

Elderly people of Aboriginal origin in Winnipeg: Their struggle to secure  
safe and affordable housing

By

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We will find the answers through **education** and **research**. First we have to do the research. Then we have to go to the government and say, 'Look. This is what's happening. Now, why don't we work together and try to do something about it?'

(Key informant, 2009)

Supervisor: Dr. Ian Skelton  
Committee: Linda Ring  
Jino Distasio

## **Abstract**

Many elderly people of Aboriginal origin find themselves displaced as they move from rural reserves into unfamiliar urban settings. The majority are forced to relocate to cities for medical purposes and fall between the cracks of an already fragile support system. Responsibility for their needs, particularly in relation to housing, is not clearly assigned to band organizations or governments. They seek shelter wherever they can. Some move in with family members or friends. Others secure units in non-profits, while several reside in single room occupancy hotels or rooming houses. In Winnipeg, and throughout Canada, specific numbers and individual circumstances of this demographic remain relatively unknown. Preliminary research indicates many are living in unhealthy and unsafe environments.

This study begins to document the situations and conditions in which elderly people of Aboriginal origin are currently living. This task is achieved through a review of pertinent literature and through empirical work in the form of focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Participants include elderly Aboriginals and officials from Winnipeg and across Canada. The thesis aims to construct a body of evidence which highlights the housing needs of elderly Aboriginals. It also aims to assist the Aboriginal Senior Resource Centre (ASRC) in supporting elderly people of Aboriginal origin in Winnipeg and concludes with recommendations for policy makers, arguing for immediate implementation as well as further study.

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And to my parents, my brother and all my friends; thank you from the bottom of my heart for your patience and for believing in me. Every one of you has been supportive and encouraging, even though I was convinced I would never finish. However, I guess if you are reading this, I must have somehow magically completed my mission.

For those of you who are critiquing this work for your Thesis Preparation course; please be kind. And no worries, you too will finish. I promise.

August 26, 2010

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Housing for elderly Aboriginals who are living in poverty has received little attention from research communities in Canada. There is a significant amount of literature addressing senior citizens (Chappel et al. 2008) and their housing (Drover and Wade 2006). There is also documented insight into urban Aboriginal communities (Peters and Starchenko 2008) and urban Aboriginal housing (Bridges and Foundations n.d.; Walker 2004; Walker 2006). However, these areas have yet to be extensively intertwined. As elderly people of Aboriginal origin move from rural reserves into cities, many find themselves displaced in unfamiliar urban settings. Some move in with family members or friends. Others secure units in non-profits, while some reside in single room occupancy hotels or rooming houses. Preliminary research indicates many are living in unhealthy and unsafe environments. Some of the most unfortunate have no where to go. They may be visibly homeless, living on the streets. Others may become part of the more invisible 'hidden homeless' (Distasio, Sylvestre and Mulligan 2005) population. They may not be physically living on the streets, but they are a portion of the population without a permanent place to call home (Distasio, Sylvestre and Mulligan 2005).

### **1.1 Statement of purpose**

The purpose of this research is to begin to document the situations and conditions in which elderly people of Aboriginal origin are currently living in Winnipeg and in other Canadian urban centres. It also aims to assist the Aboriginal Senior Resource Centre (ASRC) in their mission to support elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg and suggest broader long-term considerations for how to address the needs of these individuals.

This topic evolved out of a study conducted in collaboration with Dr. Ian Skelton and the Manitoba Research Alliance. In April 2009, the Manitoba Research Alliance was approached by one of its community members who pointed out that “many elderly people of Aboriginal origin living in Canadian cities are in dire housing need, as anecdotal evidence abounds about their homelessness and other forms of housing-related stress” (Lange and Skelton 2010, pg. 72). Consequently, the Alliance undertook the study reported by Lange and Skelton (2010), which in turn inspired the work documented here.

The study team for both the aforementioned study and this thesis comprised researchers from the Aboriginal Senior Resource Centre (ASRC) and the University of Manitoba. Three ASRC staff members worked as community research partners for the duration of the study. All were of either Cree or Ojibway ancestry and were fluent in one or both of these languages. Working in collaboration with individuals of the same ancestry as the participants helped to alleviate any cultural differences or language barriers which may have arisen between the author and the participants. Moreover, the community research partners shared advice regarding respectful protocol for engaging with Elders of Aboriginal origin; facilitated traditional smudging ceremonies prior to focus group meetings; and offered prayers before each and every meeting and interview. Without the knowledge and guidance of the community research partners, this study would not have progressed as smoothly as it did.

The ASRC is located in the North End of Winnipeg. For the past six years, it has been an active support centre in Winnipeg and is highly valued by the community it serves. The

ASRC's mission is to increase access to information, resources and supports which directly improve the health and well-being of elderly Aboriginals. It also aims to provide opportunities for active involvement within the community and create an environment where elderly people of Aboriginal origin can celebrate their uniqueness and build friendships (ASRC 2009).

The ASRC is primarily funded by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. However, they also have various other funding partners, including: Healthy Aging and Secretariat; New Horizons; Ethno-Cultural Program; and North End Renewal Corporation (ASRC 2009).

This organization was originally incorporated in 2004 in response to a dire need for resources and supports for the elderly Aboriginal population in Winnipeg, including: First Nations; Metis and Inuit. Today, the ASRC provides recreational activities as well as advocacy and training (ASRC 2009). However, with a full-time staff of only three, and approximately 60 calls a day regarding issues such as housing, medical assistance and support services, this organization is desperately in need of an increase in both staff and resources. The ASRC will require additional funding in order to continue to provide its services to current members and extend future support to elderly Aboriginals throughout Winnipeg.

While listening to the stories of the elderly Aboriginals involved with this organization, it became instantly apparent that many of them, and/or their elderly relatives or friends, are living in unsafe, unaffordable and inadequate homes. They described sub-standard housing conditions, homes in need of significant repairs and alterations as a result of

residing in unsafe neighbourhoods. None of the participants were presently homeless and living on the streets, but the majority knew of at least one elderly Aboriginal without a place to call home.

