chronic overcrowding	20
b. Poor quality and substandard housing	21
c. At risk of homelessness due to housing conditions	22
d. Major health challenges	24
e. Safety and security	25
f. Violence against girls, women and elderly people	26
g. Adaptations and the rights of people with disabilities	27
h. Education	28
i. Steps taken by the Manawan Atikamekw Council and the challenges it faces	29
<b>6. Inadequate funding of housing and infrastructure on reserves in Canada</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>7. 30 years of recommendations from multiple UN bodies on housing and infrastructure for Indigenous Peoples in Canada</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>8. When childhood and hidden homelessness go hand in hand</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>9. Recommendations</b>	<b>43</b>





Manawan  
community



# SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH REPORT ON HOUSING IN MANAWAN

The Atikamekw First Nation of Manawan is an Indigenous community located over 250 kilometres from Montreal, the largest city in the province of Quebec, Canada. The Manawan Atikamekw Council (CDAM), which manages all services within the territory devolved to it under the Indian Act, uses financial resources allocated to it by the federal government to provide services to the community, such as housing and infrastructure. Almost all homes in the community are social housing built by the CDAM.

The territory of the reserve, within the meaning of the Indian Act, covers 7.83 km<sup>2</sup>, which represents a minuscule portion of the traditional territory, Nitaskinan, whose area is estimated at 19,716 km<sup>2</sup>. It is crucially important for traditional practices and for preserving Atikamekw identity and culture. The community is accessed via a gravel road that links it to the nearest municipality, 80 km away. The road is used by the forestry industry and is considered unsafe. The single access road contributes to Manawan's isolation and poses multiple challenges in terms of its economic situation, access to healthcare services and food autonomy.

Based on the findings of this research, Amnesty International considers that the right to adequate housing is neither respected nor implemented in Manawan. The life stories of the people who live in Manawan show that adequate housing standards have not been met and that, in addition to breaches of the right to adequate housing, the rights to education, health, privacy, safety and life are neither respected nor implemented. This state of affairs perpetuates the cycle of violence against women, girls, children and elderly people and helps to maintain a large part of the community in poverty due to lack of high-quality, reliable and safe housing and infrastructure. Many people are forced into homelessness as a result.

Our research shows that many families in Manawan live in housing considered substandard, due in particular to the presence of mould and the absence of adequate repairs. Overcrowded homes encourage the spread of disease, leave little space for privacy and offer few environments for schoolwork. They can also result in violence against women, children and elderly people.

The overcrowding and disrepair of some homes in Manawan are the result of a serious lack of housing available in the community. The Manawan Atikamekw Council, which receives funds and manages the housing stock, has tried for many years to obtain further funds to build and renovate homes and make adaptations for people living with disabilities, but its efforts have been unsuccessful.

The housing crisis in Manawan is not unique and it is representative of many other Indigenous communities in Canada. Today, in 2026, Indigenous Peoples on and off reserves continue to live in unacceptable housing conditions across the country. In its most recent report, CMHC states that “Indigenous households [are] more than twice as likely to live in inadequate housing” and that the figures may be under-reported because of Indigenous Peoples’ historical mistrust of colonial government institutions. In 2021, 43.9% of Indigenous households lived in housing that failed to meet at least one of the three standards defining adequate housing in Canada: adequacy, suitability and affordability.

The United Nations has noted that overcrowding remains a major problem in many Indigenous communities. On reserves, almost half of households live in homes that do not comply with adequacy or suitability standards. Additionally, for many Indigenous reserves across Canada, access to drinking water is not always guaranteed, their electricity supply is unstable and internet access remains a challenge.

Due to lack of housing, many people, in particular those living in poverty, are forced to live in inadequate, uninhabitable homes that are often hazardous to their health and well-being. The lack of housing often also leads to homelessness and is simultaneously a key factor in and a manifestation of inequalities and discrimination.

The issue of homelessness is central to Manawan and many other Indigenous communities in Canada. However, the scale of the situation is unprecedented if we use the definition set out by Jesse Thistle, which highlights the fact that colonialist policies force Indigenous Peoples to live on tiny territories and not only result in hidden homelessness but also, through lack of choice, oblige families to live in overcrowded, substandard housing. The overall situation on reserves is untenable and it is much worse than people think. Despite the lack of data, band councils know that hidden homelessness exists within the territory they manage. Coupled with the housing shortage and the fact that so many homes fail to meet standards, it becomes clear that the homelessness situation is catastrophic and must be resolved urgently and effectively.

The Councils in place in Manawan over the past 20 years have tried, without success, to make the Canadian people and their elected representatives aware of the housing crisis in Manawan. This long-standing indifference raises the question of systemic racism regarding housing, as with other social issues, such as the forced sterilization of Indigenous women and the chronic underfunding of education for young people from Indigenous communities, which have had to approach the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in the hope of achieving their aims.

In 2024, the Auditor General of Canada published a report condemning the acute lack of funding for housing in Indigenous communities. According to the Auditor General, the two main funders – Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) – have provided insufficient funding for at least the past 20 years. At



Manawan

the current rate, it would be impossible for ISC and CMHC to meet the federal government's commitment to close the First Nations housing gap by 2030 and to ensure that Indigenous Peoples live in homes free from mould.

Amnesty International considers that systemic racism towards Indigenous Peoples in Quebec and Canada, the persistent impacts of colonial policies and the historic underfunding of reserves are key factors that contribute to the housing crisis in Manawan. The situation requires significant and immediate measures to ensure that First Nations can live in dignity, stop being marginalized and discriminated against and develop in accordance with their priorities and goals. As the federal government recognizes the systemic racism experienced by Indigenous Peoples and its consequences on their daily lives, it must implement a plan to adequately address all of their fundamental needs in terms of housing and infrastructure so that everyone can enjoy a dignified life. Provinces, including Quebec, must recognize the existence of systemic racism towards Indigenous Peoples and work hand in hand with communities without digging in their heels over jurisdictional matters.

Governments must, in close partnership with band councils, invest heavily, quickly, in a predictable manner and over several years to make up for lost time and maintain the pace of construction while ensuring that tools for assessing construction costs are free from bias. Programmes specifically focused on adapting homes for people with disabilities must be given sufficient funding to meet all of their needs. Governments must take on board an Indigenous vision of the issue of homelessness to offer funding programmes that are tailored to their reality.

# METHODOLOGY

This report examines the housing crisis that many Indigenous communities in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada are currently facing. Its research has focused on the human rights impacts caused by the crisis in recent decades on the Manawan reserve in Quebec. It scrutinizes the general housing situation among Indigenous Peoples in Canada, and more specifically within the Atikamekw community of Manawan, taking account of financing policies for building and maintaining homes as well as international and Canadian laws and standards regarding housing and homelessness.

This report is primarily based on interviews with members of the Manawan community. Twenty in-person interviews were held with Atikamekw families in February and November 2025. The Amnistie internationale Canada francophone team visited these families' homes at their invitation. Furthermore, between February and August 2025, 16 interviews were held with staff responsible for housing, education, health and social services, as well as with community political leaders.

Archiving is almost non-existent within the community. This is coupled with the fact that, in light of many Indigenous individuals' mistrust of colonial federal institutions, official statistics do not reflect the on-reserve reality. We have used the available information and data to support our assertions. With that said, the majority of our observations are taken from interviews with families, staff at the relevant departments and a number of former and current members of the Manawan Atikamekw Council.

Interviews were also held with Leilani Farha, United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing from 2014 to 2020. Representatives of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) agreed to meet with Amnesty International but refused to be recorded. The accounts given in this report are also supported by the scientific literature and multiple reports from the House of Commons of Canada, the Senate of Canada, CMHC, the Auditor General of Canada, Indigenous organizations and UN mechanisms such as special procedures.

Amnesty International has built a relationship of trust with the members of the Atikamekw Nation of Manawan since 2022. This report was conducted in response to a request by the Manawan Atikamekw Council (CDAM), which wished to expose the housing crisis being experienced by its community. An agreement based on the principles of shared but differentiated responsibilities was signed. The research proposal was approved by CDAM members and advice was sought on the way in which interviews should be held. As such, rather than being imposed from the outside, the process has been guided by the voices and priorities of the Atikamekw of Manawan and reflects Amnesty International's commitment to the principles of decolonial research.

# ACRONYMS

**CDAM or the Council:** Manawan Atikamekw Council

**CESCR:** Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

**CEDAW:** Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

**CERD:** Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

**CRC:** Convention on the Rights of the Child

**CRPD:** Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**UNDRIP or the Declaration:** UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

**ICCPR:** International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

**ICESCR:** International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

**ISC:** Indigenous Services Canada

**CMHC:** Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation



Senior's home in Manawan



# 1. MANAWAN, AN ATIKAMEKW COMMUNITY IN CANADA

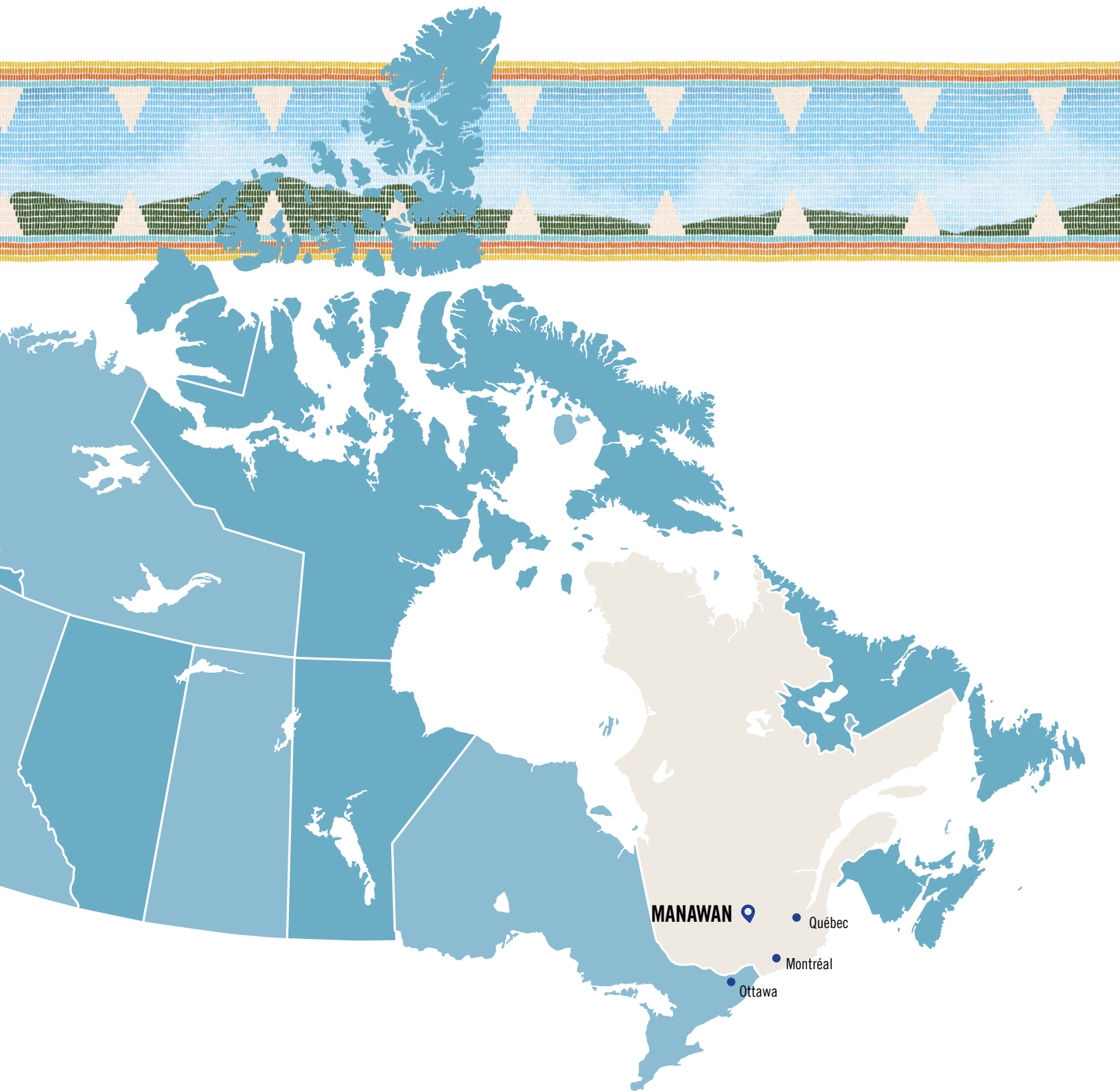
The Atikamekw First Nation of Manawan is located 250 kilometres from Montreal, the largest city in the province of Quebec in Canada. The territory of the reserve, within the meaning of the Indian Act,<sup>1</sup> covers 7.83 km<sup>2</sup>, which represents a minuscule portion of the traditional territory, Nitaskinan, whose area is estimated at 19,716 km<sup>2</sup>. It is crucially important for traditional practices such as hunting, fishing and foraging and for preserving Atikamekw identity and culture.<sup>2</sup> The Manawan Atikamekw Council (CDAM), whose members are elected, has jurisdiction over the territory of the reserve. The community can be accessed by a dirt road that is used by the forestry industry and is ill suited to safe private transport. This road connects the community to the nearest village, Saint-Michel-des-Saints, 80 km away. The single access road contributes to the community's isolation and to the economic challenges it faces, its difficulties accessing health services and its struggles with food self-sufficiency.

The Manawan community is made up of 1,051 women, 1,022 men and 1,068 children aged under 18, who represent 34% of the population. There are 146 people aged 65 and over. In 20 years, the population of Manawan has grown by 33.3%, rising from 2,095 people in 2003 to 3,141 people in 2024.<sup>3</sup> According to statistics provided by the CDAM, population growth has nevertheless slowed since 2015, although it remains higher than in the rest of Canada, where the figure is 23.8% over the last 20 years.<sup>4</sup>

The CDAM rents 405 on-reserve homes to its members.<sup>5</sup> In 2024, there were an average of 7.8 people per home, and this figure is rising: the 2018 data shows 6.6 people per home.<sup>6</sup> At the time at which the interviews were conducted, some homes were permanently inhabited by 8 or even 10 people, and, in one case, 17 people, not including occasional guests (such as close family who are visiting and children who study outside the community).

Under the Indian Act and as required by government funding, the Council is responsible for local services relating to education, health, social services, emergency services, law enforcement, water supply and treatment, and roads. It is also responsible for maintaining the only road connecting the community to Saint-Michel-des-Saints.<sup>7</sup> The community's economy is fragile and depends on the Council, seasonal employment and a new agreement





signed with a mining company that will eventually create jobs accessible to Manawan residents.<sup>8</sup> The Council is the community's main employer, with almost 400 employees.<sup>9</sup> As the Manawan community is located in the forest and is relatively distant from villages and large towns and cities, its economic development has been limited. Manawan does not receive any dividends from natural resource extraction, such as logging in Nitaskinan.



Manawan  
community

## 2. HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE ON RESERVES IN CANADA

The housing crisis affects Indigenous communities more profoundly than the population in the rest of the country.<sup>10</sup> It is the result of the theft of land belonging to Indigenous Peoples, centuries of colonial policies and the forced sedentarization of First Nations that occurred with the creation of reserves following the adoption of the Indian Act,<sup>11</sup> a colonial tool of assimilation.<sup>12</sup>

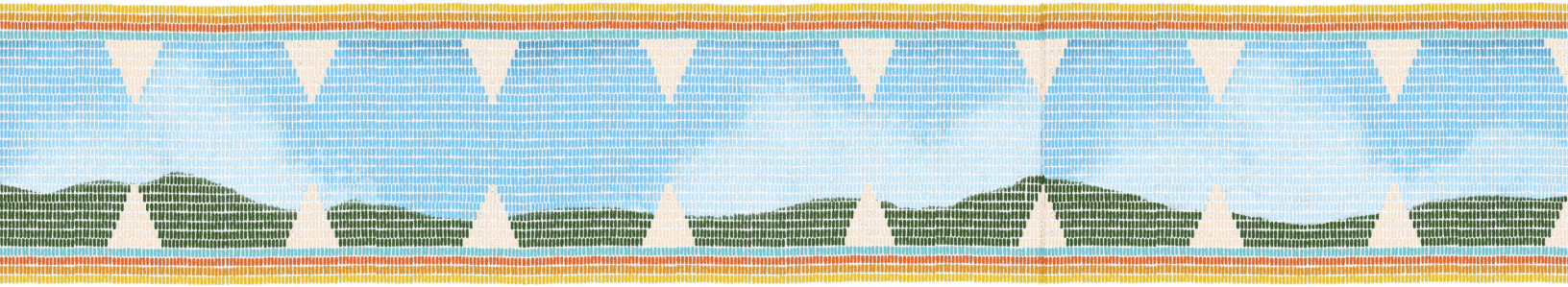


Condemned house  
in Manawan

In Canada, legal status, governance and property rights vary significantly between municipalities and Indigenous reserves. While municipalities are legally created by provinces and fall within their jurisdiction, Indigenous reserves are created under the Indian Act and as such are under federal jurisdiction.<sup>13</sup> Municipalities are led by elected representatives at the town or city hall and municipal council, while reserves are governed by a band council, whose members are also elected, as required by the Indian Act.<sup>14</sup> This council governs the reserve lands, which belong to the Crown, are non-mortgageable and are reserved for the use of First Nations.<sup>15</sup> Local management takes place through certificates of possession and independent land codes.<sup>16</sup> On reserves, the property market is limited, which makes access to property difficult for Indigenous people, who can only sell to other members and must obtain a ministerial guarantee in partnership with the Council to take out a mortgage.<sup>17</sup>

However, reserves represent a minuscule portion of the territory for which each nation considers itself historically responsible. The rights of Indigenous

Peoples are protected by the Constitution of Canada.<sup>18</sup> The administration of reserves falls under federal jurisdiction, but the territory surrounding them is under provincial jurisdiction.<sup>19</sup> Provincial and federal responsibilities can overlap for some services, including child and family services, health, education and police.<sup>20</sup> When a request is made of one level of government, it often claims responsibility lies within the remit of the other level of government.<sup>21</sup>



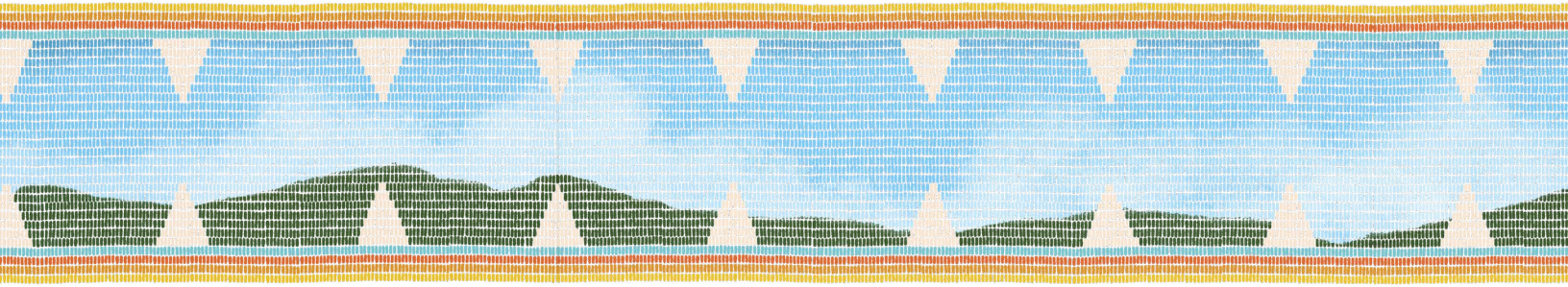
Responsibility for housing on reserves is shared between the Canadian federal government and First Nations governments.<sup>22</sup> The Canadian federal government serves mainly as a funder for housing and related infrastructure. It primarily distributes funds through two bodies: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). ISC funds community infrastructure and CMHC funds social housing, while band councils are responsible for meeting other needs.<sup>23</sup>

The private rental market varies from community to community in Canada. It is almost non-existent in some Indigenous communities.<sup>24</sup> Under the Indian Act, in principle, reserve lands are communal, legally owned by the Crown and set apart for First Nations.<sup>25</sup> As such, they cannot be bought and property titles in the civil sense cannot be issued. Community members can be given a certificate of possession, which is issued by the Council and registered with ISC.<sup>26</sup> This means that because they cannot in principle be mortgaged and they legally belong to the Crown, banks often refuse to approve a mortgage. To circumvent this issue, ministerial guarantees are sometimes issued by the federal government or the band council so a mortgage can be obtained from a bank.<sup>27</sup> Such conditions make it difficult to create a traditional property market within communities. As a result, Indigenous people living on reserves have fewer property investment opportunities than if they lived in urban areas, which in turn limits their access to other types of funding as they do not have assets.<sup>28</sup> This has the further consequences of preventing owners from passing property onto future generations and of maintaining recourse to federal funding programmes.