These stories must be heard. For this reason, the goal of this research is to share their words and urgent needs with government officials and policy makers who will hopefully transform their words into action. The research aims to share first-hand experiences with those in power. A few participants suggested that perhaps decision-makers do not realize the true extent of the affordable housing crisis in Winnipeg or in other Canadian urban centres. Therefore, the research ultimately aims to amplify the voices of the participants, both elderly Aboriginals and the service workers and officials who work with them day-to-day, as they all attempt to illustrate this reality.

### **1.2 Statement of objectives and research questions**

The overall goal of this thesis is to begin to construct a body of knowledge which highlights the housing needs of elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg. The underlying objectives of the research are:

1. To discover where elderly Aboriginals are currently living in Winnipeg, why they are living where they are and where they would ideally like to be;
2. To explore the barriers facing elderly Aboriginals as they migrate to urban centres;
3. To identify supports and services available for elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg and in other Canadian cities; and

4. To outline recommendations for policy and program changes to address the housing needs of elderly Aboriginals in urban centres.

The research questions which will be posed in order to meet these objectives are:

1. a. Where are elderly Aboriginals currently living in Winnipeg?  
b. Do elderly Aboriginals have options as to where they will live upon arrival in urban centres?  
c. Where would elderly Aboriginals ideally like to live, if given the choice?
2. What are some of the issues and challenges facing elderly Aboriginals as they migrate to urban centres?
3. What types of supports and services are available for elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg, and in other Canadian cities, which could assist with their migration from rural communities?
4. What can be done, at a policy level, to address and improve the housing needs of elderly Aboriginals in Canadian urban centres?

These research questions will be addressed in both the analysis and conclusions and recommendations chapters of this thesis.

Housing affordability has been a well-documented topic in Canadian planning literature over the past few decades. Arguably, this is potentially due to the fact that the country's affordable housing supply has been slowly diminishing since the early 1990s while demand has been increasing exponentially. It was at this time that the federal

government shifted nearly all affordable housing responsibility over to the provinces (Walker 2003). Over the years, a large portion of the affordable housing stock, originally constructed in the 1970s and 1980s, has not been properly maintained and is now unsuitable for habitation (Walker 2003). Moreover, very few new affordable housing units have been built since the 1990s due to a severe reduction in both private and government funding. Together, these factors have all played a role in leaving thousands of Canadians without an affordable, safe place to live.

This exploration highlights the impact that the lack of safe, affordable housing in Canada has had on a very specific segment of our nation's population. Many of whom face several additional challenges and barriers as they fall between the cracks of the various levels of government and are frequently left without guidance or assistance as they transition from rural reserves into urban centres. It is important to note from the onset that although the term 'Aboriginal' is used throughout the entirety of this thesis, the majority of participants were of First Nations ancestry specifically. The findings and corresponding analysis included in this study would have been very different if the study sample had focused more broadly on elderly individuals of First Nations, Metis and Inuit origin.

### **1.3 Relevance of research**

Housing for elderly Aboriginals living in poverty in cities has received very little attention from research communities in Canada. This inattention represents a significant shortcoming in relation to needs expressed in anecdotal evidence (Lange and Skelton 2010). Previous research has focused on the migration of Aboriginal people into urban

centres, their housing, economic situations and health conditions. However, very little work has focused specifically on the particular challenges and barriers facing the elderly segment of the population. These challenges and barriers are often very complex and distinct from those of the younger generations and warrant immediate investigation (Lange and Skelton 2010). The following study attempts to fill this gap in Canadian urban Aboriginal research as it focuses solely on elderly Aboriginals and their housing situations and conditions in cities. With clear objectives, the subsequent pages aim to highlight an urgent need and amplify voices which are unfortunately not often heard.

The research also aims to draw attention to the support and aid provided by the ASRC and the beneficial impact it has had on the lives of elderly Aboriginals throughout Winnipeg. For many, this centre is not only an office where one can seek advice and assistance, but also a warm and welcoming place to gather and socialize. The ASRC is a safe meeting spot where elderly Aboriginals can visit, participate in formal and informal activities and ultimately experience a strong sense of community. Subsequent sections will highlight the innumerable benefits of the centre; from helping secure housing, to organizing weekly sewing and craft classes. For these reasons, and many more, the concluding chapter will recommend that the ASRC's core funding be increased and secured so that they are able to continue their influential work for many years to come.

#### **1.4 Limitations**

One of the limitations of this thesis is that the majority of elderly participants were of First Nations ancestry specifically, rather than a combination of individuals of First Nations, Metis and Inuit ancestry. Therefore, it is important to note that the term

'Aboriginal', within the context of this thesis, is primarily referring to individuals of First Nations ancestry. Another limitation is that all of the elderly participants were ASRC members. Both of these factors may have limited the range of perspectives.

One other limitation is that the thesis only speaks to the experiences of a very specific group of elderly individuals. It only investigates the lived realities of elderly Aboriginals (primarily of First Nations ancestry) who have migrated from rural reserves into urban centres and are now living in or near poverty. The range of participants is limited, as there are several elderly individuals throughout Canada, many of Aboriginal origin, who are not suffering from housing distress or faced with migration issues. However, for the most part, this thesis only shares the stories of those who are.

Although these factors may be noted as limitations, they could also be viewed as inspiration for further research. It would be very interesting to compare and contrast the lived experiences of various different elderly populations, of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal origins; as they migrate from rural communities to urban centres for reasons such as a lack of medical care, supports and services. Although this type of extended exploration is beyond the scope of this thesis, it definitely warrants further investigation and research.

### **1.5 Outline of chapters**

Following the introductory chapter, Chapter 2 examines the theoretical foundation upon which this research is based. This includes a brief overview of insurgent planning, Indigenous planning and communicative planning. Chapter 3 describes the methods

used to gather and analyze empirical evidence through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with Elders, elderly Aboriginals and service workers and officials from Winnipeg and across Canada. Chapter 4 explores pertinent literature regarding elderly Aboriginals in cities; their migration and housing situations; the impact of housing on overall health and well-being; the various forms of support for elderly Aboriginals; as well as local and national examples of housing options for this demographic. Chapter 5 discusses the analysis and findings from the interviews and focus groups, while Chapter 6 provides conclusions and recommendations for policy makers, arguing for immediate implementation as well as further study.

## **Chapter Two: Theoretical foundation**

Cities in Canada, North America and across the world are becoming increasingly more diverse. They are multi-ethnic and multi-racial. According to Sandercock (2003), Jojola (2008) and Forester (1999), this diversity calls for new forms of planning theory, theories which extend beyond the realm of traditional rational planning. This thesis is grounded in the linking of Sandercock's (2003) concept of insurgent planning, Jojola's (2008) thoughts on Indigenous planning and Forester's (1999) knowledge of communicative planning.

The following section begins by exploring Sandercock's (2003) work regarding insurgent planning and her concept of an epistemology of multiplicity. It then examines Jojola (2008), LaRocque (2000) and Simpson's (2000) research in the realm of Indigenous planning. Lastly, it discusses Forester (1997) and Friedmann's (1979) concepts of communicative planning and their arguments for its incorporation into planning practices in postmodern societies.

### **2.1 Insurgent planning**

Sandercock (2003) suggests that "planning in the multicultural cities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires a very different approach than that of the modernist paradigm" (p.47). She believes that this approach can be uncovered through the exploration of multiple insurgent planning histories. It is not enough to focus solely on the well-documented history of rational planning. Instead, Sandercock explains that a broader historical lens must be used to examine planning through the centuries. For, these additional forms

can ultimately provide us with helpful links and insight into present-day public issues, as well as tools and methods for planning in multicultural cities.

Once we have acknowledged the multiple planning histories of our past, we can then begin to re-shape our future. Sandercock (1998) argues that a broadening of the epistemological base of planning, to an 'epistemology of multiplicity', is one way to achieve this re-shaping. This means we must learn from the multiple planning histories of the past, recognize the diversity of communities today and realize that they are becoming increasingly more diverse as the years progress. She suggests there are several reasons for this increasing diversity, such as global economic integration as well as three equally powerful social-cultural forces, including:

1. the age of migration, and an accompanying new politics of multicultural citizenship;
2. the age of post colonialism with its politics of reclaiming urban and regional space by Indigenous and formerly colonized peoples; and
3. the age of urban social movements, the rise of civil society mobilized around issues of place and identity, culture and history, voice and inclusion (Sandercock 1998, p. 170).

The effects of these socio-cultural forces can be observed in nearly every neighbourhood, town and city across North America, as well as throughout much of the world. Communities generally have at least a few aspects of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural urban design features, events, programming, services and amenities. All of

which are characteristic of the wide range of people who live within these centres. Because of this extreme diversity, a euro-centric planning model can no longer (and arguably never could) provide a solid foundation for planning and development within multi-cultural societies.

Moreover, Sandercock warns planners to be careful not to assume the role of 'the expert' in planning situations. In fact, she strongly believes, and asserts, that planning professionals do not have the ability to accurately determine public interest through rational deliberation. She explains that it would be impossible to achieve such a feat with the extreme diversity and multiplicity of postmodern communities. However, she also does not believe that we should completely discard all scientific and technical ways of knowing. Instead, she states that these traditional ways of knowing should be used in conjunction with additional ways of knowing, which may be important to culturally diverse groups.

These ways of knowing, as identified by Sandercock (1998), include:

1. knowing through dialogue;
2. knowing from experience;
3. learning from local knowledge;
4. learning to read symbolic and non-verbal evidence;
5. learning through contemplative or appreciative knowledge; and
6. learning by doing, or, action-planning (p. 76-81).

Each of these methods can be used as a way of hearing, discussing and investigating issues regarding place and identity, culture and history, voice and inclusion (Sandercock 1998). Sandercock explains that no one method is better or more useful than the other. They are all valuable in their own right and should be used when deemed necessary, in conjunction with technical planning techniques. According to Sandercock (2003), the true artistry of planning is deciding when to use which way, or ways of knowing and to ultimately see them as being context-dependent.

## **2.2 Indigenous planning**

This study can also relate to Jojola (2008), LaRocque (2000) and Simpson's (2000) work with Indigenous planning theory and practice. Indigenous planning calls for a "re-examination of contemporary planning practice through long-term learning, the empowerment of community voice, and the advocacy of culture and tradition" (Jojola 2008, p. 41). Jojola (2008) further explains that Western authorities need to recognize that an Indigenous world-view is rooted in very distinct, yet multiple, community traditions. Therefore, Indigenous planning approaches should operate in a manner which incorporates "traditional knowledge and cultural identity" at all times (p. 41).

It is important to note that the majority of Indigenous planning theorists "do not assume that an umbrella Aboriginal world view exists, one that universally encompasses the paradigms of all Indigenous Peoples" (Simpson 2000, p.171). However, due to a lack of published material on the world views of distinctive Aboriginal Nations, theorists frequently rely on Aboriginal academics of many different Nations to contribute to both their research and arguments (Simpson 2000).

It is also important to remember that each planning situation is different from the next. Sandercock (2003) suggests that planners use their perception skills to decipher which ways of knowing would be best-suited to a particular situation. Simpson (2000) believes that researchers should ask Indigenous community members how they prefer to share information. She adds that, "some communities have a strong traditional base and prefer the traditional 'Anishinabe ways of knowing', while others prefer Western methods" (p.169). However, Simpson also states that, "increasingly, Aboriginal academics are engaging in research with Aboriginal communities and this inevitably raises the conscious desire to conduct research that is rooted in our own world views in order to ensure the accurate construction of Aboriginal perspectives" (p.167). She argues that although some Indigenous peoples state that they prefer Western research methods, this could potentially be the result of colonial influence rather than true personal preference (Simpson 2000).

The 'Anishinabe ways of knowing' can be characterized by collaboration, consensual decision making, learning from Elders, by doing and storytelling (Simpson 2000). These ways of knowing are similar to those suggested by Sandercock (2003) and linked to Jojola's (2008) argument for incorporating traditional Indigenous culture and identity into all Indigenous planning processes. LaRocque (2000) builds on this idea for a new epistemology for planning with Indigenous peoples by calling for a move away from the "oversimplification of traditional Aboriginal knowledge" (p.163). She states that, "for lack of more precise translations, or research, we have in modern times generalized

Native cultures as 'intuitive', 'spiritual', 'qualitative', 'moral' and holistic', but these are descriptions subject to oversimplification" (p. 163).