## **a. Colonialism, systemic racism and property access**

Indigenous Peoples in Canada face multiple systemic obstacles. These are the result of centuries of racist colonialist policies whose effects are still felt today, in particular in terms of housing. Systemic racism towards Indigenous Peoples persists.<sup>29</sup> It continues to have an impact on housing policies and leads to discrimination in the off-reserve rental market.<sup>30</sup> Racism and colonialism manifest in multiple areas of life, dehumanizing Indigenous Peoples and excluding them from decisions that affect them.<sup>31</sup>

In 2024, the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed Indigenous jurisdiction over management of their child welfare system, as provided for in the Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families (Bill C-92).<sup>32</sup> The new mechanisms will be managed by and for Indigenous Peoples to prevent the recurrence of events such as the Sixties Scoop or the over-representation of Indigenous children in provincial child welfare systems.<sup>33</sup>



In 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal established Jordan’s Principle, which guarantees that any relevant federal ministry whose services are required will pay for essential services to protect the child’s interests,<sup>34</sup> which includes housing improvements, if necessary. The principle is not always rigorously applied,<sup>35</sup> and it is constantly being questioned,<sup>36</sup> contributing to Indigenous communities’ mistrust of the healthcare system.<sup>37</sup>

Colonial violence also continues in the justice and penal systems. Indigenous people continue to be over-represented among the prison population and are more likely to be classed as dangerous. Indigenous women account for 41% of federally incarcerated women, despite making up just 4% of women in Canada.<sup>38</sup> This means that Indigenous women are imprisoned at a rate 15 times higher than non-Indigenous women.<sup>39</sup> Indigenous people still suffer police violence after being stopped without cause, and in 2023 alone, nine Indigenous people were killed by law enforcement.<sup>40</sup>

## **b. Intersectional discrimination against Indigenous women and girls**

As demonstrated by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Indigenous women and girls continue to be victims of Canada’s colonial past<sup>41</sup> and experience intersectional discrimination both as women and as Indigenous people.<sup>42</sup>

The Native Women’s Association of Canada emphasizes that the Indian Act continues gender-based discrimination through the granting of “Indian status”, which prevents many women and their descendants from accessing on-reserve services, such as housing.<sup>43</sup> The Act is also rooted in patriarchy.<sup>44</sup> For a long time, Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous partners would lose “Indian” status. They and their children were thus deprived of lands on reserve territory.<sup>45</sup> No such limitation was placed on men. Although the Act has since been corrected, the effects of these provisions continue to be felt. Women whose ancestors lost their status through marriage no longer have access to on-reserve housing.<sup>46</sup> It is difficult for them to access housing outside the community because of persistent racist prejudices. They are subject to racist comments and are often automatically refused housing or, when they are able to access it, are monitored excessively.<sup>47</sup>

# 3. ADEQUATE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS: REGIONAL, INTERNATIONAL AND CANADIAN LAWS AND STANDARDS

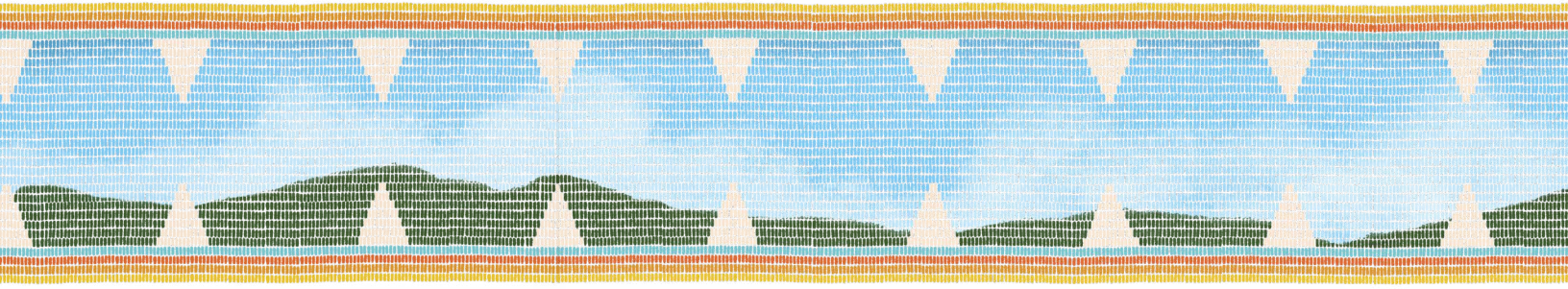
## a. Regional and international laws and standards

The right to adequate housing is guaranteed by multiple international and regional human rights treaties ratified by Canada, including the United Nations' International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).<sup>48</sup>

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) has declared that the right to housing should not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with, for example, the right to shelter or a roof over one's head, nor should shelter be viewed exclusively as a commodity. Instead, it should be seen as the right to live in security, peace and dignity.<sup>49</sup>

The United Nations defines adequate housing as “having secure tenure—not having to worry about being evicted or having your home or lands taken away. It means living somewhere that is in keeping with your culture, and having access to appropriate services, schools, and employment.”<sup>50</sup> The seven main elements of the right to adequate housing are security of tenure, availability of services, affordability, habitability (housing must guarantee its occupants' physical safety and provide adequate space as well as protection against the cold, damp, heat, rain, wind, other threats to health and structural hazards), location and cultural adequacy.<sup>51</sup> In its judgements, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has considered certain housing conditions to be a breach of the right to life as guaranteed under Article 4 of the American Convention on Human Rights.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to all the other treaties, conventions and declarations on human rights, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) affirms and protects the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including protection against forcible removal from their lands and territories and the right to manage these areas and their resources.<sup>53</sup> UNDRIP reiterates Indigenous Peoples' right to protection from discrimination and to the improvement of their economic and social situation in multiple areas, including housing, sanitation, health and social security.<sup>54</sup> States must ensure that established processes respect Indigenous Peoples' laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems and ensure they can participate in them.<sup>55</sup> They must implement a consultation system in good faith to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of the Indigenous Peoples concerned regarding use of their lands or territories.<sup>56</sup>



Canada has ratified several United Nations conventions on equality and non-discrimination. The CERD requires States to guarantee the right to equality regardless of race, colour or ethnic or national origin and to prohibit and eliminate racial discrimination, including in access to housing.<sup>57</sup> The right to equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex with regard to adequate living conditions is enshrined in the CEDAW.<sup>58</sup> Under the CRPD, the right to equality of people living with disability implies the identification and elimination of accessibility obstacles and barriers, enabling those with disabilities to live independently and choose their place of residence and the people with whom they live without being obliged to accept a particular living arrangement.<sup>59</sup>

## **b. Laws and standards governing adequate housing in Canada**

In the wake of its 2017 National Housing Strategy (NHS), Canada passed the National Housing Strategy Act,<sup>60</sup> which expressly recognizes that the right to housing is a fundamental human right.<sup>61</sup> The Strategy specifies that all Canadians deserve secure, affordable housing and that investments in housing should prioritize those with the greatest needs, including Indigenous people, but also women and children fleeing domestic violence situations and people living with disability. A specific strategy for Indigenous Peoples living on reserves has also been developed.<sup>62</sup>

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation<sup>63</sup> (CMHC) defines affordable housing using three criteria: adequacy, suitability and affordability.<sup>64</sup> A home must be sufficiently large and have an appropriate number of bedrooms for the size of the family living there. The size of a home is assessed using the National Occupancy Standard, which was created in the 1980s by multiple levels of government to determine whether the size of a dwelling is suitable given the number of occupants and the number of bedrooms.<sup>65</sup> The standard is still used today to calculate the number of families in core housing need and to inform the process of creating housing plans and strategies.<sup>66</sup> To meet the adequacy and affordability criteria, a home must not require major repairs and the cost of housing must not exceed 30% of the household's pre-tax income.

According to a 2022 study by the House of Commons of Canada's Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, there are other important criteria that should supplement CMHC's definition of adequate housing. For example, a home's adequacy is not only linked to the need for repairs but the absence of mould and material degradation. Housing

adequacy should therefore be assessed from a health and hygiene perspective.<sup>67</sup> Health also refers to holistic health, which can be affected by substandard homes, overcrowding and the tensions that can arise as a result.<sup>68</sup> Housing adequacy should also take account of climate change, which requires homes to be sustainable, resilient and better adapted to the changing climate.<sup>69</sup>

The Committee also established that adequate housing must be culturally appropriate and of sufficient size to accommodate large families.<sup>70</sup> The space must be sufficient for occupants to pass on and practise their culture, but also to ensure balance between community and personal life.<sup>71</sup>

Measured against international standards, Canada's definition of adequate housing is minimal and does not take account of the reality Indigenous people experience on reserves. The former Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Leilani Farha, echoed the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: "The right to housing under international law is not limited to four walls and a roof – although four walls and a roof may be necessary. It is, of course, the right to live in peace, security and dignity."<sup>72</sup> Canada's vision does not include the concept of habitability, which implies that individuals' basic needs are met. However, in Canada, on reserves, access to drinking water is far from guaranteed for all Indigenous people,<sup>73</sup> the electricity supply is unstable and internet access remains a challenge.<sup>74</sup> Canada's definition of adequate housing disregards health and education services<sup>75</sup> as well as transport services that provide safe access to the former.<sup>76</sup> None of the criteria mentions cultural needs.<sup>77</sup>



Hole in the ceiling of a Manawan's house

# 4. HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA AND INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES

*Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.*

ARTICLE 21 OF THE UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

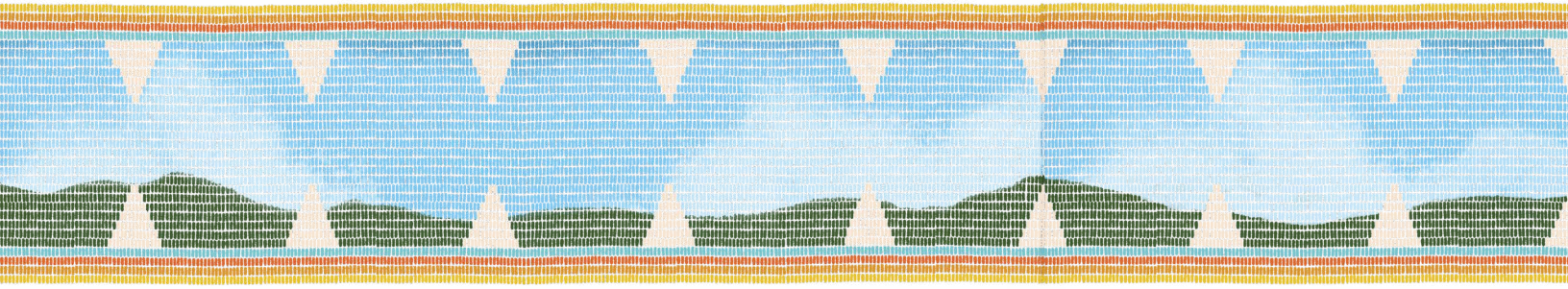
Lack of on-reserve housing reduces Indigenous people from these communities to living in overcrowded or inadequate housing. It prevents them from choosing a home that meets their needs as defined by their own criteria.

Homelessness on reserves is as long-term a problem as it is hidden (people experiencing homelessness are taken in by members of their family, friends or acquaintances) and meets the Canadian government's definition of chronic homelessness.<sup>78</sup> It also encompasses people living in inadequate housing that is neither stable nor safe.

“Chronic homelessness refers to persistent or long-term homelessness where people have:

- Been homeless for at least 180 days at some point over the course of a year (not necessarily consecutive days); and/or,
- Experienced recurrent episodes of homelessness over three years that total at least 18 months. The measure of chronicity only includes time spent in the following living situations:
  - Emergency shelters (permanent or overflow beds, including those for people experiencing domestic violence);
  - Unsheltered locations or places not intended for human habitation (e.g., parks);
  - Staying temporarily with others (e.g., family or friends) without guarantee of continued residency (“couch surfing”);” Regarding Indigenous homelessness, the National Housing Strategy adds that those “living in unaffordable, inadequate, substandard and unsafe accommodations or living without the security of tenure” are also considered homeless.”<sup>79</sup>

As the United Nations states, tackling homelessness does not simply consist of putting a roof over someone's head. Loss of social connection, the feeling of “belonging nowhere” and the social exclusion experienced by persons living in homelessness – situations experienced by Indigenous Peoples – must also be taken into account.<sup>80</sup> According to



the Métis-Cree author and historian Jesse Thistle<sup>81</sup> and the Assembly of First Nations, Indigenous homelessness also requires a broader perspective. “First Nations homelessness is a direct result of displacement, dispossession, and economic exclusion by historical and current colonial processes that have prevented First Nations people from accessing economic prosperity, resulting in the loss of land and resources, and a fractured sense of individual and community well-being.”<sup>82</sup> Despite being faced with often inappropriate housing conditions and non-existent economic development, many Indigenous people decide to remain within their community to avoid breaking their cultural ties with their Nation, losing their cultural identity and experiencing racism and discrimination outside their community. This is why, with no other option, many resign themselves to living in overcrowded, inadequate or unsafe homes.



Condemned house in Manawan

Ultimately, compared to visible homelessness, hidden homelessness is difficult to quantify because it can refer to a vast category of people that can encompass those temporarily living with family members, friends, neighbours or strangers (couch surfing) and those living in other forms of temporary accommodation.<sup>83</sup> In addition, due to a lack of housing, to gain a more realistic overview of homelessness on reserves, it is important to take account of extreme overcrowding, substandard homes and the vulnerability their residents experience.



## 5. LIVES AND HOUSING IN MANAWAN

The housing crisis in Manawan is not unique. Today, in 2026, whether on or off reserve, some Indigenous people continue to live in unacceptable housing across Canada. It is a chronic housing crisis and the housing stock has been insufficient for decades.<sup>84</sup> The majority of Indigenous individuals living on reserves are reliant on social housing.<sup>85</sup>

According to the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL), the housing crisis stems from a lack of homes, the disrepair and overcrowding of those homes that do exist and the fact that many families struggle to be able to find a place to live within their community.<sup>86</sup> The housing shortfall among Indigenous communities in Quebec reportedly stands at 10,000, while over 8,000 require repairs and renovation, almost 4,000 need decontaminating due to mould and nearly 10,000 plots require connections to water, sewage, road and lighting services.<sup>87</sup>

In Manawan, the vast majority of homes are social housing built by the Council and financed by CMHC.<sup>88</sup> The Council owns almost all houses and homes in the community as well as infrastructure and facilities (health, social services, education, emergency services, law enforcement). It also owns accommodation for workers who do not live in the community on a full-time basis.<sup>89</sup>

Research conducted by Amnesty International has revealed that the main challenges Manawan's members face in terms of access to housing are overcrowding, substandard homes, homelessness, violence, lack of safety and health and education problems arising from the fact that people with disabilities are living in inadequate housing.