Aboriginal world views are by no means simple or straightforward. They are not merely 'mystical' (p. 163) or whimsical. Generally, 21<sup>st</sup> century academic literature does not refer to Aboriginal world views as such. However, it can be argued that the majority of academics still require further exposure to Aboriginal world views and ways of knowing. For, this could potentially help non-Aboriginals to gain a deeper understanding of the true significance of traditional knowledge. Moreover, increased exposure would hopefully lead to the proper use and incorporation of Aboriginal knowledge in all necessary planning processes.

### **2.3 Communicative planning**

Forester defines planning as, "more than anything, an interpretive, communicative activity" (Forester 1999, qtd. in Sandercock 2003, p. 67). For quite some time, Forester (1999) and fellow theorists (Healey 1992; Innes 1995; Friedmann 1979) have been urging planners to engage in open dialogue with citizens. They believe planning should be active and interactive at all times. Moreover, Friedmann (1979) explains that the only way to successfully achieve genuine action and interaction is to bring professionals and stakeholders together in a process of mutual learning. This is a process in which both parties ultimately benefit equally from their communication with one another.

Communicative theory also calls for a move away from technical rationality and a shift towards a more qualitative and interpretive mode of inquiry (Innes 1995).

Communicative theorists believe every situation and circumstance is completely

different from the next and should be treated as such. Communities and stakeholder groups cannot be typecast or placed into a particular mould. Furthermore, communicative theorists do not believe in following general rules of practice. However, they do believe professionals and citizens should speak the same language. They believe a lot more will be accomplished if professionals avoid using technical, inaccessible jargon. Professionals and citizens must be able to understand one another in order for progress to be made.

Essentially, communicative planning theory can be described as planning which places emphasis on human worth and the importance of inter-personal relationships and skills. It is a planning model which revolves around dialogue, storytelling and reciprocity. It steers away from technical, science-based knowledge and instead relies equally on the experiential knowledge of both professionals and citizens.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Insurgent planning, Indigenous planning and communicative planning theory have many similar defining characteristics. Each focuses on the concept of open communication between parties and a narrowing of the metaphorical gap between 'professionals' and citizens. They state that the rational approach to planning must be modified if planners aim to successfully work towards the betterment of diverse cities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moreover, they all place emphasis on the importance of collaboration, participation and storytelling.

Each of these elements is vital when planning with Aboriginal peoples. Therefore, they have all been implemented and incorporated throughout the duration of this study. However, there needs to be more than just stakeholder participation in Indigenous planning processes. As will be discussed further in Chapter 6, planners must include Aboriginal voices in planning processes and public policy, but more importantly, we should all be working towards something far greater. Ultimately, planners must work towards facilitating the development of Aboriginal-run and Aboriginal-led programs and initiatives. For, the next step is a paradigm shift towards self-governance and leadership for all Aboriginal nations.

### **Chapter Three: Research approach and methods**

Research methods should be chosen with care. They should be well-suited to the particular topic of discussion. They should be accessible and appropriate for all participants involved. For this exploration, multiple research methods were chosen to inform the work. It has been well-documented that the use of triangulation, or multiple research methods, can strengthen a researcher's argument. With this in mind, I conducted a review of pertinent literature, organized 32 semi-structured interviews and coordinated 3 focus groups, with 8 to 12 participants in each group. Each step in the research process was guided by action research principles. This means that the majority of my investigation was conducted in direct collaboration with participants as I strived for continuous mutual learning between researcher and stakeholders. Conducting this research through an action research lens enabled me to gain insight into the lived realities of the participants while also building community learning amongst individuals.

The study ran from May 2009 to April 2010. Each research method encouraged active participation between myself and the participants; elderly Aboriginals, service providers, community workers and government officials throughout Winnipeg and across Canada. A review of relevant literature highlighted issues previously identified and examined in relation to this paper. It also pointed out areas which have yet to be explored and addressed. Conducting semi-structured interviews provided me with the opportunity to experience honest, open dialogue with participants in a one-on-one setting. Focus group meetings gave participants the opportunity to share personal stories and experiences in a comfortable and familiar group setting.

It was deemed essential to use a variety of research methods in order to fully explore the housing needs and issues of Winnipeg's elderly Aboriginals living in poverty. It would be impossible to uncover all pertinent information relating to this topic from only written sources such as books, journal articles or websites. A review of the literature is a fundamental part of the research process, as it indicates where other researchers have been and where we must go from here. A comprehensive literature review should, without a doubt, serve as the foundation for a solid argument. However, learning from those who are currently living the realities we are studying is an invaluable part of the research process. Without the stories, knowledge and insight of the participants, this study would be missing a very important piece.

### **3.1 Action research**

Action research has several names. It is often referred to as participatory research, collaborative inquiry or action learning. However, in essence, they are all one and the same (O'Brien 1998). Simply put, action research is learning by doing. A group of people come together to identify a problem, do something to resolve it, see how successful their efforts were, and if not satisfied, try again (O'Brien 1998). A more concrete definition is provided by Gilmore et al. (1986):

Action research aims to contribute to both the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to further the goals of social science simultaneously. Thus, there is a dual commitment in action research to study a system and concurrently to collaborate with members of the system in changing it in what is together regarded as a desirable direction. Accomplishing this dual

goal requires the active collaboration of researcher and participants, and thus it stresses the importance of co-learning as a primary aspect of the research process (Gilmore et al. 1986 qtd. in O'Brien 1998, p.1).

As Gilmore et al. (1986) explain, action research is a qualitative research method which aims to benefit both the participants and researcher through a mutual learning experience. It attempts to avoid settings in which a researcher simply studies participants from an outsider's perspective and leaves them with nothing in return. Instead, the researcher's goal is to help participants find practical solutions to pertinent issues. Participants reciprocate by sharing their knowledge, opinions and insights. Furthermore, as illustrated by Guba and Lincoln (1994), this method recognizes the values, perspectives and constructs of all key players through a dynamic engagement. This unites the researcher and stakeholders to "empower as well as further a more contextually reflective engagement process" (Guba and Lincoln 1994, p.78).