## a. Chronic overcrowding

Overcrowded housing is an ever-present reality in the Manawan community. As there are no vacant homes in the community, which is made up almost exclusively of social housing, and purchasing private property is difficult, the only means of finding accommodation is to submit a request to the Council<sup>90</sup> for a home. It is not uncommon for multiple generations of the same family to live under the same roof due to lack of housing.<sup>91</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, at least 39 homes accommodated at least 10 people,<sup>92</sup> often sharing a single bathroom.<sup>93</sup>

Ottawa Andicha, a community social worker, normally has four people permanently living in her home, but there are currently 11. The average number of occupants per dwelling stands at 7.7.<sup>94</sup> There may be several generations of the same family or even of many different families living under the same roof. Take the example of a health worker who lives with her partner, daughter, son-in-law and four grandchildren. Through lack of space, the couple and their four children have to share one bedroom.<sup>95</sup> “Every home is multifunctional or multigenerational, because the grandparents, parents and children all live in the same house. There aren’t enough finished homes to house them. Every home is overcrowded.”<sup>96</sup> As such, many families experience a lack of privacy,<sup>97</sup> worsened by the fact that some rooms do not even have doors.<sup>98</sup> Many families are disheartened because they know that their situation can only improve when new homes are built.<sup>99</sup> Other families put their plans to have children on hold due to lack of space.<sup>100</sup> Many people have had their requests for housing rejected. The lack of space also separates families, with children going to live with aunts or grandparents.<sup>101</sup>

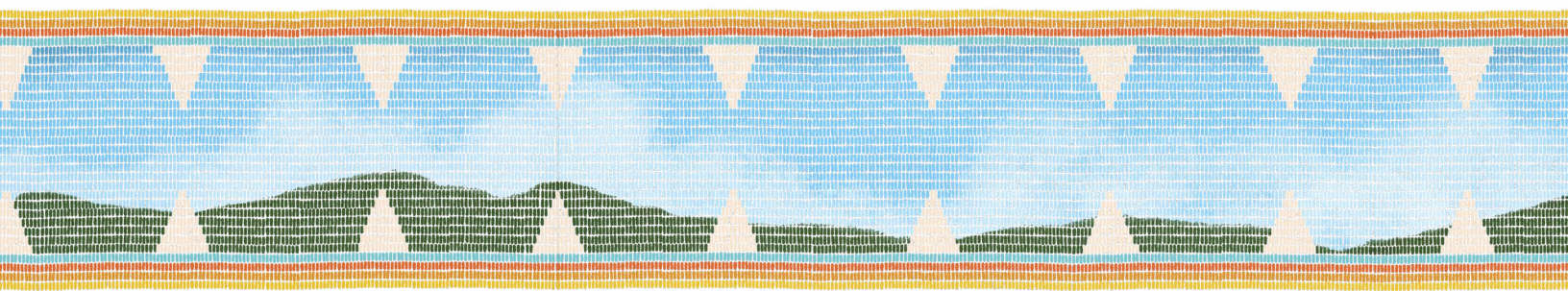
This reality requires people living in overcrowded homes to be extremely organized to ensure that everyone can access the washing machine, for example.<sup>102</sup> The current Chief of the Manawan Atikamekw Council does not have his own home and also lives with his sister and her family, including her nephews and nieces.<sup>103</sup> Families with a home often host family members who live outside the community when they visit, as Claudia Newwashish, a councillor, explained: “I have nieces who [...] stay in the city with their children. From time to time, they come [to Manawan] and I give [them] a bedroom or the living room [...] where they sleep [on] mattresses.”<sup>104</sup>

The community development director, Gaétan Flamand, condemns the situation experienced by young people who, having left the community to study, cannot access housing<sup>105</sup> when they want to come back. This was the case for Claudia Newwashish, a CDAM councillor: “I came back to Manawan. I had to work in Manawan. You know, I didn’t want to leave, I didn’t want to live my life somewhere else. My family were here, so I had to come back. Then I got married, I had children. My children grew up here, you know.” Returning to the community therefore often implies returning to the family home, unless the member now has a degree in health or education, which results in priority access to housing.<sup>106</sup> When children come back to the family home, it requires adaptation by the parents and the children alike, who must reacclimatize to living together again.<sup>107</sup> Some children prefer to remain in the city or to go back there once again rather than live with their parents, especially when they are single, as families are given priority when new homes are built.<sup>108</sup> “The lucky ones who went to study to work in health and education can access housing. If not, it’s back to the family home. Going back home isn’t easy, even for us. It requires adaptation on both sides.”<sup>109</sup> In some families, parents who work in a field that gives them

access to housing plan to leave their home to their children when they return to Manawan after their studies to ensure that they have somewhere to live.<sup>110</sup>

Some people have been waiting for housing for a long time, such as Maria Echaquan: “When I finished my bachelor’s degree at university, I submitted a housing request so I could build a life in the community. Since then I’ve been waiting, waiting, waiting. I haven’t had any news. You go and ask questions at Council AGMs and they never quite reply how you want them to. You never know, but it’s been a long time. I finished my degree in 2006.”<sup>111</sup>

Overcrowding and the conflicts it creates within families have led some community members to go and live in Nitaskinan, off-reserve, in areas that are difficult to access. As such, they live far from their family, which can be demoralizing, despite the disagreements arising from communal living. If these people require rescue due to a storm, for example, it would be difficult and expensive because their homes cannot be accessed by car.<sup>112</sup>



## **b. Poor quality and substandard housing**

Alongside the lack of housing in Manawan, the Amnesty International research teams observed that some homes for which the Council is responsible need repairs, sometimes major repairs, and noted the presence of mould.

The flooring and cladding<sup>113</sup>, pipework<sup>114</sup>, roofs<sup>115</sup> and window frames and windows<sup>116</sup> of certain homes require repair. Problems with the electrical grid affect the heating and sewer backflow occurs.<sup>117</sup> In the home of Bianca Moar, “the taps haven’t worked in the upstairs bathroom for 15 years. They’ve come to repair them, but there are always leaks.” In other homes, the kitchen cupboard doors are falling off.<sup>118</sup> Many homes are poorly insulated, have broken windows, have brickwork in poor condition that allows draughts to enter, or have heating problems.<sup>119</sup> This increases families’ electricity bills.<sup>120</sup>

Some families have sealed off rooms in their home because they are uninhabitable or because they require repair, while all those interviewed would like their homes to be larger.<sup>121</sup> A family whose bath drain was blocked had to use a bucket to empty the bathwater for three years.<sup>122</sup> Some community members report that their electrical appliances become defective, leak or break due to faulty pipework and electrics.<sup>123</sup> Marie-Josée Ottawa is one such member: “We have three dryers because there are problems with the outlet hose, so

our dryer constantly breaks. The outlet needs replacing and has done for several years. When it rains, it leaks inside. Then there's the heaters, which haven't worked for four years. We haven't been able to open one of our doors for three years. We can't close the windows completely.”

The Council is responsible for maintaining social housing within the community. When a repair is needed, community members submit a request to the community development service. If an urgent repair is required, members can call a dedicated number. Overcrowding also has an impact on housing condition, causing them to deteriorate faster.<sup>124</sup> They quickly become dilapidated<sup>125</sup> and require further repairs.<sup>126</sup> Some homes were also poorly built, leading to infestations of mice and insects.<sup>127</sup> When the Council was made aware of these situations, many homes received only temporary repairs. As such, many have taken it on themselves to carry out work or have bought equipment to solve their problems.<sup>128</sup> This has led many community members to consider their rent high given the state of their homes and the lack of upkeep by the Council.<sup>129</sup>

### **c. At risk of homelessness due to housing conditions**

In Canada, overcrowded housing and the resulting problems drive more Indigenous people to leave their community for urban centres, where they encounter discrimination in their search for housing.<sup>130</sup> This increases their risk of experiencing homelessness, and this risk is amplified for women,<sup>131</sup> who often experience hidden homelessness because they manage to find temporary housing solutions that keep them in a position of vulnerability.<sup>132</sup>

In Quebec, in 2022, 13% of people surveyed during a census of people experiencing homelessness identified as Indigenous. This proportion is five times higher than the proportion of Indigenous people in the general population.<sup>133</sup> In Montreal, in 2018, Indigenous people accounted for 12% of people experiencing visible homelessness, far in excess of the proportion of Indigenous people among the city's population.<sup>134</sup> Homelessness in all its forms affects a larger proportion of Indigenous people when they leave their community and find themselves in an environment they do not understand, where they have no cultural landmarks and where they are often victims of discrimination and systemic racism when seeking accommodation.<sup>135</sup> In urban areas, Indigenous people are also more likely to live in substandard or unsafe housing or in unsafe neighbourhoods and spend too large a proportion of their income on rent.<sup>136</sup> Despite the lack of data from the Canadian government on the situation, according to the Assembly of First Nations, Indigenous Peoples in Canada are 23 times more likely to experience periods of homelessness than non-Indigenous individuals.<sup>137</sup>

In Manawan, the lack of homes in the community and population growth mean that some people find themselves homeless.<sup>138</sup> Some buildings have been converted into temporary housing so people are not forced onto the streets.<sup>139</sup> However, they do not have the necessary facilities to be used as permanent housing, such as full bathroom facilities or washing machines and dryers, or they are poorly insulated.<sup>140</sup>

Due to overcrowding, Thérèse Niquay, director of community services and projects, notes: “When it isn't too cold, when the temperatures are milder, people will stay in the woods,

in family camps. There are some who will plan to stay there, but as soon as it turns cold, we know that they'll come back and knock [on our door] and that they'll need help. Some of them build makeshift shelters and ask people to help them with firewood or fuel for their vehicles. We try to find in-depth solutions to support them and find them somewhere to stay. But it's really not easy, especially because here in Manawan, we don't have enough homes, and we also lack infrastructure for our services." The lack is so great that the community, which wanted to create a food and clothing bank, was unable to bring the project to fruition. The community also wants to store equipment to build multiple houses, but there are no buildings that can be used as a warehouse.<sup>141</sup> Sometimes "people leave the community to move to an urban area, but ultimately, they become homeless and have nowhere to live."<sup>142</sup>

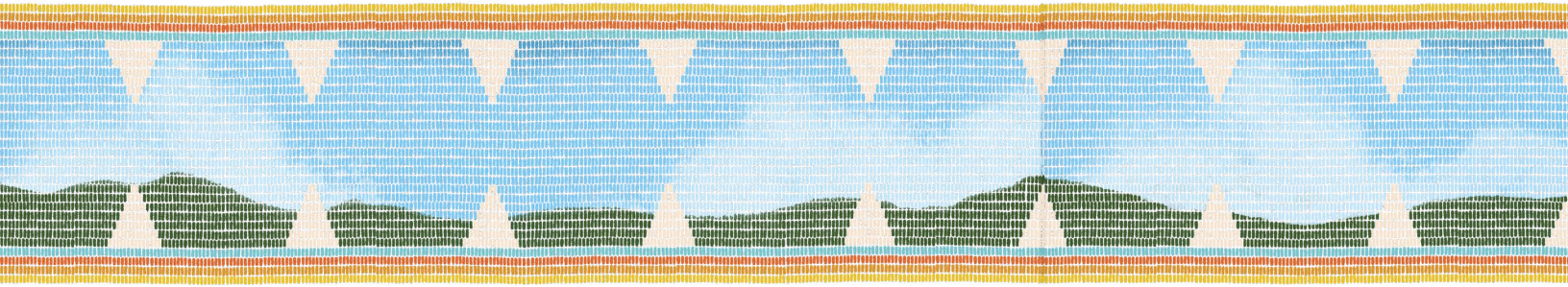


Leaky door in a residential building of Manawan

Some people who submitted housing requests three years ago are still waiting.<sup>143</sup> In their own family, many people do not have access to their own bed and must share one with other family members or sleep on a sofa in the homes of friends and family.<sup>144</sup> Some people place a mattress in another room in the house, such as the kitchen, or wait for the bed's other occupant to wake up before they can go to bed.<sup>145</sup>

Several members of the community move from house to house. They exhaust their network's resources in terms of housing and end up on the street. When the weather permits, others sometimes sleep in tents on the traditional Mirerimowin site, which is used for cultural events. Several members of the community, including Chief Sipi Flamand, refer to this as hidden homelessness.

He explained: "There are people who have nowhere to sleep. There was a blockade not far from the community linked to forestry. There were people who didn't have anywhere to sleep in the community. They didn't have homes. They moved into the area around where the blockade was [in caravans]. It was somewhere they could have some kind of roof over their heads for a while. When there are young families who move from house to house to try to find somewhere of their own, I think that's a form of hidden homelessness."



## d. Major health challenges

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

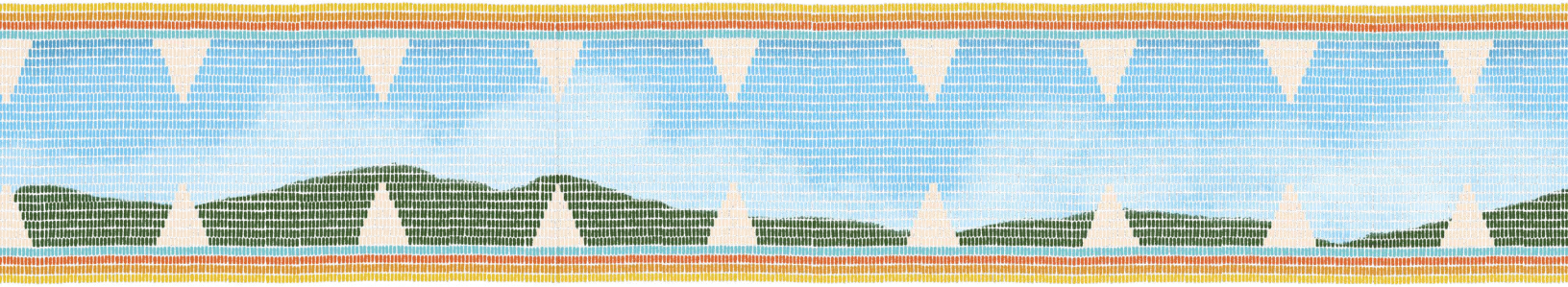
ARTICLE 12.1, INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS.

Overcrowding has major impacts on people's health conditions and has been listed by some Canadian coroners as a potential cause of death.<sup>146</sup> Poor housing quality also helps infectious diseases and respiratory infections to spread, including complications linked to COVID-19, and increases the risk of contracting tuberculosis.<sup>147</sup>

For many members of the Manawan community, the housing crisis and overcrowding result in serious problems in terms of mental and physical health and the fitness and safety of their homes. In the census conducted by the community during COVID-19, of the 361 homes visited, 292 housed at least one occupant who met vulnerability criteria due to age (over 60 years old or under 1 year old), pregnancy or mental or physical health problems.<sup>148</sup>

Some community members told us that the housing situation in the community and the fact that they could not access a home or any accommodation for their family depressed them.<sup>149</sup> Health and education professionals noted the presence of insomnia and mental health problems that could be linked to overcrowding and lack of privacy.<sup>150</sup> The director of education services noted that “for the last two years, there has been a lot of anxiety among the children. It’s worrying in terms of their development. They’re only in primary school and they’re suffering from anxiety. What’s going to happen in secondary school?”<sup>151</sup>

Healthcare workers in Manawan have noted respiratory problems among their patients,<sup>152</sup> including asthma and chronic cough, particularly among children. These problems have also been noted by their families.<sup>153</sup> The condition of the housing stock, water damage and overcrowding have resulted in mould problems.<sup>154</sup> Due to lack of space, members of some families have no choice but to sleep in rooms in which mould is present.<sup>155</sup> These very damp environments, which are difficult to ventilate, can harm physical health and result in skin problems and allergic reactions.<sup>156</sup> In addition, skin conditions including eczema have been observed in children at the social paediatrics centre. Living conditions such as these also encourage the spread of lice.<sup>157</sup> According to Marie-Josée Ottawa, a member of one of the families who took part in this research, some homes reportedly contain asbestos.<sup>158</sup>



Overcrowding affects physical health. “When the environment is damp, many viruses are able to spread, especially in poorly ventilated areas,” said Sanja Stojanovic, a paediatrician at the Mihawoso social paediatrics centre. As such, the people who live in these overcrowded homes must be more vigilant and pay great attention to hygiene measures, including disinfecting surfaces.<sup>159</sup>

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a large number of people were in lockdown with an infectious person in the household. During the census conducted by the community at the height of the pandemic, 91 homes did not include an additional room in which those infected could isolate themselves, which increased the risk of infection for all other residents of the household.<sup>160</sup> This situation increased tensions within families.<sup>161</sup>

The director of education services, Annette Dubé, also highlighted that the school had seen cases of lice, scabies, chickenpox, hand, foot and mouth disease and several childhood diseases among children when multiple people share beds at home.<sup>162</sup> Around a decade ago, Health Canada came to assess the situation in the community and wrote a report on the mould, which was sent to the Council.<sup>163</sup> A community member said: “Inspectors from Health Canada have come to assess the house three times. Then they make their recommendations, but it’s clear that the house [should be] demolished because the entire basement is contaminated. Even the foundation is full of mould. This house here is an old log-built house that has been renovated. But the Atikamekw Council is refusing to renovate it at the moment because it would cost far too much. We’re ill all the time. It’s like we have the flu all the time.”<sup>164</sup> Another family reports that there are cracks in the foundation of the house, which were covered over by the maintenance staff without being repaired, leading to mould spreading.<sup>165</sup>

## **e. Safety and security**

Inadequate housing conditions increase the risk of death in the event of fire, which means that in Canada, such deaths are ten times higher among First Nations members than the national average.<sup>166</sup>

In Manawan, densely populated homes also include large numbers of mattresses in the same room.<sup>167</sup> If fire breaks out in such a home, it could spread very quickly, posing a threat to the safety of the house’s occupants.

Many members reported that electrical sockets, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and heating appliances<sup>168</sup> were defective. The wiring in some electrical sockets was insufficiently sized for the household electrical equipment used. A family spent two years waiting for an electrician to come and fully rewire and had to use a separate hot plate for the duration.<sup>169</sup> Some heating appliances were repaired a few years ago, but quickly began overheating and smoking, forcing the family to use a different small heater to keep warm.<sup>170</sup>

Fireplaces do not always work.<sup>171</sup> Some homes do not have appropriate emergency exits for use in case of fire. Their occupants would therefore be forced to jump from a balcony if a fire broke out.<sup>172</sup> Others lack windows serving as an emergency exit or have a boiler installed in a dangerous location, which could itself cause a fire.<sup>173</sup> People living with disabilities whose homes are not adapted to their needs would have difficulty evacuating in the event of a fire.<sup>174</sup> Additionally, the community firefighters are almost all volunteers, and the community's fire station is not currently able to purchase a vehicle fitted with a ladder to rescue people from the two-storey buildings the community has built in recent years to increase the amount of housing within its territory.<sup>175</sup> Due to lack of funding to date from federal and provincial governments, the head of the fire department is paid directly from Council funds.

Food security is also at risk due to the frequent power cuts the community experiences. Hydro-Québec does not carry out the essential work needed to ensure the electricity grid operates correctly. The latest power cut took place during a long weekend in September 2025. It lasted almost three days and led to considerable quantities of food being lost through lack of refrigeration, which meant the Council had to reimburse many community members.<sup>176</sup> As there is only one local shop in Manawan and the community is 80 km from the nearest village, this is a major issue.