The principles of action research provided a solid framework for this study as I worked collaboratively with participants to determine the housing needs of elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg. This project would not have been possible without the knowledge and insight of each and every one of the participants who so generously donated their time, thoughts and opinions. Together, we worked to identify the issues and problems in relation to the questions and objectives steering the research. We then proceeded to discuss ways in which the current housing situation could be improved, a situation which is referred to by many as an 'affordable housing crisis' (Peters 2005; Porter 2004; Walker 2004). Lastly, all shared and learned information was melded together to create

realistic and achievable recommendations for future housing policy change and implementation.

### **3.2 Semi-structured interviews**

Zeisel (2006) suggests that interviews and questionnaires involve “posing questions systematically to find out what people think, feel, do, know, believe and expect” (p. 227). He further explains that “a researcher can use interviews to discover how people define a situation, what they consider important about it, what effects they intend their actions to have in that situation, and how they feel about it” (p. 227). For this study, I wanted to know exactly how participants feel about the current housing and support situation for elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg and in other Canadian urban centres. I wanted to know their thoughts, opinions, needs, wants, insights and recommendations. I wanted to learn as much as I could from each participant’s contribution.

For these reasons, I chose to incorporate semi-structured interviews into my research process. The interviews provided me with a deeper insight into the lives of those directly affected by the issues examined in this paper. After speaking with participants, every bulleted issue and problem leapt off of the page and into reality. These people have real problems that require real and immediate solutions. Conducting interviews enabled me to hear, first-hand, the stories of those who face these challenges every day. Moreover, the interviews enabled me to hear the voices and opinions of those who may or may not feel comfortable speaking in a group setting, such as a focus group, or responding to a written questionnaire.

A total of 7 semi-structured, indepth interviews (Zeisel 2006) were held with Elders and elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg seeking to understand housing issues from their perspectives. It is important to note that, in traditional Aboriginal culture, age alone does not necessarily mean that one is recognized as an Elder. According to Martin-Hill (1995), Aboriginal Elders are recognized as the historians or keepers of particular Aboriginal world views. They possess the knowledge of culture, spirituality and social structure. Traditionally, Elders are the historians, philosophers, leaders and teachers of the community and are consulted for their advice and wisdom. For this project, I interviewed both Elders and elderly individuals.

The Elders and elderly participating in this study, 6 women and 1 man, were all 55+ in age, identified by ASRC staff and interviewed at Kekinan Centre in Winnipeg's inner city. All interviews were between 1 and 2 hours in length. Each interviewee signed a consent form before beginning their interview. Interviews were audio-recorded when permitted. Detailed written documentation was employed in instances where audio-recording was not preferred.

In addition, a total of 25 semi-structured interviews, with 19 women and 6 men, were held with staff in Indigenous organizations, community groups, non-profit housing organizations and government offices in Winnipeg, face to face; and in other Canadian cities, by telephone. Interviews averaged 1 hour in length, and were useful for assessing the level of awareness of the issue and for identifying programs. All local participants were identified through affiliation with their respective organization or group. All

national participants were identified through affiliation with their local Aboriginal Friendship Centre.

Interviews were conducted at the participant's workplace. Each interviewee gave written or verbal consent (over the telephone) before beginning their interview. Verbal consent was verified via email prior to participation. Interviews were audio-recorded when permitted. Detailed written documentation was employed in instances where audio-recording was not preferred.

The semi-structured interviews provided indepth insight into the issues facing elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg and across the country and inspired initial illustrative arguments (Mason 2002). Participants provided answers to a prepared set of questions. However, a significant amount of information was also shared through unplanned storytelling. This additional knowledge has been invaluable to the analysis and overall findings of the study.

### **3.3 Focus groups**

A focus group is a unique research tool as it allows for group interaction and often greater insight into why certain opinions are held (Krueger 1988). According to Krueger (1988), focus groups work because "they tap into human tendencies" (p.23). He states that, "attitudes and perceptions relating to products, services or programs are developed in part by interaction with other people. We are a product of our environment and are influenced by the people around us" (p.23). Because participants generally feel comfortable with each other in a focus group setting, they tend to share a variety of ideas, thoughts, opinions, as well as potential solutions to the issues at hand.

Moreover, some people feel more at ease sharing ideas in a group setting rather than in a one-on-one interview. Participants are not singled out in a focus group (unless they want to be) and are not required to speak unless they willingly choose to do so.

The 3 focus groups conducted for this study were held throughout the month of September, 2009. Each lasted approximately 150 minutes and included 8-12 participants. Participants were recruited by ASRC staff members and offered a small honorarium. This recruitment strategy enabled me to conduct the groups expeditiously, although, like many of those who participated in the semi-structured interviews, all participants were involved in the ASRC network. This may have limited the range of contributing perspectives.

The focus group meetings were held at three different inner-city locations to facilitate access. Participants included 23 women and 5 men. They were all 55+ in age and had lived in Winnipeg anywhere from 6 months to 60 years. The overarching goal of these focus groups was to uncover the current housing situations for elderly Aboriginals living in Winnipeg.

Participants signed consent forms before participating in each focus group. Sessions commenced with a prayer and an Aboriginal smudging ceremony, which were both led by Thelma Meade. A Sharing Circle formation was used for each discussion, similar to those traditionally employed by North American Indigenous Peoples (Ball et al. 2009). The Circle process was incorporated as it offers a “structured form of dialogue which is inclusive and respectful; engages residents; and builds community” (Ball et al. 2009, p.

14). Moreover, Ball et al. (2009) suggest that Circles are “more likely to produce outcomes that are widely supported and successful” (p. 15) as they create a safe space for participants to “express different viewpoints and strong emotions while also building relationships based on what they all have in common” (p.13).

Focus group interviewing was an important research method for this study as it offered a way for the elderly and Elders to communicate and make decisions collectively. Moreover, participants were able to practice full citizen participation as they shared their needs and concerns regarding housing for elderly Aboriginals in a comfortable and relaxed group setting.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The use of multiple research methods can strengthen and enrich a study. Applying a variety of different tools can facilitate the sharing of multiple perspectives and stories, both written and verbal. This research process incorporated multiple methods to begin to construct a body of evidence which highlights the housing needs of elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg. This task was achieved through a review of pertinent literature, as well as through empirical work in the form of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with elderly Aboriginals, service workers and officials from Winnipeg and across the country.

## **Chapter Four: Literature review**

According to Hart (1998), a literature review is many things, but most obviously perhaps it is a surveying of the land in which we have chosen to travel and an acknowledgement of the major landmarks, such as key players and theoretical movements. It is also an entry point into our participation in this community of discourse (Hart 1998). It tells the reader what our assessment of the discourse is, where we situate ourselves in that community, and, to some extent, who we are (Hart 1998).

A preliminary investigation into the literature reveals significant gaps and issues in relation to the topic of this paper. These gaps are not only in the literature, but in the programming, support and housing availability for elderly people of Aboriginal origin throughout Canadian urban centres. In order to examine a topic with minimal published material, this overview explores literature within related subject realms as a means to contextualize and frame the inquiry. Moreover, it highlights the ways in which this study aims to situate itself within the discourse and hopefully fill in at least a few of the gaps.

### **4.1 Aboriginal migration to Canadian urban centres**

When we discuss Aboriginal migration from rural reserves into Canadian urban centres, it is important to remember that their urbanization patterns are directly linked to actions which originally removed them from emerging urban areas (Peters 2002) during periods of colonization. When Aboriginal people move to cities, they do not arrive like other national or international migrants. They face many of the same challenges and issues, such as integrating into an urban economy, forming new social networks and finding appropriate housing and education. Moreover, many new Canadian urbanites,

Aboriginal people included, retain close ties to their communities of origin (Peters 2002). However, unlike others, most Aboriginal people are actually travelling within their traditional territories as they relocate within cities. This leads to a complex misunderstanding of Aboriginal rights in urban areas, representing a major contemporary challenge for governments, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (Peters 2002).

Although people of Aboriginal origin have always lived in and around cities, it was not until the 1950s that Canadian urban centres began to see a dramatic increase in urban Aboriginal population (Peters 2002). Currently, 54 percent of Aboriginal people in Canada live in cities, comprising approximately nine to ten percent of the populations of Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg (Statistics Canada 2006). According to the 2006 Census, Winnipeg is the Canadian city with the largest urban Aboriginal population, with a total of 68,380 persons (Statistics Canada 2006). Edmonton follows closely with 52,100 persons, accounting for five percent of the city's total population (Statistics Canada 2006). These numbers are significant and are increasing rapidly, particularly those accounting for youth and the elderly (Cooke et al. 2008; MUNHA 2007).

Unfortunately, research identifies various areas of concern for these people. Migration to the city is frequently marked by racism, presenting barriers in finding and securing rental and owner-occupied housing (Just 2005). There is a well-documented shortage of safe, affordable housing in Canadian urban centres, an issue which is exacerbated for individuals who are victimized by the effects of racism and prejudice (Mulligan 2007; MUNHA 2007). Because finding an adequate place to live is often very difficult, and for

other family or social reasons, an individual's migration may also involve several returns to the reserve (Distasio et al. 2005; Peters 2002) and multiple moves within the city (Skelton 2002). This process can be expensive, time-consuming and inconvenient. On the other hand, these frequent moves can also be voluntary and beneficial. Returning to the reserve on a regular basis can assist an individual in maintaining a strong connection to their home community and to their family and friends who remain on the reserve.

The fact that a significant number of Aboriginal people continue to move back and forth between the urban and rural communities suggests that initiatives focused solely on urban areas may not adequately address the needs of urban Aboriginals. Peters (2002) argues for a re-examination of the various programs and services provided for urban Aboriginals and suggests that programming be extended to both locales and connections formed between the two. She also argues for an improvement in the interface between organizations in both the rural and urban communities (Peters 2002).

Walker (2005) highlights cultural and language barriers as issues which further complicate an Aboriginal individual's access to housing and services (ASRC 2009) within cities. Urban life is very different from life on the reserves. This is particularly true for elderly Aboriginals who have spent the majority of, if not their entire lives in reserve communities. Moreover, many of those who arrive from remote northern communities are unfamiliar and unversed in English or French. Without access to a formal or informal interpreter, these elderly people have an exceptionally hard time with the migration process and find it difficult settling in within an urban setting.

Urban housing available to Aboriginal households is often of low quality (CMHC 2009) and typically suits them poorly. For many Aboriginal groups, it is important that all family members, from youth to the elderly, are able to reside together. Frideres (1994) points to mutual support, to the youth bringing a sense of life into the home, and to the elderly setting the example. Saladin d'Anglure (1994) argues that youth living in close proximity to older relatives is integral to the preservation of traditional language and culture. However, the majority of affordable homes in Canadian cities are not significant enough in size to allow for large families and extended family members to reside within one household. This leads to high rates of overcrowding and inadequate living conditions for urban Aboriginal families across the country. Many would prefer, and sometimes need to live in large groups, as a means of providing support to one another. Unfortunately, affordable Canadian housing options do not satisfy this need.

Peters (2002) describes discriminatory outcomes in job markets for urban Aboriginals. Unemployment rates are much higher for people of Aboriginal origin than for total metropolitan populations. The majority earn less than \$40,000 per year (Statistics Canada 2006). They are also subject to a complicated legal regime (Peters 2002), as they are identified in terms of legal categories (i.e. registration status or band membership). These categories create inequalities among urban Aboriginal individuals. Some have access to federally funded programs and services, others do not. Some have opportunities to participate in self-government, others do not. In addition, it is often very unclear as to which level of government or organization is responsible for those requiring financial, educational, employment, housing, and/or medical support (ASRC 2009; Walker 2003) off-reserve. In sum, unemployment, low incomes and a complicated

legal regime all result in individuals and families living in inadequate and unsafe housing. They simply cannot afford to choose where they would like to live in urban centres and the necessary support and assistance is often difficult, if not impossible, to locate and access.