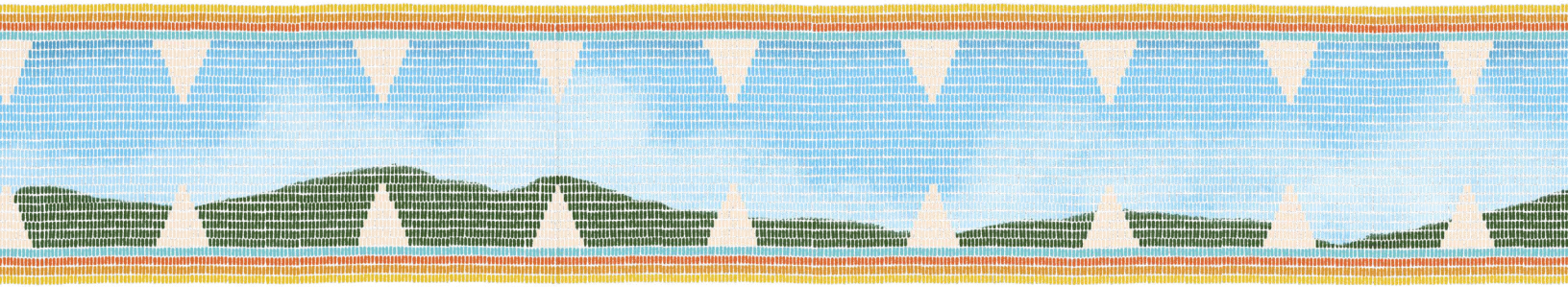
## **f. Violence against girls, women and elderly people**

Women are also overrepresented in homeless shelters, a phenomenon that clearly illustrates the link between inadequate housing, poverty and violence.<sup>177</sup> Bed-sharing in overcrowded homes increases the risk of sexual, domestic and family violence for women and children.<sup>178</sup> Housing problems within communities<sup>179</sup> make women and children more vulnerable, and the lack of housing forces some women to continue with relationships in which they are subjected to violence.<sup>180</sup> As such, more funding to increase the number of women's shelters and transition housing is both urgent and necessary. According to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, lack of housing contributes to the national crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.<sup>181</sup>

This means that more intrafamily and domestic tension and violence is reported among Manawan families.<sup>182</sup> Violence is physical and psychological in equal measure. Women and elderly people are the primary victims.<sup>183</sup> Although the community has a home for the elderly, due to strong family bonds, it is sometimes difficult to remove elderly people from their environment despite episodes of violence.<sup>184</sup> The COVID-19 lockdown also exacerbated these problems.<sup>185</sup> As a result, according to Thérèse Niquay, director of community service

and projects, emergency and social services are becoming involved in such cases with increasing frequency.

It should also be noted that the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has, since 2003, expressed concern at the high percentage of Indigenous women who live in poverty<sup>186</sup> and requested that Canada ensure that they are able to live in adequate housing. This was reiterated in the conclusions of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls<sup>187</sup> and in the calls to action published by the Commission on Relations between Indigenous Peoples and Certain Public Services (Viens Commission).<sup>188</sup>



## **g. Adaptations and the rights of people with disabilities**

It is particularly concerning to note that in Canada, Indigenous families, some of whom live with disability, do not have the necessary resources to adapt their homes. There are very few options for ensuring physical accessibility and disability adaptations within communities.<sup>189</sup> This is a systemic problem that goes beyond Indigenous Peoples. In a 2025 report, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended that specific mechanisms be enshrined in law, with the active involvement of people with disabilities, to ensure the Convention is respected by all levels of government (federal, provincial and territorial).<sup>190</sup>

There are no homes that are fully adapted for people living with disabilities in Manawan. Aside from a few external ramps, the homes we visited during our research showed little or no adaptations to the needs of residents with disabilities.

One family with a member who has limited mobility lives on the second floor of a home with no lift.<sup>191</sup> Other families live in homes that are not suitable for wheelchairs.<sup>192</sup> One family, which was supposed to receive accommodation that had been partly adapted for wheelchair users, was eventually told by the Council, after it had met with an architect regarding the plans, that: “We have four adapted homes in Manawan that aren’t being used properly. People live there, but they aren’t disabled. Go and choose one of the four houses. Then whoever lives in the one you pick will have to move out.”<sup>193</sup> Knowing that others would lose their home so the family could move in makes the decision a painful one for them.

Some families have also, unsuccessfully, submitted several requests to the Council to have their home adapted to a family member's disabilities.<sup>194</sup> In 2024 and 2025, health professionals made recommendations calling for three homes to be adapted and repaired and for a family member to be potentially rehoused,<sup>195</sup> but they have not yet been followed.

## h. Education

The lack of housing and the level of overcrowding also have negative consequences in terms of education,<sup>196</sup> a right mentioned in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 13),<sup>197</sup> to which Canada is a party. In addition, it is difficult to keep a job, continue with studies or raise children in inadequate housing.<sup>198</sup> Regarding hidden homelessness, Annette Dubé adds: "When young parents send their children to school, I'm sure [homelessness] has an impact on their children's learning and development because they walk around with their children from house to house, they don't have anywhere of their own, which means the parents probably have other priorities than making sure their child goes to school. Their priority will be 'where will I find a place for them to sleep tonight?'".

Many young people who attend primary and secondary schools in Manawan live in overcrowded homes, which often have poor sound insulation.<sup>199</sup> Their homes do not offer the facilities, healthy environment and quiet needed for school work.<sup>200</sup> The education system cannot close every gap caused by outside factors. As Annette Dubé, the director of education services, put it, "we can't control what goes on outside of school. School can't control how long a child sleeps for. It certainly has an impact on the child who sleeps at their school desk because they didn't get enough sleep the night before. It has an impact on their ability to learn and concentrate in class. After a certain amount of time, a young person ends up falling behind, loses motivation and wants to give up on school because they're being left behind."<sup>201</sup>



Cross at the entrance of Manawan

Overcrowded homes mean that many children do not get enough sleep at night or do not have a mattress or bed on which to sleep, then sleep in class or cannot concentrate on their lessons.<sup>202</sup> Some children witness situations they should not be exposed to at their age and do not always have access to someone with whom to discuss their emotions or a place in which to do so, which affects their behaviour.<sup>203</sup> According to several education staff

members we spoke to, this leads to educational delays, particularly in reading and writing.<sup>204</sup> Many children find this discouraging and, in some cases, it leads to them dropping out of school, said Annette Dubé.<sup>205</sup> Such inadequate conditions are currently harming several children's academic success<sup>206</sup> and, according to Annette Dubé, they also affect attendance and graduation rates.<sup>207</sup> All of these factors were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>208</sup> Their impact on education is a side effect of the housing crisis and only aggravates the problems: "I could describe what we're experiencing in terms of housing as a double-edged sword, because it makes more problems," said Jean-Roch Ottawa, a former chief of the community.<sup>209</sup>

Overcrowding also makes it difficult to put children down to give them quiet moments that support personal development.<sup>210</sup> Annette Dubé emphasized that the developmental delay found in some children was a consequence of their housing situation.<sup>211</sup> It is almost impossible for children, teenagers and adults to enjoy moments of calm or a space of their own in which they can relax at home.<sup>212</sup> Some parents have registered their children for homework help to give them a quiet study space because some rooms at home are unusable due to concerns regarding the effects of the mould they contain.<sup>213</sup>

The lack of adapted housing and the absence of specialist and adapted school services for people with disabilities in Manawan mean that many families choose to send their children to schools outside the community.<sup>214</sup>

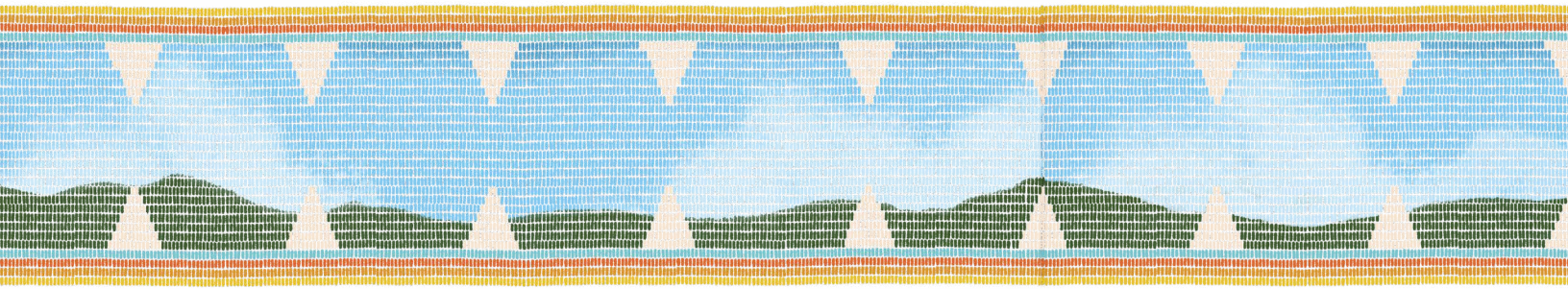
The Grand Chief of the Atikamekw, Constant Awashish, said, "even today, the school dropout rate is very high among communities. If you want to work towards creating a bright future, you need to explain how they can have a vision, a purpose, make them aware of their ability, of reality, of their reality, then give them a purpose, a goal, because Indigenous Peoples have been so crushed that we have become disillusioned."

## **i. Steps taken by the Manawan Atikamekw Council and the challenges it faces**

The Council is responsible for building and funding new homes, inspecting and maintaining the current housing stock, allocating social and rental housing within the community and collecting rent. Managing all of these services represents a significant administrative and financial burden for the community.

The situations described above also reflect the Council's lack of capacity to make the necessary improvements to the community's homes. The Council is short of staff in general and more specifically does not have enough employees with the specialized vocational training needed to meet its residents' housing and maintenance needs.<sup>215</sup>

Another challenge for the community relates to the high churn among housing sector staff, coupled with the near-absence of archives, resulting in a loss of practical knowledge.<sup>216</sup> To remedy the situation, a college-level technical course in First Nations housing management has been established. This was one of the priorities of the tripartite committee that provides guidelines to the Canadian government's funders.<sup>217</sup> In Manawan, some people have taken



this course and are still in post, but care should be taken to prepare the next generation and ensure that knowledge will be passed on.<sup>218</sup>

To provide better service and be more effective, the Council is now working with software that lists tenants of a home, the work and repairs that have been carried out there and future needs. Through this process, 45 homes that require repairs have been identified over three years.<sup>219</sup>

The Council began discussions on developing private housing a few years ago, before COVID-19, but has not organized a formal consultation. According to Sipi Flamand, Chief of Manawan, “we need to have public consultations, group discussions to be able to find solutions, ways to enable access to private property. I know there are families that expect it.” A question-and-answer session is organized after the Council submits its annual report each year,<sup>220</sup> but many community members told us that the answers they receive were rarely satisfactory. There is a Housing Committee made up of staff members from services other than housing, which determines who will be given a house, but the selection criteria are not clear, especially regarding priorities, and no waiting list is available.

The Council reports that homes built more than 30 years ago require major work in terms of their structure, flooring, cladding and kitchens, which require renovation.<sup>221</sup> According to the community development director, the community currently requires an additional 200 homes,<sup>222</sup> and of Quebec’s Indigenous communities, its needs are among the highest.<sup>223</sup>

To help recruit and retain professionals in the healthcare (doctors and nurses)<sup>224</sup>, social services and education sectors, the Council has built homes reserved for them.<sup>225</sup> However, it is not uncommon for such staff members who have been given a home with an unused room to rent it to someone who does not have access to housing or who works in the community.<sup>226</sup> A paediatrician working in the community, Dr Sanja Stojanovic, described the delicate situation that arises as a result of certain professionals being awarded priority housing: “I live in an apartment with someone. There’s always that concern of thinking, ‘am I taking a home that would have gone to a family?’ At the same time, [healthcare] staff also need to be able to live with their children in the best possible conditions.”<sup>227</sup>

However, people who do not belong to the specific professions mentioned cannot access this housing.<sup>228</sup> As a result, good community employees, such as secretaries and mental health workers, leave the community because it cannot give them a home.<sup>229</sup> Community members whose job gives them and their family access to housing experience significant stress at the idea of having or wanting to change job because they would lose their home as a result.<sup>230</sup>

The community is also faced with a number of dilemmas when it comes to housing its professionals. For example, Manawan has a home for the elderly with 30 units, 20 of which are occupied. Of the remaining units, some have been offered to ambulance workers and teachers.<sup>231</sup> To meet the housing needs of people from outside the community who spend a short period of time working in health and social services within the community, for example at the Mihawoso social paediatrics centre, caravans have been placed near the community's hotel. Funds were obtained thanks to Jordan's principle.<sup>232</sup>

While maintaining the supply of affordable homes so low-income families can access adequate housing, the Council wants to diversify the higher-density social housing available and define an area in which to encourage access to private property to meet the needs of families who could afford to do so<sup>233</sup> despite the land tenure obstacles created by the Indian Act.<sup>234</sup> A master plan to create 95 units in the community has been drawn up, but it will depend on the funding the community can obtain to implement the plan and build and upgrade the infrastructure needed to supply drinking water, provide sanitation



Preliminary Community Development Plan

services and build road infrastructure.<sup>235</sup> The Council has recently launched legal action against Quebec's transport ministry<sup>236</sup> to force it to modernize the only access road to the community, which is considered dangerous by its members and increases housing-related budgets, because the isolation and condition of the road<sup>237</sup> increase the cost of the construction materials that must be delivered to the community.

A family centre is also being built. It is partly funded by CMHC and Quebec's Indigenous Initiatives Fund.<sup>238</sup> The facility will include rooms

for women experiencing difficulty so they no longer have to leave the community to go to La Tuque, 225 km from Manawan, to access this type of services.<sup>239</sup> The community suffers greatly from a lack of leisure spaces and the Council is also working to build two youth centres.<sup>240</sup>

The Council has invested in a rainwater drainage system to reduce dampness and water ingress in some homes in the community. It has also arranged for mould removal operations to take place.<sup>241</sup> Suitable new homes for people with disabilities are expected.

# 6. INADEQUATE FUNDING OF HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE ON RESERVES IN CANADA

CMHC has two separate programmes for Indigenous housing: one for urban areas and another for rural areas and reserves.<sup>242</sup> These programmes represent \$257 million in investment over 10 years, equivalent to 0.8% of the National Housing Strategy's budget.<sup>243</sup> Viewed against the level of need, this sum is minuscule, especially given that Indigenous Peoples make up 5% of Canada's population. The Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ) occasionally contributes to housing funding when it believes that doing so falls within its remit.

In general terms, CMHC funding has changed little since the 1990s, without keeping up with inflation or with the increase in construction costs, which have risen by 60% since 2018.<sup>244</sup> Government funding for housing is not sufficient in light of population growth and the discrepancy is only growing.<sup>245</sup> Funding agreements last for a five-year period and increases never exceed 2%.<sup>246</sup>

Regular budgets have stagnated for at least 20 years. There has been an increase in the amounts granted as part of one-off funding injections and, since 2015, further funds have been added almost every year, which has resulted in a certain predictability over the last decade, but this remains at the mercy of changes in government. Currently, a funding injection of around \$600 million has been made for the 2024-2027 period.<sup>247</sup> In addition, while CMHC operates programmes to fund not-for-profit on-reserve housing, they are only sufficient for a very limited number of social housing units.<sup>248</sup> The other main funder, ISC, does not build houses or tackle homelessness, but is instead responsible for funding road and sanitation infrastructure as well as aqueducts.<sup>249</sup>

Unfortunately, it is clear that the federal funds granted are insufficient to cover actual housing-related costs within communities, which forces them to find additional revenue of their own, for example income generated by Council-owned businesses. To provide a constant level of funding, in light of the increase of all housing-related costs, the Council has announced a rent increase<sup>250</sup> for new homes. Regrettably, it has encountered delays with determining the new rent amount, as the federal government long prevented it from doing so, imposing scales that limit the community's independence.<sup>251</sup> Despite the fact that the Manawan Atikamekw Council has decided to increase rents, its resources in recent years have continued to be insufficient to plug the federal funding gap. This state of affairs prevents Canada's Indigenous communities from building enough homes of adequate quality and from enacting programmes to maintain them.<sup>252</sup>

CMHC reports that the funding it grants is determined using the Marshall & Swift calculation method.<sup>253</sup> This method is based on a national average from 47 different sectors to determine the cost of equipment.<sup>254</sup> ISC uses the Colliers method to assess infrastructure cost.<sup>255</sup> It is difficult to assess whether these methods contain any biases unless the funders

in question conduct an analysis to evaluate whether they take account of Indigenous communities' realities when determining the amounts offered for building and repairing homes in light of factors such as the remote nature of communities, their access-related difficulties and the scarcity of labour.

Furthermore, the fact that Manawan can only be accessed via a gravel road disproportionately increases construction costs, which are three times higher than elsewhere.<sup>256</sup> In essence, access is dependent on road and weather conditions. Given the distance from large population centres, it takes longer to receive supplies and the community is at the mercy of businesses that accept delivery contracts. The federal government's funding calculations include a remoteness index to weight these costs. However, as the Manawan community is semi-remote,<sup>257</sup> it does not benefit from this weighting.<sup>258</sup> The two main funders of on-reserve housing (ISC and CMHC) claim to factor these costs in, an opinion not shared by the Council. The community's remote nature also makes it difficult to secure the most qualified people to carry out the necessary repairs and work within the community.<sup>259</sup> Council member Claudia Newashish reported the same experience: "Two years ago, we had houses to build. We couldn't even find concrete firms that would come out to Manawan." She noted that the community had contacted the Quebec transport ministry to ask it to asphalt the road from Manawan to Saint-Michel-des-Saints, the nearest village, because several businesses had refused to use it and it had been the site of several accidental deaths. The ministry refused the request. A prefabricated homes project could not be implemented because it was impossible to use the road to transport the new housing.<sup>260</sup>

The fourth report of the Auditor General of Canada condemns the acute lack of significant funding given to housing in Indigenous communities. She underlines the minimal progress made by ISC and CMHC: between 2018 and 2023, these bodies funded just 21% of construction needs and 20% of necessary repairs, and spent \$3.86 billion in five years without producing any notable improvements.<sup>261</sup> At the current rate, it would be impossible for ISC and CMHC to meet the federal government's commitment to close the First Nations housing gap by 2030<sup>262</sup> and to ensure that Indigenous Peoples live in homes free from mould. The Auditor General also reaffirms that the communities with the greatest funding needs do not receive enough.<sup>263</sup> Furthermore, ISC has not made sufficient progress with transferring responsibility to Indigenous Peoples.<sup>264</sup> Meanwhile, CMHC uses the 2001 census to determine allocation formulas, resulting in chronic under-funding.<sup>265</sup> Neither ISC nor CMHC has ensured that communities have the capacity to manage housing or have the necessary personnel to do so, despite the administrative complexity of having several programs.<sup>266</sup> In the Auditor General's view, it is clear that funding is insufficient and poorly targeted.<sup>267</sup> In a new report published in October 2025, the Auditor General notes with regret that ISC did not even identify the amount of funding needed by First Nations to operate and maintain public drinking water systems.<sup>268</sup> In Manawan, several people interviewed reported faults with the community's drinking water system, which they believed was due to the age of the infrastructure.

The National Building Code for housing applies, but there is no mandatory federal monitoring mechanism on reserves.<sup>269</sup> Reportedly, just 40% of homes funded by ISC complied with the Code. Meanwhile, 90% of CMHC-funded homes were compliant, but no compliance checks were carried out for repairs.<sup>270</sup> The housebuilding standards followed by Manawan's housing team are based on the Canadian building code for design and

construction. However, this code has not yet been adapted to the climate crisis (energy efficiency; resilience to unpredictable climate events such as drought, heat and rain; green infrastructure; validity of climate zones, etc.)<sup>271</sup>, despite the fact that Manawan is located in a forest region where forest fires are more frequent. Additionally, Canada is still behind with providing “direct emergency response services to First Nations communities.”<sup>272</sup>

There are two programmes focused on adapting homes for people with disabilities: the Home Adaptations for Seniors’ Independence Program and the On-Reserve Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program,<sup>273</sup> which includes a component aimed at those with disabilities. According to Guy Latouche, “There’s almost nothing. It’s a regional funding envelope of between \$500,000 and \$1 million. It gives communities between \$25,000 and \$30,000 every two years!” In addition, upon reading the budget submitted on 4 November 2025, nothing indicates that this fund will be increased.<sup>274</sup> CMHC is aware that the funding envelope is meagre, but it believes that homes could also be adapted as part of regular home funding programmes,<sup>275</sup> which would result in a proportionate reduction in the number of homes built in the community.

Funds to tackle homelessness come from Canada’s Homelessness Strategy, run by Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada.<sup>276</sup> Overall, across Canada as a whole, federal government programs total \$413 million per year over 10 years to tackle Indigenous homelessness in urban environments.<sup>277</sup> However, just 14% of the budget of Canada’s Homelessness Strategy is dedicated to addressing homelessness in Indigenous people, despite their significant over-representation in Canada’s homelessness statistics,<sup>278</sup> and there is no sign that these funds will be increased.<sup>279</sup>

Despite Canada’s recognition of the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous Peoples in the definition of homelessness, financial support programmes are not tailored to this reality. They do not consider the specific nature of on-reserve homelessness, where there are few shelters, permanent or temporary, coupled with a lack of housing.

With support from the Council of the Atikamekw Nation, Manawan was able to obtain Quebec funds for the imminent construction of off-reserve temporary housing to provide personalized services to people experiencing homelessness within the community.<sup>280</sup> The buildings cannot be located within the community due to constitutional jurisdiction matters linked to legislative powers. However, the government of Quebec invests in the reserve in other areas, such as public health and safety. This could potentially be a way in which the province of Quebec could invest in this issue, given that the surrounding cities, including Montreal, host people experiencing homelessness due to lack of urgent, temporary or intermediary housing on reserves.

There are funding programmes other than those offered by ISC and CMHC, but they require the resources to analyse them all along with their own unique specifications and to submit applications at the appropriate time.<sup>281</sup> This is coupled with the increasing number of parties, including ministries, departments and bodies, with which communities must interact to tackle a range of housing-related challenges, including building homes and infrastructure, equipment, labour and homelessness. This makes the work of small housing teams considerably more complex and burdensome. Factors such as these often put communities, including Manawan, in a difficult position when it comes to planning potential long-term housing investments.<sup>282</sup> Sipi Flamand, Chief of Manawan, said that there were not

enough “human resources to be able to handle these requests. Often, we have to seek out consultants who do not come from the community, who don’t necessarily understand our reality and who end up costing us a lot of money.” In this regard, Guy Latouche emphasized that First Nations know their own priorities, and if they were given an overall budget, they would be able to manage or invest it.<sup>283</sup>



Sipi Flamand, chief of Manawan Atikamekw Council

In light of discussions with teams from CMHC and ISC, it became clear to us that funding for on-reserve housing and infrastructure is complex, even for these organizations, to such an extent that it proved impossible to obtain answers to all of the questions we provided in advance to the main department in question, ISC, whose mandate is to help provide services on reserves.<sup>284</sup>

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, by which Canada is bound,<sup>285</sup> reiterates the right of Indigenous Peoples to determine and establish development strategies and to be actively involved

in developing housing programmes, among others, and to be able to administer these programmes themselves and determine how to develop and use their lands and territories.<sup>286</sup>

“Understood in conjunction with the principles of self-determination and free, prior and informed consent, this requires that indigenous peoples be meaningfully consulted with respect to any housing-related law or measure that will affect them, such as a national housing strategy or action plan, with a view to obtaining their consent.”<sup>287</sup> Although many First Nations in Canada have advocated in favour of control and management of the federal programmes available on reserves through transfer of responsibility, they face multiple obstacles to achieving this goal, including uncertainty and variation in levels of funding from one year to the next and an absence of legal funding for the provision of essential services.<sup>288</sup>

Moreover, “the federal government has a fiduciary duty. The Crown has a fiduciary duty to Indigenous Peoples. I think it’s their responsibility to respond [to this crisis]. Politically, legally, socially, Indian reserves were designed to extinguish Indigenous cultures, to extinguish us. [It’s] a genocide, but we’re still here, still present, and there are a lot more of



Church of Manawan

us too. I think that if we're on a path towards reconciliation, Canada should respond in a way that brings changes within communities, in particular by urgently addressing the housing crisis," said Sipi Flamand, Chief of Manawan.

Finally, it should be pointed out that in accordance with international law, all levels of government are required to implement the provisions of a treaty or covenant: "the Committee reminds States Parties with a federal structure of the terms of article 50, according to which the Covenant's provisions 'shall extend to all parts of federal states without any limitations or exceptions'."<sup>289</sup> As such, all provinces are also responsible for ensuring that Indigenous Peoples' rights are respected, protected and implemented, even if they fall within federal jurisdiction. Quebec and the other provinces are therefore responsible for ensuring that the right to a decent home is respected, protected and implemented across their territory, for all of their residents.

# 7. 30 YEARS OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MULTIPLE UN BODIES ON HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CANADA

Since 1993, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) has expressed deep concern at the socioeconomic disparities that continue to exist between Indigenous Peoples and the rest of Canadian society, as well as the lack of decent housing in Indigenous communities,<sup>290</sup> as did the CEDAW in 2008.<sup>291</sup> In 1998, the CESCR noted that almost a quarter of Indigenous homes required major repairs and lacked basic amenities.<sup>292</sup> The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child echoed this observation in 2012, mentioning<sup>293</sup> the poor housing conditions in which Indigenous children disproportionately find themselves, and in 2022, highlighting the major repairs that are required.<sup>294</sup> These conditions result in Indigenous children being removed from their environment more frequently and facing housing insecurity more often. The CRC emphasized its concerns regarding the structural discrimination suffered by Indigenous children in terms of access to adequate standards of living.<sup>295</sup>

In 2016, the CEDAW recommended that a specific plan be developed to address the socioeconomic challenges affecting Indigenous women, which put them at risk of being affected by poverty, health problems and housing vulnerability.<sup>296</sup> In the same year, the CESCR highlighted the lack of federal government funding for Indigenous Peoples living on and off reserves,<sup>297</sup> as well as their housing conditions, which were described as poor due to overcrowding.<sup>298</sup> The CEDAW emphasized that, despite the adoption of national poverty reduction and housing strategies, Indigenous women continue to be over-represented among victims of poverty and homelessness and those who struggle to obtain sufficient food, with these problems being exacerbated by the housing shortage. In 2024, the CEDAW also recommended that the definition of chronic homelessness be revised to better reflect the realities faced by Indigenous women in terms of housing.<sup>299</sup>

In 2017, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expressed concern about the persistent inequalities experienced by people with disabilities in Canada in terms of their ability to exercise several rights due to a lack of affordable housing, with Indigenous women facing a greater risk.<sup>300</sup> The Committee also noted that financial support was insufficient to guarantee an adequate standard of living and to cover additional disability-related costs, especially for Indigenous people.<sup>301</sup> In 2019, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of people with disabilities explained that these people do not have access to the same

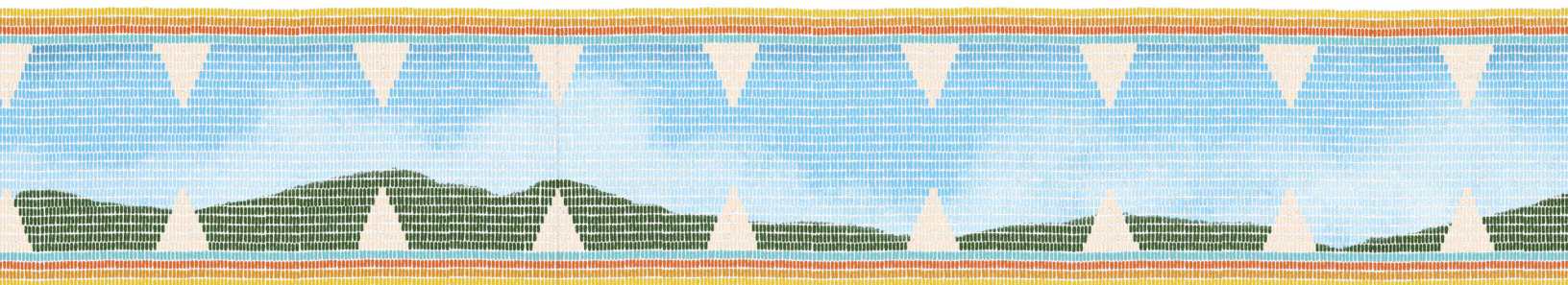


Street in Manawan

services off-reserve and that they are not culturally appropriate.<sup>302</sup> She also noted the lack of accessible data on Indigenous people with disabilities in these areas.

In 2014, James Anaya, then the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, highlighted the housing crisis plaguing the north and Indigenous communities and its socioeconomic repercussions.<sup>303</sup> He mentioned endemic overcrowding and the fact that remoteness and extreme weather exacerbated housing problems.<sup>304</sup> He also emphasized that many homes required major repairs and that funding was insufficient.<sup>305</sup> All over the country, the lack of housing contributes to deficits and financial difficulties for Indigenous communities.<sup>306</sup>

In 2023, a subsequent Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, José Francisco Calí-Tzay, explained that persistent racial discrimination continued to cause displacement and dispossessions of Indigenous Peoples from their lands, creating situations including homelessness.<sup>307</sup> Indigenous women, girls, sexual minorities and gender diverse people and people with disabilities are disproportionately affected by housing insecurity, homelessness, poverty and precarious living situations.<sup>308</sup> Notably, Indigenous Peoples are “more likely to live in substandard, overcrowded and culturally inadequate housing than the rest of the Canadian population.”<sup>309</sup>



The Rapporteur noted the lack of significant improvements in the situation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada during his term, and also observed that the urgent need to resolve the housing crisis in Indigenous communities had been an issue since 2014.<sup>310</sup> The consequences of colonialism and racial discrimination continue to result in harms.<sup>311</sup> Indigenous women continue to be disproportionately affected by housing insecurity, homelessness and poverty.<sup>312</sup> Under the Indian Act, despite the amendments that have been made to it, many women and their descendants are denied Indian status under the Act and therefore cannot access a home in their community.<sup>313</sup> Indigenous Peoples, particularly in the north, are experiencing more intensely the effects of climate change, including forest fires, making them vulnerable in the event of evacuation due to their housing insecurity.<sup>314</sup> Additionally, Indigenous Peoples are more likely to live in non-standard homes, overcrowded and culturally inadequate homes, while also having inadequate access to homes on reserve territory.<sup>315</sup>

As part of the most recent United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Canada accepted several recommendations issued specifically on the matter of housing.<sup>316</sup> It agreed to commit to adapting a concrete strategy to strengthen access to adequate housing for Indigenous Peoples.<sup>317</sup> More generally, Canada indicated its desire to eliminate chronic homelessness, with a target of a 50% reduction by 2027-2028.<sup>318</sup> Canada has committed to furthering its housing policy, including through the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.<sup>319</sup>

## 8. WHEN CHILDHOOD AND HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS GO HAND IN HAND

Based on the findings of this research, Amnesty International considers that the right to adequate housing is neither respected nor implemented in Manawan. The life stories of the people who live in Manawan show that adequate housing standards have not been met and that, in addition to breaches of the right to adequate housing, the rights to education, health, privacy, safety and life are neither respected nor implemented. This state of affairs perpetuates the cycle of violence against women, girls, children and elderly people and helps to maintain a large part of the community in poverty due to lack of high-quality, reliable and safe housing and infrastructure, forcing many into homelessness.

The realization of the right to adequate housing is also set to be implemented progressively. States are required to use as many resources as are available to guarantee the right to adequate housing through all appropriate means, including by adopting legislative measures. As a State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Canada has a duty to provide basic shelter and housing.<sup>320</sup> It is clear that Canada is not doing enough to adequately fund housing on reserves and that it has failed to meet its fundamental obligations for several decades. Furthermore, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on housing emphasized that States must give priority to measures targeting those who are most vulnerable to discrimination, in particular those faced with multiple forms of discrimination, and must meet the needs of historically excluded and marginalized groups,<sup>321</sup> such as Indigenous Peoples.

The housing crisis in Manawan is not unique and it is representative of several other Indigenous communities in Canada. Today, in 2026, Indigenous Peoples on and off reserves continue to live in unacceptable housing conditions across Canada. In its most recent report, CMHC states that “Indigenous households [are] more than twice as likely to live in inadequate housing” and that the figures may be under-reported because of Indigenous Peoples’ historical mistrust of colonial government institutions. In 2021, 43.9% of Indigenous households lived in housing that failed to meet at least one of the three standards defining adequate housing in Canada, adequacy, suitability and affordability.<sup>322</sup> Overcrowding remains a major issue in many Indigenous communities. On reserves, almost half of households live in homes that do not comply with quality or size standards. Additionally, many Indigenous reserves across Canada do not always have access to drinking water.<sup>323</sup> As of 9 April 2026, 40 long-term drinking water advisories were in effect in 37 Indigenous communities.<sup>324</sup>

Within Indigenous communities in Quebec, 51% of homes require repairs and 32% require major repairs.<sup>325</sup> In Quebec, the province in which Manawan is located, 14% of First Nations members live in overcrowded homes, almost 40% of which would require at least two additional bedrooms.<sup>326</sup>

“We face great challenges, some of which are as follows. Our population is young. It is increasing rapidly—in fact, four times faster than that of the province over a 10-year period [...] the median age of our members in Quebec is 28, compared to 43 for the non-indigenous population. [...] we need stable, predictable funding and [...] the current funding levels are insufficient to meet our needs. When we’re telling you we need to build 1,000 to 2,000 units per year and the current funding level allows us to do only 245, that speaks to a huge gap,” Lance Haymond told the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs on 4 March 2022.<sup>327</sup>



Road sign for children protection in Manawan

Due to lack of housing, many people, including children and in particular those living in poverty, are forced to live in inadequate, uninhabitable homes that are often hazardous to their health and well-being. Lack of housing often also leads to homelessness and is simultaneously a key factor in and a manifestation of inequalities and discrimination.

The issue of homelessness is central to Manawan and many other Indigenous communities in Canada. However, the scale of the situation is unprecedented if we use the definition set out by Jesse Thistle, which highlights the fact that colonialist policies force Indigenous Peoples to live on minuscule territories and not only result in hidden homelessness but also ensure that through lack of choice, families live in overcrowded, substandard housing. The overall situation on reserves is untenable and it is much worse than people think. Despite the lack of data, band councils know that hidden homelessness exists within the territory they control and manage. Coupled with the housing shortage and the fact that many homes are substandard, it becomes clear that the situation is catastrophic and must be resolved urgently and effectively.

Various Councils over the last 20 years have tried without success to make people and their elected representatives<sup>328</sup> aware of the crisis in Manawan. Despite some reports in the media,<sup>329</sup> few measures have been taken in partnership with the community to find global solutions to housing- and infrastructure-related problems. There is awareness of the situation,<sup>330</sup> but no action is being taken to resolve it. This long-standing indifference raises the question of systemic racism regarding housing. The same question is also raised regarding the forced sterilization of Indigenous women, which has been condemned by the

Innu and Atikamekw since 1982,<sup>331</sup> without resulting in any significant changes with the medical profession or the political sphere,<sup>332</sup> and regarding the chronic underfunding of education for young people from Indigenous communities, a practice long condemned by some Indigenous organizations, which have turned to the Human Rights Tribunal to achieve their aims.<sup>333</sup>

Amnesty International considers that systemic racism towards Indigenous Peoples in Quebec and Canada, the persistent impacts of colonial policies and the historic underfunding of reserves are key factors that contribute to the housing crisis in Manawan. Having a minister recognize that “Less crowded, better housing in Indigenous communities”<sup>334</sup> is needed is not enough. The situation requires significant and immediate measures to ensure that First Nations can live in dignity, stop being marginalized and discriminated against and develop in accordance with their priorities and goals. As the federal government recognizes the systemic racism experienced by Indigenous Peoples and its consequences on their daily lives, it must implement a plan to adequately address all of their fundamental needs in terms of housing and infrastructure so that everyone can enjoy a dignified life. Provinces, including Quebec, must recognize the existence of systemic racism towards Indigenous Peoples and work hand in hand with communities without digging in their heels over jurisdictional matters.<sup>335</sup>

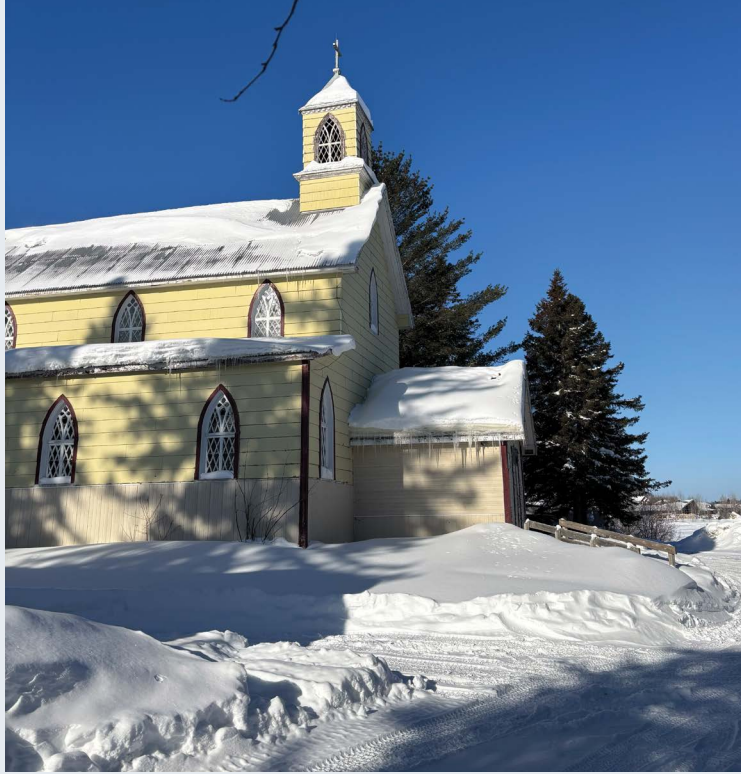
This report shows that both federal and provincial governments are not or not yet investing sufficient funds in housing as a whole, whether in terms of housebuilding, maintenance, services offered, access to the community, in particular road access, building staff capacity or meeting needs linked to demographic growth. Governments must, in close partnership with band councils, invest heavily, quickly, in a predictable manner and over several years to make up for lost time and maintain the pace of construction while ensuring that tools for assessing construction costs are free from bias. Programmes specifically focused on adapting homes for people with disabilities must be sufficiently tailored to meet all of their needs. Governments must take on board an Indigenous vision of the issue of homelessness to provide financial programmes that are appropriate for their reality.