Compared to each city's average, the Aboriginal populations in Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina and Edmonton have shorter life expectancies, lower overall levels of education and a greater number of individuals who are homeless or living in inadequate housing (Bridges and Foundations n.d; Distasio et al. 2005; MUNHA 2007; Peters 2002; Walker 2003). These issues must be brought to the forefront of Canadian policy. Researchers struggle to identify the root of each problem. They attempt to recommend viable solutions. Many suggest improvement in the health and well-being of any individual, regardless of age, gender or race, begins with a safe, healthy and supportive home (Bulter-Jones 2008; CCPA 2009; Layton 2008). According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA 2009), housing is a determinant which has an impact on the physical, spiritual, emotional and mental health of individuals and their families; neighbourhoods and the broader community. In essence, it can be suggested that the urban Aboriginal population must first have access to safe, affordable housing before they can begin to secure a healthy, sustainable future within Canadian cities.

#### **4.2 Affordable housing for urban Aboriginals in Canada**

Canada has had a long and proud history of housing successes and was once known and admired around the world for its innovative housing solutions. Unfortunately, these claims no longer hold true. Over the past two decades, there has been a significant

erosion of housing rights and affordable housing availability throughout the country. Canada's successful social housing program, which began in 1973, originally created more than half a million affordable homes, but was discontinued in the early 1990s (Walker 2005). Its discontinuation has affected all Canadians, particularly urban Aboriginals (CMHC 2005).

Canadian urban Aboriginals make up approximately 158,000 households across the country, yet there are fewer than 19,000 off-reserve (in both cities and other rural areas) housing units funded and targeted specifically for them (Devine 2002). The National Aboriginal Housing Association (NAHA) has declared that off-reserve Aboriginal renter households are at a severe disadvantage compared to non-Aboriginal renter households. Approximately 16.5 percent of urban Aboriginals live in units in need of major repair compared to only nine percent of non-Aboriginals. Aboriginal households have a higher incidence of affordability problems than non-Aboriginals, with 37 percent spending more than the norm of 30 percent for rent; while 15 percent experience a severe rent burden, paying more than 50 percent of their income for shelter (Devine 2002). Moreover, in central and western Canadian cities, Aboriginal men, women, and youth are disproportionately represented within the homeless population and are the most identified segment of street homeless and shelter users.

Many scholars agree that Canada is currently in the midst of an affordable housing crisis. They argue for a call to action by the government (Devine 2002; Peters 2002; Walker 2008), as they suggest it is the role of the country's governing body to rectify this devastating reality. More specifically, they believe it is the role of the government to

provide existing social housing organizations with the necessary and appropriate resources; resources which would enable them to adequately maintain all new and existing housing units, without interference from outside parties. Over time, this would ultimately lead towards creating a more sustainable future for housing providers, tenants, and ideally, for the nation as a whole (Walker 2008).

Many of Canada's social housing organizations and the housing stock they continue to manage are the greatest legacy of a period in Canadian history, from the mid-1960s to 1993 (Walker 2005) when social housing was improving social welfare throughout Canada. Moreover, a large majority of the homes constructed during this time were the result of the hard work and dedication of several successful urban Aboriginal housing organizations (Walker 2005).

According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), culturally appropriate housing is of central importance to the social, cultural and economic well-being of Aboriginals living in urban areas. They further state that when social housing is provided to Aboriginal households by Aboriginal organizations, the outcomes are far better than when it is provided by non-Aboriginal organizations. When these corporations are run by boards of directors and staff comprised mainly of Aboriginal people, they are actively working towards self-governance, which is argued by many (Lanigan 2002; Peters 2002; Walker 2005) as the only way to effectively meet the growing needs of Canadian Aboriginal peoples.

In 1970, the Canadian federal government launched a 200-million dollar demonstration housing program. This program was aimed primarily at finding housing solutions for inner-city, low-income households. Aboriginal communities were not a part of the initial targets under the demonstration funding (Devine 2002). However, after the program was announced, the federal government received numerous requests to allocate a portion of this funding to support urban Aboriginal housing projects. One project which benefited greatly from this initiative was a proposal for the formation of the Kinew Housing Corporation. This non-profit housing organization was officially formed in Winnipeg in August of 1970 (MUNHA 2007). Sponsored by the Winnipeg Indian-Métis Friendship Centre, Kinew was “the first Aboriginal run housing corporation in all of Canada” (Vincent 1970 qtd. in MUNHA 2007, p.15). Today, the Kinew Housing Corporation operates almost 400 units of subsidized (social) rental housing (Walker 2005) throughout Winnipeg.

Before Kinew, Aboriginal people from rural and remote reserves went to the Winnipeg Friendship Centre for assistance with their migration into the city (Devine 2002). The Friendship Centre provided support, advocacy and assistance for new migrants and was the front line for families attempting to find suitable and affordable housing. With the formation of Kinew Housing, there was now an organization dedicated specifically to the much-needed area of housing provision for Winnipeg Aboriginal families. Using Kinew as a model and with the support of Friendship Centres, as well as Metis, status and non-status Aboriginal groups from across Canada, five additional Aboriginal non-profit housing corporations were created between 1972 and 1975 (Devine 2002). Today, there

are 110 similar organizations across the country operating a total of approximately 10,000 housing units (Walker and Barcham 2007 qtd. in MUNHA 2007).

Since the establishment of Kinew Housing and similar Aboriginal housing corporations, Canadian society has witnessed the creation of numerous federally funded housing assistance programs for Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals alike. These include, but are not limited to, the Urban Native Housing Program, Non-profit Housing and Rent Supplement (Devine 2002; MUNHA 2007). In terms of housing assistance, the Canadian federal government is, and always has been, represented by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Over the years, the federal response through CMHC has been to offer affordable housing loans through the various housing assistance programs. Generally, these loans have been intended for private, charitable non-profits, and the majority have had fixed long-term mortgage interest rates (Devine 2002). However, the amount of money available for loans has varied greatly since the 1970s.

The last major approval for an increase in federal housing assistance occurred in 1983. This agreement guaranteed that tenants of native ancestry would pay no than 25 percent of their income on shelter (Devine 2002). Tenants would pay 25 percent of their income and the federal government would cover the difference to equal that of market rent. This was a significant approval, as bridging the cost-income gap had been a pressing issue for Aboriginal low-income housing providers since the 1970s. It had been a pressing issue because urban Aboriginal household incomes were, and continue to be, substantially below the Canadian average (Devine 2002; Walker 2005). This was the first

housing response to acknowledge and recognize these challenging realities of the urban Aboriginal community (Devine 2002; Walker 2005).