Finally, Canada and its provinces must implement the many recommendations of the United Nations regarding Indigenous housing in general and more specifically for Indigenous children, women and elderly people. For thirty years, the United Nations has called attention to their reluctance to act, which has perpetuated the inequality and discrimination faced by Indigenous Peoples.

# 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

## To the federal government

1. Ensure that the transfer of responsibility for housing is tailored to each community's reality in light of its experience of the repercussions of colonialism, its unique economic and socio-historical situation and its location.
2. **Funding:**
  - a. Increase funding for ISC and CMHC programmes on reserves based on the true costs of construction and index link this funding to inflation to compensate for the current lack of housing and to allow future homes to be built in response to Indigenous demographic growth.
  - b. Make substantial increases to funding for home adaptation programmes for people living with disabilities so band councils do not have to use funding from regular programmes (the On-Reserve Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program—housing for people with disabilities component and the Home Adaptations for Seniors' Independence Program).
  - c. Ensure that budgets for funding housing construction and renovation programs are predictable in the long term to facilitate planning.
  - d. Provide sufficient funding that is tailored to the reality of Indigenous homelessness on reserves, particularly remote or semi-remote reserves, to develop alternatives.
3. Increase standards and principles governing adequate housing to align with international standards, particularly in terms of habitability, access to services and cultural requirements from an Indigenous perspective to better assess the current situation regarding the right to adequate housing, all while consulting Indigenous Peoples.
4. Analyse the methods used by CMHC (Marshall & Swift) and ISC (Colliers) to assess construction costs to ensure that funds provided to Indigenous communities do not contain any biases that penalize them.
  - e. Commission an independent committee, including Indigenous members, to conduct an assessment as soon as possible.
  - f. Make the results public.
  - g. Correct the methods used if necessary.
5. Develop disaggregated data on social issues such as overcrowded homes, substandard homes and homelessness, as specified in the National Housing Strategy, in accordance with First Nations Principles of data ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP®).<sup>336</sup>



Church of  
Manawan

6. Implement the calls for justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls related to housing, more specifically numbers 1.1, 4.1, 4.6, 12.4, 12.11 and 18.25.
7. Regional and international instruments:
  - a. Ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights and International Labour Organization Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, and recognize the competence of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (article 14).
  - b. Implement the recommendations of the various United Nations reviews, committees and special procedures on adequate housing.
  - c. Implement the recommendations of general recommendation no. 39 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and Girls, in particular those regarding discrimination of all kinds against Indigenous women and girls.

## **To all levels of government (federal, provincial and territorial):**

1. With the active involvement of people living with disabilities, set out in law specific mechanisms to ensure the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is respected by all levels of government (federal, provincial and territorial), as recommended by the Convention's Committee.

## **To all provinces:**

1. Invest in housing for all on reserves to provide solutions chosen by Indigenous Peoples, including more appropriate permanent and temporary housing for Indigenous Peoples to allow them to live in their own cultural environment.
2. Invest more in shelters for women and girls who have been victims of violence.

## **To the province of Quebec:**

1. Implement recommendations 8 and 10 of the Commission on Relations between Indigenous Peoples and Certain Public Services to invest in building and maintaining homes in Indigenous communities.
2. Pass a law implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
3. Adopt Joyce's Principle<sup>337</sup> and formally recognize the systemic racism experienced by Indigenous Peoples.

## **To the Manawan Atikamekw Council:**

1. Lodge a complaint with various United Nations forums and make contact with United Nations bodies such as expert mechanisms on the rights of Indigenous Peoples on the issue of breach of the right to life as a result of the housing crisis in Manawan.
2. Lodge a discrimination complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on the topic of adequate housing on reserves on the basis that the funding model is inadequate, insufficient and racially discriminatory and that it perpetuates colonial prejudices inflicted on Indigenous communities.
3. Implement a mechanism to ensure transparency and follow-up regarding housing priorities and policies, in particular with regard to the Council's housing waiting list and how housing is allocated.
4. Provide continuous professional development for people working on housing, prepare the next generation and implement a system for passing on knowledge.
5. Deal with electrical safety issues as a priority to ensure homes are safe.
6. Set up and operate a service to better communicate with members regarding requests for housing, repairs and renovations.



Research mission  
in Mahawan

## Notes

- 1 Canada, Indian Act, 1985, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/i-5/> c. I-5, Sections 2(1), 18(1) and 20(1). The term “reserve” was created by the Indian Act, not by Indigenous Peoples. The term “community” is preferred in this report when it refers to the challenges faced by members of the Manawan First Nation, while the term “reserve” is used when we detail the impacts of the law.
- 2 Flora Mutti, Initiatives atikamekw d’affirmation et de mise en valeur des savoirs et du territoire, 2020, Master’s thesis, Université Laval, Quebec, p. 5. See also Suzy Basile, Le rôle et la place des femmes Atikamekw dans la gouvernance du territoire et des ressources naturelles, 2017, (Environmental science doctoral thesis, Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue), [depositum.uqat.ca/703/](https://depositum.uqat.ca/703/).
- 3 Statistics provided by the Manawan Atikamekw Council (CDAM): 2095 (2003), 2214 (2005), 2476 (2010), 2817 (2015), 3043 (2020), 3056 (2021), 3067 (2022), 3081 (2023) and 3141 (2024). The CDAM’s statistics are more accurate than those of Statistics Canada, as many members of Indigenous Peoples mistrust government institutions whose policies they see as colonialist and as such do not take part in censuses.
- 4 Statistics Canada, Canada at a Glance, 2003, pp. 1-4, online: [statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/](https://statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/); Statistics Canada, Canada’s population estimates, fourth quarter 2024, 19 March 2025: [statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/](https://statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/).
- 5 There are currently between three and five private individual homes across Manawan’s entire housing stock.
- 6 Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL), Les besoins en logement de Première Nation Manawan, May 2022.
- 7 Interview with Gaétan Flamand, interim director of community development.
- 8 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 9 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 10 House of Commons, The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, June 2022, 44th Parliament, 1st session, p. 18; Front d’action populaire en réaménagement urbain (FRAPRU), Crises du logement et droits humains au Québec : Rapport à la Défenseure fédérale du droit au logement, December 2022, p. 13.
- 11 Nunavik Civil Liberties Association and Clinique internationale de défense des droits humains de l’UQAM (CIDDHU), La pénurie de logements convenables au Nunavik : Le produit de la discrimination systémique envers les Inuit, Rapport parallèle sur le Canada au Conseil des droits de l’homme pour l’Examen périodique universel, March 2023, p. 1; FRAPRU, Crises du logement et droits humains au Québec, (previously cited) p. 13; Sections 3(6), 4-10, 11, 25 and 26 of the Indian Act, (LRC [1985], c. I-5); Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Volume 1 - Looking Forward, Looking Back, 1996, online [archives.ca/e/e448/e011188230-01.pdf](https://archives.ca/e/e448/e011188230-01.pdf).
- 12 Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC), Indigenous Housing: Policy and Engagement – Final Report to Indigenous Services Canada, 31 March 2020, p. 18
- 13 Indian Act (RSC, 1985, c. I-5), s. 18.
- 14 First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Sustainable Development Institute (FNQLSDI), Quebec-First Nations Energy Transition Committee, Diagnosis and findings: Residential and community buildings among First Nations in Quebec, 2020, pp. 7-8; Indian Act (RSC, 1985, c. I-5), s. 18.
- 15 Indian Act (RSC, 1985, c. I-5), s. 18.
- 16 FNQLSDI, Diagnosis and findings (previously cited), p. 7.
- 17 FNQLSDI, Diagnosis and findings (previously cited), p. 8.
- 18 Canada, Constitution Act, 1867, online [laws-lois.justice.gc.ca](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca), 30 & 31 Victoria, c. 3 (U.K.), sections 91 and 92.
- 19 Canada, Constitution Act, 1867 (previously cited), sections 91(24), 92(13) and 92(16); Sara Fryer and Olivier Leblanc-Laurendeau, Understanding Federal Jurisdiction and First Nations, November 2019, Library of Parliament, no. 2019-51-E, [parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/](https://parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/), pp. 2-4, 9.
- 20 Sara Fryer and Olivier Leblanc-Laurendeau, Understanding Federal Jurisdiction and First Nations (previously cited), pp. 2-4, 9.
- 21 One such example is the negotiations between the federal and provincial governments on which level should pay for healthcare for treating Jordan, a young boy who died as a result of lack of appropriate care. Canada has now developed Jordan’s Principle, which aims to meet necessary care needs first and discuss where responsibility for payment lies later. In addition, funds for policing services in Indigenous communities pose challenges as identified by the Auditor General in her 2024 report, <https://www.canada.ca/en/auditor-general/our-work/audit-reports/parl-oag-202403-03-e.html>.
- 22 Sara Fryer and Olivier Leblanc-Laurendeau, Understanding Federal Jurisdiction and First Nations (previously cited), pp. 2-4, 9; Yellowhead Institute, Making the most out of Canada’s new Department of Indigenous Services Act, 12 August 2019, online: [yellowheadinstitute.org/2019/08/12/making-the-most-out-of-canadas-new-department-of-indigenous-services-act/](https://yellowheadinstitute.org/2019/08/12/making-the-most-out-of-canadas-new-department-of-indigenous-services-act/).
- 23 FNQLSDI, Diagnosis and findings (previously cited), pp. 9-10.

- 24 House of Commons, The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada (previously cited); FRAPRU, Crises du logement et droits humains au Québec (previously cited) p. 13.
- 25 House of Commons, The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada (previously cited), p. 25.
- 26 FNQLSDI, Diagnosis and findings (previously cited), p. 7.
- 27 See the process for obtaining ministerial loan guarantees: [sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/](https://sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/).
- 28 House of Commons, The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada (previously cited), p. 41.
- 29 Radio-Canada Info, “Il y a du racisme systémique dans la GRC, rétorque Trudeau à Brenda Lucki”, Radio-Canada, 11 June 2020, [ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1711207/canada-racisme-systemique-trudeau-grc-lucki-police](https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1711207/canada-racisme-systemique-trudeau-grc-lucki-police); Prime Minister of Canada, Statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 21 March 2021, <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/statements/2021/03/21/statement-prime-minister-international-day-elimination-racial>; Teresa Wright, “Racisme: le ministre des Services aux Autochtones demande à la GRC d’en faire plus”, La Presse, 11 June 2020, [lapresse.ca/actualites/politique/2020-06-11/racisme-le-ministre-des-services-aux-autochtones-demande-a-la-grc-d-en-faire-plus](https://lapresse.ca/actualites/politique/2020-06-11/racisme-le-ministre-des-services-aux-autochtones-demande-a-la-grc-d-en-faire-plus); Canadian colonialist policies, such as residential schools, forced displacements and the Indian Act traumatized generations, creating lasting mental health, family, social and economic impacts and causing a loss of cultural identity among Indigenous Peoples (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH), Health Inequalities and Social Determinants of Aboriginal Peoples’ Health, 2009, p. 23). In Canada, 150,000 children were forced to attend one of the 139 residential schools, and in Quebec, at least 13,000 children attended one of the 10 residential schools in the province (<https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/history-of-residential-schools/> and Julia Posca, Portrait des inégalités socioéconomiques touchant les Autochtones au Québec, January 2018, p. 2).
- 30 House of Commons, The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada (previously cited), p. 23; NWAC, Indigenous Housing: Policy and Engagement (previously cited), p. 40.
- 31 See Julia Posca, Portrait des inégalités socioéconomiques touchant les Autochtones au Québec (previously cited), p. 2; NCCIH, Visioning the future: First Nations, Inuit, & Métis population and public health, 2021, pp. 25-26; Marie-Laure Josselin, “Une trentaine d’Atikamekw de Manawan affirment avoir été stérilisées de force à Joliette”, Radio-Canada Espace autochtone, 9 October 2025, [ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/2188801/recours-collectif-sterelisations-hopital-joliette](https://ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/2188801/recours-collectif-sterelisations-hopital-joliette); Senate of Canada, Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, Forced and Coerced Sterilization of Persons in Canada, 3 June 2021, <https://sencanada.ca/en/info-page/parl-43-2/ridr-forced-and-coerced-sterilization-of-persons-in-canada/>; NWAC, Shadow Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, List of Issues Prior to Reporting in Relation to Canada’s 7<sup>th</sup> Periodic Review, May 2021, pp. 16-17; a class action on forced sterilization of women of Atikamekw origin has been authorized (see: <https://www.dionneschulze.ca/imposed-sterilizations/?lang=en>).
- 32 Government of Canada, The Supreme Court of Canada unanimously affirms Indigenous jurisdiction over child welfare, 20 June 2024, online: <https://justice.canada.ca/eng/declaration/stories-histoires/01.html>; the province of Quebec, in which Manawan is located, had contested this jurisdiction (see: [ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/2048038/enfance-protection-loi-autochtones-c92-justice](https://ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/2048038/enfance-protection-loi-autochtones-c92-justice)).
- 33 NWAC, Shadow Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (previously cited), pp. 18-21.
- 34 Jordan’s Principle is a Canadian legal requirement that guarantees First Nations and Inuit children fast, equal access to healthcare, social and education services without having to wait for different levels of government to agree on who will pay for it, following a principle of fairness in which the child’s needs are met first and the governments settle the financial aspects among themselves later ([sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/](https://sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/)). It was established following the death of Jordan River Anderson, a Cree child who died as a result of lack of home care due to financial disagreements between governments.
- 35 NWAC, Shadow Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (previously cited), pp. 18-21.
- 36 8 October 2025, [ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/2197430/cour-appel-principe-jordan-joanne-powless-autochtones](https://ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/2197430/cour-appel-principe-jordan-joanne-powless-autochtones).
- 37 See examples of racism in NCCIH, Visioning the future: First Nations, Inuit, & Métis population and public health, 2021.
- 38 NWAC, Shadow Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (previously cited), pp. 26-28.

- 39 Statistics Canada, Over-representation of Indigenous persons in adult provincial custody, 2019/2020 and 2020/2021, 12 July 2023, [statcan.gc.ca](https://www.statcan.gc.ca); see also Cyndy Wylde's analysis of the imprisonment of Indigenous women who "are faced with negative perceptions and prejudices that stigmatize them and worsen their prison experience": Cyndy Wylde, 2024, *Αλίσιαρεκ8εκ : ce qui arrive aux femmes autochtones en prison*. (Doctoral thesis.) Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue, [depositum.uqat.ca/id/eprint/1633](https://depositum.uqat.ca/id/eprint/1633).
- 40 Charles Séguin, "Six Autochtones morts lors d'interventions policières en deux semaines au Canada", Radio-Canada Info, 13 September 2024, [ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/2104375/six-autochtones-tues-abattus-police-grc](https://ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/2104375/six-autochtones-tues-abattus-police-grc); La Presse canadienne, "Une enquête nationale exigée sur la mort de 9 Autochtones lors d'interventions policières", Radio-Canada Espace autochtone, 22 October 2024, [ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/2114327/autochtones-morts-police-enquete-nationale](https://ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/2114327/autochtones-morts-police-enquete-nationale).
- 41 NWAC, Shadow Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (previously cited), pp. 1-7.
- 42 See also the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's general recommendation no. 39 on the rights of Indigenous women and girls, CEDAW/C/GC/39.
- 43 NWAC, Shadow Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (previously cited), pp. 31-33.
- 44 NWAC, Shadow Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (previously cited), p. 16.
- 45 NWAC, Shadow Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (previously cited), pp. 31-33.
- 46 NWAC, Indigenous Housing: Policy and Engagement (previously cited).
- 47 NWAC, Indigenous Housing: Policy and Engagement (previously cited), pp. 39-42.
- 48 ICESCR, Article 11.1. States Parties to the Covenant must take appropriate steps to gradually realize this right, using as many resources as are available; CRC, Article 16.1, CRPD, Article 22.1 and CERD, Article 5 (e).
- 49 CESCR, General comment No. 4, paragraph 7, E/1992/23.
- 50 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), The human right to adequate housing: Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, 2025, [ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/human-right-adequate-housing](https://ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/human-right-adequate-housing).
- 51 OHCHR, The human right to adequate housing (previously cited). Leilani Farha, a former Special Rapporteur on the right to housing, adds that the literature increasingly mentions an eighth element, housing sustainability. Housing must be adapted to climate change and its impacts, both in terms of the home itself and related infrastructure (2 July 2025).
- 52 Canada has been a member of the Organization of American States since 1990. The right to housing is set out in the inter-American human rights system, which is binding on Canada, in the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man (Article 11) and in the Charter of the Organization of American States (Article 34k). The non-binding American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes Indigenous Peoples' right to own and develop their ancestral lands and have them recognized and their right to have cultural traditions related to their lands respected. Additionally, in one of its legal opinions, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (advisory opinion, AO-32/25, 29 May 2025, footnote 676, [corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea\\_32\\_en.pdf](https://corteidh.or.cr/docs/opiniones/seriea_32_en.pdf)), recognized the United Nations' seven principles regarding adequate housing, thus incorporating them into the inter-American system. See the cases of the Yakye Axa Indigenous Community v. Paraguay (IACtHR, judgement of 17 June 2005, Series C, No. 125, Sawhoyamaya Indigenous Community v. Paraguay (IACtHR 2006) and Xákmok Kásek Indigenous Community v. Paraguay (IACtHR 2010).
- 53 UNDRIP, Articles 10 and 26. On 21 June 2021, the Canadian government passed an act implementing UNDRIP, which required its laws, including the Indian Act, to be made consistent with the rights set out in UNDRIP. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 2021, [laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/u-2.2/page-1.html](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/u-2.2/page-1.html).
- 54 UNDRIP, Article 21.1.
- 55 UNDRIP, Article 27.
- 56 UNDRIP, Article 32.
- 57 CERD, Article 5(e)(iii).
- 58 CEDAW, Article 14.2(h).
- 59 CRPD, Articles 9.1(a), 19(a) and 5.3.
- 60 SC 2019, c. 29, section 313
- 61 Section 4(d) of the National Housing Strategy Act.
- 62 The National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy, which was adopted in 2018 and which will be renewed after consultations that will begin in 2026. [afn.ca/community-services/housing-and-homelessness/](https://afn.ca/community-services/housing-and-homelessness/).
- 63 CMHC is the national body responsible for housing in Canada. It acts as a financial institution for the implementation of government housing programmes. About CMHC, 2025: [cmhc-schl.gc.ca/about-us](https://cmhc-schl.gc.ca/about-us).
- 64 CMHC [cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/CoreHousingNeedMethodology](https://cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/CoreHousingNeedMethodology).
- 65 CMHC, "National Occupancy Standard": [cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/industry-innovation-and-leadership/industry-expertise/affordable-housing/provincial-territorial-agreements/investment-in-affordable-housing/national-occupancy-standard](https://cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/industry-innovation-and-leadership/industry-expertise/affordable-housing/provincial-territorial-agreements/investment-in-affordable-housing/national-occupancy-standard).
- 66 CMHC, "National Occupancy Standard" (previously cited).
- 67 House of Commons, The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada (previously cited), pp. 9-10.
- 68 NCCIH, Visioning the future: First Nations, Inuit, & Métis population and public health, 2021, pp. 49-51

- 69 Indigenous housing inequality in Canada will drive up costs and health risks without policy changes: report, 4 December 2025, <https://climateinstitute.ca/news/indigenous-housing-inequality-canada-will-drive-up-costs-and-health-risks-without-policy-changes/>.
- 70 House of Commons, *The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada* (previously cited), p. 22; House of Commons, *Indigenous Housing: The Direction Home*, Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, May 2021, 43rd Parliament, 2nd session, pp. 19-20, 28, 35-38
- 71 House of Commons, *Indigenous Housing: The Direction Home* (previously cited), pp. 47-50.
- 72 A/74/183; interview with Leilani Farha, 2 July 2025.
- 73 CESCR, General comment no. 15, 2003, E/C.12/2002/11, ICESCR, Articles 11 and 12; Report of the Special Rapporteur on water and sanitation rights, Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, during his visit to Canada in 2024, A/HRC/57/48/Add.1.
- 74 *Our Common Agenda*, Report of the Secretary-General, 2021, [un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common\\_Agenda\\_Report\\_English.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf), in which António Guterres explains that internet access is a human right. During an interview she gave us on 2 July 2025, Leilani Farha said: “Today, electricity and internet access are included because they are essential for life, communication, safety, etc.”.
- 75 CESCR, General comment no. 14, 2000, E/C.12/2000/4; General comment no. 13, 1999, E/C.12/1999/10.
- 76 A/74/183, paragraph 60; General comment no. 21, 2009, E/C.12/GC/21, on the right of everyone to take part in cultural life, paragraphs 16, 36 and 37.
- 77 General comment no. 26, 2022, E/C.12/GC/26: “access to land provides space for housing” (paragraph 7); “land is closely and often intrinsically linked to the enjoyment of the right to take part in cultural life [...] when [it] serves as a basis for [...] the expression of cultural identity” (paragraph 10).
- 78 [housing-infrastructure.canada.ca/homelessness-sans-abri/](https://housing-infrastructure.canada.ca/homelessness-sans-abri/), but based on the information we have, this funding is not available to reserves; [statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/](https://statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/).
- 79 [housing-infrastructure.canada.ca/homelessness-sans-abri/directives-eng.html#h2.2/](https://housing-infrastructure.canada.ca/homelessness-sans-abri/directives-eng.html#h2.2/).
- 80 OHCHR, Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Definition of homelessness, 2025, [ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/homelessness-and-human-rights#homelessness](https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/homelessness-and-human-rights#homelessness); Leilani Farha, in her report A/74/183, adds that the definition must take account of the “multiple deprivations [Indigenous Peoples] experience, including the isolation of individuals, families and communities from their land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities.”
- 81 Jesse Thistle, *Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press, 2017, [IndigenousHomelessnessDefinition.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/homelessness-and-human-rights#homelessness).
- 82 Assembly of First Nations (AFN), *National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan*, December 2023, p. 9
- 83 Assembly of First Nations, *National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan*, December 2023, [afn.bynder.com/m/ab432b373ed8160/original/Plan-d-action-national-pour-les-sans-abri-des-Premieres-Nations.pdf](https://afn.bynder.com/m/ab432b373ed8160/original/Plan-d-action-national-pour-les-sans-abri-des-Premieres-Nations.pdf); the Canadian government is aware of hidden homelessness, and so far it has ignored evidence highlighting the enormous gulf between Indigenous Peoples and the rest of the Canadian population in terms of realizing economic, social and cultural rights. It would be very convenient for the government to claim that because such forms of homelessness are “hidden”, they are necessarily difficult to tackle. Marc Miller and Patty Hadju, former ministers of Crown-Indigenous Relations and of Indigenous Services respectively, gave testimony to a parliamentary committee, mentioning hidden homelessness alongside many other challenges linked to a lack of housing on reserves. House of Commons, *The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada* (previously cited), pp. 17-18. Hidden homelessness is also mentioned in the government response to the report.
- 84 House of Commons, *The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada* (previously cited).
- 85 Nunavik Civil Liberties Association (NCLA) and CIDDHU, “La pénurie de logements convenables au Nunavik” (previously cited), p. 11.
- 86 First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission (FNQLHSSC), *First Nations Regional Health Survey: Main findings of the 2015 RHS*, 2015, p. 13.
- 87 AFNQL, *Les besoins en logement des Premières Nations: synthèse de données*, May 2022, p. 6.
- 88 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 89 *Ma vie à Manawan*, [manawan.com/](https://manawan.com/).
- 90 To make a request, a family fills out a paper form available from the CDAM website, which can then be sent via email or delivered to the Council offices. The form requires the following information: the names of those requesting a house, the number of people who will live there and their income. The request is then sent to the Housing Committee, which makes recommendations to the Council. If the family is not selected, their request is placed on a waiting list.
- 91 Interview with Gaétan Gauthier, head of Onikam social services in Manawan.
- 92 Data gathered by the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 93 Interviews with Annette Dubé, the director of education services, and with anonymous families from the community.
- 94 Interview with Guy Latouche, consultant for the Atikamekw community of Manawan and housing and infrastructure advisor for the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador.
- 95 Anonymous interview.
- 96 Interview with Gaétan Gauthier (previously cited).
- 97 Interview with anonymous families.
- 98 Interview with anonymous families and Bianca Moar.
- 99 Anonymous interview.
- 100 Anonymous interview.
- 101 Interview with anonymous families and Marie-Josée Ottawa.

- 102 Interview with an anonymous health sector employee.
- 103 Interview with Sipi Flamand, Chief of the Manawan Atikamekw Council.
- 104 Interview with Claudia Newashish, councillor on the Manawan Atikamekw Council.
- 105 Interviews with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited) and Thérèse Niquay, director of community services and projects.
- 106 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited); Remote Indigenous communities in Canada have difficulty attracting and retaining professionals to offer basic health, social and educational services to the community. The Council has chosen to provide housing to people offering these essential services.
- 107 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 108 Interview with Annette Dubé (previously cited).
- 109 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 110 Interviews with families and Bianca Moar.
- 111 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 112 Interview with Jean-Roch Ottawa, former Chief of the Manawan Atikamekw Council.
- 113 Interview with Paul-Émile Ottawa, CDAM councillor and former Council Chief.
- 114 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 115 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 116 Interview with Sipi Flamand (previously cited).
- 117 Interviews with an anonymous health sector employee and anonymous families.
- 118 Interviews with anonymous families.
- 119 Anonymous interview.
- 120 Interviews with anonymous families.
- 121 Interviews with anonymous families.
- 122 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 123 Interview with Marie-Josée Ottawa (family).
- 124 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 125 Interview with Jean-Roch Ottawa (previously cited).
- 126 Interview with Gaétan Gauthier (previously cited).
- 127 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 128 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 129 Interview with an anonymous family
- 130 FRAPRU, Crises du logement et droits humains au Québec (previously cited), p. 14; Société immobilière du Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (SIRCAAQ), Plan d'action gouvernemental en habitation : mémoire présenté au SHQ, August 2021, p. 9; NWAC, Indigenous Housing: Policy and Engagement (previously cited), p. 2.
- 131 NWAC, Indigenous Housing: Policy and Engagement (previously cited), p. 5.
- 132 NWAC, Indigenous Housing: Policy and Engagement (previously cited, p. 21).
- 133 Québec, La Direction des communications du ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, Dénombrement des personnes en situation d'itinérance visible au Québec, Rapport de l'exercice du 11 octobre 2022 : Tout le monde compte, 2022, pp. 1-6, 269-270.
- 134 In 2021, Indigenous people made up 1.1% of Montreal's population: [statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/](https://statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/), but this figure may have been underestimated because many Indigenous people living in the city do not take part in censuses; FRAPRU, Crises du logement et droits humains au Québec (previously cited), p. 14.
- 135 AFN, National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan, December 2023, pp. 11, 15, <https://afn.bynder.com/m/5a1874d70244b133/original/National-First-Nations-Homelessness-Action-Plan.pdf>.
- 136 NWAC, Indigenous Housing: Policy and Engagement (previously cited), p. 66.
- 137 AFN, Community Services, Housing & Homelessness, 2025, <https://afn.ca/community-services/housing-and-homelessness/>.
- 138 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 139 The tourist information office and the presbytery are currently occupied by families.
- 140 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 141 Interview with Thérèse Niquay (previously cited).
- 142 Interview with Sipi Flamand (previously cited).
- 143 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 144 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 145 Interview with an anonymous health sector employee.
- 146 Félix Lebel, "La mort d'un bébé liée au manque de logements au Nunavik", Radio-Canada, 24 October 2022; NWAC, Indigenous Housing: Policy and Engagement (previously cited), pp. 5, 38, 49-52; FRAPRU, Crises du logement et droits humains au Québec (previously cited), p. 13.
- 147 House of Commons, The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada (previously cited), p. 9, 19-20; NCCIH, Visioning the future: First Nations, Inuit, & Métis population and public health, 2021, pp. 28-30; United Nations Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Anaya, The situation of indigenous peoples in Canada, A/HRC/27/52/Add.2, 2014, par. 24; NCCIH, Health Inequalities and Social Determinants of Aboriginal Peoples' Health, 2009, p. 12; NWAC, Indigenous Housing: Policy and Engagement (previously cited), p. 45.
- 148 Chronic heart disease, cancer, diabetes, chronic lung disease, immunodeficiency or autoimmune disease.
- 149 Interviews with anonymous families.
- 150 Interviews with anonymous health staff and Annette Dubé (previously cited).
- 151 Interview with Annette Dubé (previously cited).
- 152 Interview with an anonymous health sector employee.
- 153 Interviews with Annette Dubé (previously cited) and with anonymous families.
- 154 Interview with Ottawa Andicha, a community social worker.
- 155 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 156 Interview with Sanja Stojanovic, paediatrician at the Mihawoso social paediatrics centre.
- 157 Interviews with Sanja Stojanovic (previously cited) and an anonymous health sector worker.
- 158 Interview with Marie-Josée Ottawa (family).
- 159 Interview with an anonymous health sector employee.
- 160 Interviews with Ottawa Andicha (previously cited) and anonymous health staff.

- 161 Interview with Thérèse Niquay (previously cited).
- 162 Interview with Annette Dubé (previously cited).
- 163 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 164 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 165 Interview with Marie-Josée Ottawa (family).
- 166 NCCIH, Social determinants of health, Housing as a social determinant of First Nations, Inuit and Métis health, p. 4.
- 167 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 168 Interview with an anonymous family, Katia Flamand and Marie-Josée Ottawa (families).
- 169 Interview with Marie-Josée Ottawa (family).
- 170 Interview with Marie-Josée Ottawa (family).
- 171 Interview with Marie-Josée Ottawa (family).
- 172 Interview with Katia Flamand (family).
- 173 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 174 Interview with Marie-Josée Ottawa (family).
- 175 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 176 7 September 2025, [noovo.info/nouvelle/la-communaute-atikamekw-de-manawan-privee-de-courant-depuis-3-jours.html](https://noovo.info/nouvelle/la-communaute-atikamekw-de-manawan-privee-de-courant-depuis-3-jours.html); 9 September 2025, message from the Council, [facebook.com/share/p/19tjLyXNhk/](https://facebook.com/share/p/19tjLyXNhk/).
- 177 NWAC, Indigenous Housing: Policy and Engagement (previously cited), pp. 63-65, on the challenges experienced in shelters.
- 178 Interview with an anonymous health sector employee; FRAPRU, Crises du logement et droits humains au Québec (previously cited), p. 13; House of Commons, The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada (previously cited), pp. 20-21.
- 179 A/HRC/27/52/Add.2, 2014, par. 24.
- 180 House of Commons, The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada (previously cited), p. 21.
- 181 House of Commons, The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada (previously cited), pp. 21 and 36.
- 182 Interviews with anonymous health staff and Jean-Roch Ottawa (previously cited).
- 183 Interview with Gaétan Gauthier (previously cited).
- 184 Interview with Gaétan Gauthier (previously cited).
- 185 Interview with Thérèse Niquay (previously cited).
- 186 CEDAW, Concluding Observations, 28th session, 2003, A/58/38, par. 357, [ohchr.org/en/documents/concluding-observations/report-committee-elimination-discrimination-against-women-28th-0](https://ohchr.org/en/documents/concluding-observations/report-committee-elimination-discrimination-against-women-28th-0).
- 187 National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, final report: Reclaiming power and place (2019), [mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/](https://mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/).
- 188 Commission d'enquête sur les relations entre les Autochtones et certains services publics : écoute, réconciliation et progrès : rapport final, 2019, [bibliotheque.assnat.qc.ca](https://bibliotheque.assnat.qc.ca).
- 189 NWAC, Indigenous Housing: Policy and Engagement (previously cited), see recommendation on p. 88.
- 190 CRPD, Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Canada, 15 April 2025, CRPD/C/CAN/CO/2-3, par. 8c), [docs.un.org/en/CRPD/C/CAN/CO/2-3](https://docs.un.org/en/CRPD/C/CAN/CO/2-3).
- 191 Anonymous interview with a member of the CDAM.
- 192 Interviews with Bianca Moar and Marie-Josée Ottawa (families).
- 193 Interview with Marie-Josée Ottawa (family).
- 194 Interviews with Bianca Moar and Marie-Josée Ottawa (families).
- 195 Reports provided to Amnistie internationale Canada francophone.
- 196 FRAPRU, Crises du logement et droits humains au Québec (previously cited), p. 14; House of Commons, The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada (previously cited).
- 197 CESCR, General comment no. 13 on the right to education, E/C.12/1999/10.
- 198 House of Commons, The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada (previously cited); First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Health and Social Services Commission. Housing Conditions and Associations with Social Outcomes in First Nations Communities in Quebec, Wendake, FNQLHSSC, 2020, pp. 17-20; Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG), Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada: Report 2, Housing in First Nations Communities, 2024, p. 3, [oag-bvg.gc.ca](https://oag-bvg.gc.ca).
- 199 Interviews with anonymous families.
- 200 Interview with Thérèse Niquay (previously cited).
- 201 FNQLHSSC, Housing Conditions and Associations (previously cited), pp. 17-20.
- 202 Interview with Annette Dubé (previously cited).
- 203 Interview with anonymous school staff members.
- 204 Interview with anonymous school staff members.
- 205 Interview with Annette Dubé (previously cited).
- 206 Interview with Thérèse Niquay (previously cited).
- 207 Interview with Annette Dubé (previously cited).
- 208 Interview with anonymous school staff members.
- 209 Interview with Jean-Roch Ottawa (previously cited).
- 210 Interview with Sanja Stojanovic (previously cited).
- 211 Interview with Annette Dubé (previously cited).
- 212 Interview with Sanja Stojanovic (previously cited).
- 213 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 214 Interview with Annette Dubé (previously cited).
- 215 Interviews with Claudia Newashish, Gaétan Flamand, Sipi Flamand and Guy Latouche; Joonsoo S. Lyeo et al.; Ten questions concerning First Nations on-reserve housing in Canada, 1 January 2025: [sciencedirect.com/science/article/](https://sciencedirect.com/science/article/).
- 216 Unrecorded conversation with Sipi Flamand regarding the lack of community archives.
- 217 Interview with Guy Latouche (previously cited): Communities in Quebec experience a different situation to that found in the rest of Canada, with a Tripartite Housing Committee formed of ISC, CMHC and the AFNQL. This committee and its unique model ensure effective collaboration between all parties and maximize the funding obtained. It is working on a regional strategy to give First Nations greater skills, funding and independence. Quebec's Tripartite Committee has adopted a regional strategy with three focuses: skill and capacity building, funding and governance. It is targeting the first focus in particular so the two others can develop later on; IDDPNQL, Diagnosis and findings (previously cited), p. 9.
- 218 Interview with Guy Latouche (previously cited).
- 219 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 220 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 221 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).

- 222 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 223 Interview with Guy Latouche (previously cited).
- 224 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 225 Interview with anonymous health staff.
- 226 Interview with Sanja Stojanovic (previously cited).
- 227 Interview with Sanja Stojanovic (previously cited).
- 228 Interviews with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited) and anonymous health staff.
- 229 Interview with anonymous health staff.
- 230 Interview with an anonymous family.
- 231 Interview with anonymous health staff.
- 232 Jordan's Principle is a Canadian legal requirement that guarantees First Nations and Inuit children fast, equal access to healthcare, social and education services without having to wait for different levels of government to decide on who will fund it, following a principle of fairness in which the child's needs are met first and the governments settle the financial issues among themselves later. It was established following the death of Jordan River Anderson, a Cree child, who was unable to receive home care due to financial disagreements between levels of government. ([sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/](http://sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/)).
- 233 Interviews with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited) and Guy Latouche (previously cited).
- 234 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 235 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 236 Superior Court action against the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests and the Attorney General of Quebec, filed on 30 September 2025.
- 237 Although it is not within the scope of this report, geographic access to healthcare infrastructure is also a challenge as, during good weather, it takes almost three hours to travel to the closest hospital, in Joliette. Many community members refuse to go there as a result of prevailing systemic racism, which was highlighted by the death of Joyce Echaquan, who was subjected to racist comments there. ([coroner.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/contenu/Enquetes\\_publiques/Joyce\\_Echaquan/2020-EP00275-9.pdf](http://coroner.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/contenu/Enquetes_publiques/Joyce_Echaquan/2020-EP00275-9.pdf)) The only other hospital centre nearby is in Trois-Rivières, three and a half hours' drive away. In terms of geographic accessibility, see Fiche technique : l'accessibilité dans le cadre d'évaluation de la performance CSBE, 27 May 2022, [csbe.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/www/2022/Fiches\\_techniques/CSBE-Fiche\\_accessibilite.pdf](http://csbe.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/www/2022/Fiches_techniques/CSBE-Fiche_accessibilite.pdf).
- 238 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 239 See the emergency housing needs in the section on violence against girls, women and elderly people.
- 240 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 241 Interviews with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited) and Guy Latouche (previously cited).
- 242 Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO), Urban, rural, and Northern (URN) Indigenous housing, 11 February 2021, p. 19.
- 243 PBO, URN Indigenous Housing (previously cited), p. 19.
- 244 OAG, Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada (previously cited), p. 7.
- 245 Interview with Guy Latouche (previously cited).
- 246 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 247 Interview with Guy Latouche (previously cited).
- 248 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited); CMHC, On-Reserve Non-Profit Housing Program (Section 95), 31 March 2018, [cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/project-funding-and-mortgage-financing/funding-programs/all-funding-programs/on-reserve-non-profit-housing-program-section-95](http://cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/project-funding-and-mortgage-financing/funding-programs/all-funding-programs/on-reserve-non-profit-housing-program-section-95).
- 249 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited); unrecorded interview with ISC.
- 250 Interview with Gaétan Flamand (previously cited).
- 251 Beyond the ability to set rent, a few years ago, the Council was forced to accept the development of a new housing neighbourhood, against the advice of the community's elders, to avoid losing the necessary federal funding. Since then, several homes – which, according to the elders, were built on the site of a former lake – have suffered from water ingress. Interview with Paul-Émile Ottawa (previously cited) and Jean-Roch Ottawa (previously cited).
- 252 Joonsoo S. Lyeo et al., Ten questions concerning First Nations on-reserve housing in Canada (previously cited).
- 253 Unrecorded interview with CMHC.
- 254 Marshall and Swift, Marshall and Swift Equipment Cost Index, 2015, [scholars.unh.edu/](http://scholars.unh.edu/).
- 255 Unrecorded interview with ISC.
- 256 Interviews with Sipi Flamand (previously cited) and Guy Latouche (previously cited).
- 257 In a letter dated 1 August 2025, CMHC wrote: "The key criteria are the areas, i.e. the distance (remoteness) from a major centre, and the latitude (geographic context) of the community. CMHC uses the data and definitions produced by Indigenous Services Canada. Major centres are populated areas which can be used to generate several economic indicators as a benchmark. Service centres are the closest municipalities to a community in which it can access services, service providers and financial institutions. In the case of Manawan, the major centre is Montreal and the service centre is Saint-Michel des Saints." However, calculations for the area do not take into account the condition of the single gravel access road, which makes transport difficult.
- 258 Interview with Guy Latouche (previously cited).
- 259 Interview with Guy Latouche (previously cited).
- 260 Interview with Claudia Newashish (previously cited).
- 261 OAG, Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada (previously cited), pp. 5-6, 8.
- 262 OAG, Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada (previously cited), pp. 5-6.
- 263 OAG, Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada (previously cited), pp. 10-13.
- 264 OAG, Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada (previously cited), pp. 16-18.
- 265 OAG, Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada (previously cited), p. 10.
- 266 OAG, Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada (previously cited), pp. 13-14. CMHC alone manages 13 programmes.
- 267 OAG, Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada (previously cited).
- 268 Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG), Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada, Follow-up on Programs for First Nations, 2025, p. 25, [oag-bvg.gc.ca](http://oag-bvg.gc.ca).

- 269 OAG, Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada (previously cited), pp. 15-16.
- 270 OAG, Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada (previously cited), p. 15.
- 271 Nick Zrinyi, MSc., Office of the Honourable Rosa Galvez, Canada's Building Code in the Context of Climate Change, Adaptation, and Sustainability, 2019, [rosagalvez.ca/media/1udjdkyp/eng-building-code-discussion-paper-june-2019.pdf](https://rosagalvez.ca/media/1udjdkyp/eng-building-code-discussion-paper-june-2019.pdf); Government of Canada, Climate-Resilient Buildings and Core Public Infrastructure: an assessment of the impact of climate change on climatic design data in Canada, 20 June 2025, [climate-scenarios.canada.ca](https://climate-scenarios.canada.ca).
- 272 OAG, Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada (previously cited), pp. 11-13.
- 273 [cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/project-funding-and-mortgage-financing/funding-programs/all-funding-programs/residential-rehabilitation-assistance-program](https://cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/project-funding-and-mortgage-financing/funding-programs/all-funding-programs/residential-rehabilitation-assistance-program).
- 274 Federal budget submitted on 4 November 2025, [budget.canada.ca/2025/report-rapport/intro-en.html](https://budget.canada.ca/2025/report-rapport/intro-en.html).
- 275 Unrecorded interviews with ISC and CMHC.
- 276 PBO, URN Indigenous Housing (previously cited), p. 16.
- 277 Set out in the National Housing Strategy; PBO, URN Indigenous Housing (previously cited), p. 16.
- 278 "From data collected by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) it is estimated that between 34,400 and 45,300 Indigenous persons used an emergency shelter in 2016. 31% of shelter users identified as Indigenous. In comparison around 5% of the total Canadian population identifies as Indigenous, highlighting the over representation of Indigenous people within the homeless population." PBO, URN Indigenous Housing (previously cited), pp. 15 and 29.
- 279 Federal budget submitted on 4 November 2025, [budget.canada.ca/2025/report-rapport/intro-en.html](https://budget.canada.ca/2025/report-rapport/intro-en.html).
- 280 Interview with Thérèse Niquay (previously cited).
- 281 Interview with Guy Latouche (previously cited).
- 282 Interview with Guy Latouche (previously cited).
- 283 Interview with Guy Latouche (previously cited).
- 284 Other teams or departments manage dedicated programmes for Indigenous Peoples such as Jordan's Principle, Order 41 (Indigenous Services Canada, 2021, Canadian Human Rights Tribunal 41: Order, 17 February 2022, [sac-isc.gc.ca](https://sac-isc.gc.ca)), and programmes to tackle homelessness.
- 285 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (SC 2021, c. 14)
- 286 UNDRIP, Articles 23 and 32.
- 287 A/74/183, paragraph 54.
- 288 Sara Fryer and Olivier Leblanc-Laurendeau, Understanding Federal Jurisdiction and First Nations (previously cited); AFN, Affirming Treaty Rights and Inherent Rights, Title and Jurisdiction PowerPoint, 17-22 May 2019, [afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Affirming-Treaty-Rights-and-Inherent-Rights-Final.pptx](https://afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Affirming-Treaty-Rights-and-Inherent-Rights-Final.pptx).
- 289 CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13, draft general comment no. 9 of the CESCR on the domestic application of the Covenant (E/C.12/1998/24). General comment no. 12 of the CESCR on the right to adequate food explains that coordination between all entities, both State and non-State, must be ensured so such access can be provided regardless of the internal barriers within a country (E/C.12/1999/5). Article 29 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties states that all entities of a State party are bound by obligations across its entire territory, and Article 46.1 states that a State party cannot invoke internal law to avoid guaranteeing a right.
- 290 Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, Concluding observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Canada, E/C.12/CAN/CO/4, E/C.12/CAN/CO/5, 2006, par. 11d); Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, Concluding observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Canada, E/C.12/1/Add.31, 10 December 1998, par. 17.
- 291 Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW/C/CAN/CO/7, 7 November 2008, par. 43.
- 292 Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, Concluding observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Canada, E/C.12/1/Add.31, 10 December 1998, par. 17.
- 293 Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic report of Canada, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-first session (17 September – 5 October 2012), CRC/C/CAN/3-4, 6 December 2012, par. 98; CRC, Replies of Canada to the list of issues in relation to its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports, CRC/C/CAN/RQ/5-6, 23 June 2022, par. 76.
- 294 CRC/C/CAN/RQ/5-6, par. 76.
- 295 CRC/C/CAN/CO/5-6, par. 17a).
- 296 Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women regarding the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of Canada, CEDAW/C/CAN/CO/8-9, 25 November 2016, par. 29a).
- 297 CESCR, Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Canada, E/C.12/CAN/CO/6, 2016, par. 19.
- 298 E/C.12/CAN/CO/6, par. 43.
- 299 CEDAW, Concluding observations on the tenth periodic report of Canada, CEDAW/C/CAN/CO/10, 30 October 2024, par. 40 a).
- 300 CRDP, Concluding observations on the initial report of Canada, CRPD/C/CAN/CO/1, 8 May 2017, par. 13 a) and b).
- 301 CRPD/C/CAN/CO/1, par. 13 a) and b), par. 49.
- 302 OHCHR, Visit to Canada, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, visit of 2–12 April 2019, A/HRC/43/41/Add.2, 2019.
- 303 A/HRC/27/52/Add.2, 2014, par. 24.
- 304 A/HRC/27/52/Add.2, 2014, par. 24.
- 305 A/HRC/27/52/Add.2, 2014, par. 24, 26.
- 306 A/HRC/27/52/Add.2, 2014, par. 25.

- 307 Visit to Canada, end of mission statement, José Francisco Calí-Tzay, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous Peoples, 2023, pp. 6-7, [ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/indigenouspeoples/sr/statements/eom-statement-canada-sr-indigenous-2023-03-10.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/indigenouspeoples/sr/statements/eom-statement-canada-sr-indigenous-2023-03-10.pdf).
- 308 Visit to Canada, end of mission statement, Canada, José Francisco Calí-Tzay (previously cited), p. 7.
- 309 Visit to Canada, end of mission statement, Canada, José Francisco Calí-Tzay (previously cited), p. 7; Visit to Canada, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 24 July 2023, A/HRC/54/31/Add.2, par. 74.
- 310 A/HRC/54/31/Add.2, par. 21 and 74.
- 311 A/HRC/54/31/Add.2, par. 21.
- 312 A/HRC/54/31/Add.2, par. 21.
- 313 A/HRC/54/31/Add.2, par. 40.
- 314 A/HRC/54/31/Add.2, par. 59.
- 315 A/HRC/54/31/Add.2, par. 74 and 76.
- 316 Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Canada, Addendum, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review, A/HRC/55/12/Add.1, 2023-2024, recommendations 166-168, 173.
- 317 A/HRC/55/12/, recommendation 181.
- 318 A/HRC/55/12/, recommendations 170, 171, 172 and 174.
- 319 A/HRC/55/12/, recommendations 170, 171, 172 and 174.
- 320 CESCR, General comment no. 3 (E/1991/23).
- 321 Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, 15 August 2023, A/78/192.
- 322 CMHC, Indigenous Housing Needs and Conditions, 18 June 2025, [cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-research/research-reports/housing-needs/indigenous-housing-needs-conditions](https://cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-research/research-reports/housing-needs/indigenous-housing-needs-conditions).
- 323 E/C.12/CAN/CO/6, par. 44.
- 324 Drinking water advisories are issued to warn people that water may not be suitable for consumption or for any purpose. A long-term drinking water advisory is an advisory that has been in effect for over a year. Government of Canada, “Ending long-term drinking water advisories”, 17 October 2025, [sac-isc.gc.ca](https://sac-isc.gc.ca).
- 325 In 2016, according to FNQLSDI, Diagnosis and findings (previously cited), p. 12.
- 326 FRAPRU, Crises du logement et droits humains au Québec (previously cited), p. 13; Statistics Canada, Housing conditions among First Nations people, Métis and Inuit in Canada from the 2021 Census, 21 September 2022, [statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/](https://statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/).
- 327 Lance Haymond, Evidence of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, [ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/INAN/meeting-8/evidence](https://ourcommons.ca/documentviewer/en/44-1/INAN/meeting-8/evidence).
- 328 Interview with Jean-Roch Ottawa (previously cited), focusing in particular on a meeting with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations from 2015 to 2021, Carolyn Bennett, in Wendake, followed by another meeting in Gatineau.
- 329 Interview in CFNJ, Logements insalubres à Manawan : le financement du fédéral est insuffisant pour entreprendre des travaux de rénovation, 2 August 2024, [cfnj.net/logements-insalubres-a-manawan-le-financement-du-federal-est-insuffisant-pour-entreprendre-des-travaux-de-renovation/](https://cfnj.net/logements-insalubres-a-manawan-le-financement-du-federal-est-insuffisant-pour-entreprendre-des-travaux-de-renovation/); Interview in CFNJ, La crise du logement n'épargne pas la communauté Atikamekw de Manawan, 1 August 2024, [cfnj.net/la-crise-du-logement-nepargne-pas-la-communaute-atikamekw-de-manawan/](https://cfnj.net/la-crise-du-logement-nepargne-pas-la-communaute-atikamekw-de-manawan/); CMHC, Canada supports rapid housing in Manawan, 23 June 2021: [cmhc-schl.gc.ca/media-newsroom/news-releases/2021/canada-supports-rapid-housing-manawan](https://cmhc-schl.gc.ca/media-newsroom/news-releases/2021/canada-supports-rapid-housing-manawan) (see quote by Bryan Decontie); Marie-Laure Josselin, “Ottawa investit pour la création rapide de 12 logements à Manawan”, Radio-Canada Espace autochtone, 23 June 2021, [ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/1803988/ottawa-logement-manawan-atikamekw-investissement-penurie](https://ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/1803988/ottawa-logement-manawan-atikamekw-investissement-penurie); Magali Lapointe, “Manawan : quinze personnes dans une maison délabrée”, Journal de Montréal, 7 novembre 2020, [journaldemontreal.com/2020/11/07/manawan-quinze-personnes-dans-une-maison-delabree](https://journaldemontreal.com/2020/11/07/manawan-quinze-personnes-dans-une-maison-delabree); Indigenous Services Canada, Atikamekw community of Manawan to benefit from the completion of new housing units, 2018, [canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada/news/2018/06/atikamekw-community-of-manawan-to-benefit-from-the-creation-of-new-housing-units.html](https://canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada/news/2018/06/atikamekw-community-of-manawan-to-benefit-from-the-creation-of-new-housing-units.html); L'Écho, “Jean-Roch Ottawa : nouveau chef à Manawan”, 14 August 2014, [lechoedelatouque.com/actualites/jean-roch-ottawa-nouveau-chef-a-manawan/](https://lechoedelatouque.com/actualites/jean-roch-ottawa-nouveau-chef-a-manawan/); Guy Latour, “Pénurie de logements à la Manawan”, Néo média Joliette, 21 September 2011, [lejournaldejoliette.ca/actualites/societe/174445/penurie-de-logements-a-la-manawan](https://lejournaldejoliette.ca/actualites/societe/174445/penurie-de-logements-a-la-manawan).
- 330 Unrecorded interviews with ISC and CMHC, which recognized the critical housing situation in Manawan.
- 331 Suzy Basile and Patricia Bouchard, Free and informed consent and imposed sterilizations among First Nations and Inuit women in Quebec, research report, FNQLHSSC, 2022. [files.cssspnql.com/s/CGKiiNtNdTYkGF](https://files.cssspnql.com/s/CGKiiNtNdTYkGF).
- 332 Marie-Laure Josselin, “La stérilisation forcée de femmes autochtones : un drame qui dure depuis plus de 40 ans”, Radio-Canada Espace autochtone, 21 December 2022, [ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/1942738/sterilisations-autochtones-rapport-quebec-gouvernement-sante-histoire](https://ici.radio-canada.ca/espaces-autochtones/1942738/sterilisations-autochtones-rapport-quebec-gouvernement-sante-histoire).
- 333 See [aptnnews.ca/national-news/mississauga-of-the-credit-challenge-federal-education-funding-at-human-rights-tribunal/](https://aptnnews.ca/national-news/mississauga-of-the-credit-challenge-federal-education-funding-at-human-rights-tribunal/) and [mncfn.ca/canadian-human-rights-tribunal-on-education-livestream/](https://mncfn.ca/canadian-human-rights-tribunal-on-education-livestream/). See also the treatment of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls: <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/recit-numerique/12745/femmes-autochtones-victimes-police-medias>.
- 334 Government response to the third report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, The Effects of the Housing Shortage on Indigenous Peoples in Canada, [ourcommons.ca/content/Committee/441/INAN/GovResponse/RP11984932/441\\_INAN\\_Rpt03\\_GR/DepartmentOfIndigenousServices-e.pdf](https://ourcommons.ca/content/Committee/441/INAN/GovResponse/RP11984932/441_INAN_Rpt03_GR/DepartmentOfIndigenousServices-e.pdf).

- 335 Quebec could take inspiration from British Columbia, a Canadian province, which has set up a dedicated fund for on-reserve housing. See [bchousing.org/indigenous/on-reserve-housing](http://bchousing.org/indigenous/on-reserve-housing).
- 336 The principles of OCAP® state that First Nations have the right to control the process of data collection within their communities and to control how information may be stored, interpreted, used and shared.
- 337 Joyce's Principle, [principedejoyce.com/en/#quoi](http://principedejoyce.com/en/#quoi), was created in memory of Joyce Echaquan, a woman and mother from Manawan, who died at the Joliette Hospital Center after being the victim of racist remarks and receiving inadequate treatment. ([coroner.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/contenu/Enquêtes\\_publicques/Joyce\\_Echaquan/2020-EP00275-9.pdf](http://coroner.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/contenu/Enquêtes_publicques/Joyce_Echaquan/2020-EP00275-9.pdf)).



Manawan  
community



# **THE HOUSING CRISIS IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN CANADA: INJUSTICE AND DISCRIMINATION.**

## **THE EXAMPLE OF MANAWAN**

Facebook: [facebook.com/AmnistieCA](https://facebook.com/AmnistieCA)

Instagram: [amnistie\\_canadafr](https://instagram.com/amnistie_canadafr)

Bluesky: [@amnistieca.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/@amnistieca.bsky.social)

Linkedin: [Amnistie internationale Canada francophone](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Amnistie-internationale-Canada-francophone)

INDEX: AMR 20/0870/2026  
APRIL 2026  
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

[amnesty.org](https://www.amnesty.org)

**AMNISTIE  
INTERNATIONALE**