As previously mentioned, Canada used to be viewed as a role model for its innovative and affordable housing solutions. However, from 1993 to 2001, the federal government did not build a single social housing unit (Walker 2005). Responsibility for affordable housing was passed down from the federal government to the provincial governments, with no requirements on the part of the provinces or territories to continue the agreements aligned with the previous housing programs (Devine 2002). The consequences were instantly evident throughout the country. Absolute homelessness and inner-city socio-economic deterioration were characteristic of nearly every urban centre (Toronto Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force 1999; Winnipeg Inner City Housing Coalition 2000; Winnipeg's State of the Inner City Report).

In 1999, the federal government attempted to re-enter the nonmarket housing sector, but as Walker (2005) states, they entered through 'the back door' as they initially began targeting the problem of homelessness rather than that of insufficient housing. A few years later, in 2001, they launched the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI) through CMHC, in an attempt to assist with affordable housing provision (Walker 2005).

According to Porter (2004) and Walker (2005), this initiative produced very few new housing units and could not provide large enough subsidies to assist housing providers.

As a result, housing providers were unable to maintain affordable rents for any extended period of time. For, they could not maintain operating costs with their reduced rental income. The AHI was an attempt to increase the number of affordable

housing units across the country. However, it was unfortunately unable to rectify the housing crisis previously created by the federal government's exit from the nonmarket housing sector.

The federal government did not re-enter the off-reserve Aboriginal housing sector until 2006, when it budgeted \$300 million to be spent over a three-year period. This initiative is called the Off-Reserve Housing Trust (OHT). The OHT is similar to the AHI.

Unfortunately, like the AHI, it has also been unsuccessful in adequately addressing the need for affordable housing in urban Aboriginal communities, as can be observed from the number of Aboriginal individuals and families who are currently homeless or living in core housing need (MUNHA 2007; Statistics Canada 2006). In fact, the Manitoba Urban Native Housing Association (MUNHA 2007) states that Aboriginal housing demand is far exceeding supply in Winnipeg. In 2009 they reported having 2,300 persons on their waiting lists (MUNHA 2009), with the majority of people waiting anywhere from one to three years before being able to secure a place to live.

As referred to earlier, Kinew Housing is a local Aboriginal non-profit housing organization. Kinew is constantly searching for new and creative ways to deliver social housing to its constituency. This organization allocates funding through government assistance programs, community initiatives and any other available funding sources (MUNHA 2007; Walker 2005). While Kinew develops new units as quickly as possible, their housing supply is unable to meet the current demands of the community. Moreover, they are presently in the midst of facing their greatest challenge to date. Over the next twenty years, all of their subsidy (operating) agreements, which are

attached to existing Urban Native Housing Program (UNHP) units, will expire, as their mortgage loans are nearly paid out. This is a significant issue for the organization and upsetting for all those directly and indirectly involved. Similar subsidy agreements are currently expiring, and will continue to do so, all across the country over the next 20 years. Cities in Canada's Prairie Provinces will be hit the hardest, as this is where the majority of these agreements were originally made, due to their high urban Aboriginal populations.

When these subsidies expire, affordable housing providers will then own their units and rental income will have to cover all of their operating costs. Because the majority of urban Aboriginal housing providers have renters who pay on a rent-geared-to-income basis (rents fixed at approximately 25-27 percent of the tenants household incomes), as mentioned earlier, they will be unable to meet operating costs due to the significant reduction in rent revenue. According to MUNHA (2007), by December 2010, nearly half of Kinew's units will be off subsidy, and they too will be forced to charge market rate rents. For low-income urban Aboriginal families, paying market rent is inconceivable. To put this into perspective, tenants who are currently on social assistance will have to go from paying approximately \$295 a month to paying approximately \$500 a month (MUNHA 2007; Walker 2008).

Reports commissioned by the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association note that with few exceptions, Aboriginal housing organizations will "not remain viable as social housing providers once their subsidy agreements expire" (Connelly Consulting Services 2003 qtd. in Pomeroy 2004, p.238). That is, unless new subsidies are extended to them

(p.238). The manager of Kinew Housing, the Manitoba Urban Native Housing Organization and leaders from the Manitoba Aboriginal community do not know what will happen next. Unless the federal or provincial governments are able to extend further funding, the housing providers may eventually be forced to sell off the majority, if not all, of their current housing stock. For, there is simply no way to adequately cover the operating costs of these units at rent-geared-to-income rates.

The National Aboriginal Housing Association (NAHA) is attempting to find solutions for the issues surrounding the subsidy agreements and the urban Aboriginal housing crisis. One thing is certain; they firmly believe that all federal housing initiatives must have an urban Aboriginal component. National Aboriginal organizations must be representative of Aboriginal peoples and the members of the National Aboriginal Housing Association must be involved in the design of each and every initiative. The NAHA also believes that the Aboriginal community must ultimately solve its own problems. Lanigan (2002) states, “we have waited for a long time to come to the conclusion that nobody else can solve our problems for us”. He further explains:

In terms of the principles that we espouse, self-determination of Aboriginal peoples must be respected. The Aboriginal community must be consulted and must deliver on any future programs. This is consistent with international covenants on the self-determination of indigenous peoples, to which Canada is a signatory. It is also consistent with domestic court decisions and federal Aboriginal policies, such as the inherent right of self-government and the response to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Gathering Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal*

Action Plan. Housing is considered the cornerstone of urban Aboriginal governance. By ensuring Aboriginal peoples' access to adequate and affordable housing, the issues of health, education, and employment can then be improved (Devine 2002 in *Finding Room*, p.343).

#### **4.3 Aging in place – on reserve versus off reserve care**

An extensive amount of literature has explored the concept of aging in place (Canada 2009; Buchignani and Armstrong-Esther 1999; Dupuis 1996) and supportive housing for the elderly (Cooke, Guimond and McWhirter 2008; Drover and Wade 2006). Aging in place is a process which enables elderly people to grow older in the familiar and comfortable surroundings of their homes while providing them with the necessary assistance to maintain a relatively independent life style (MacDonald 2008). Supportive housing complexes combine a physical environment that is specifically designed to be safe, secure, enabling and home-like with support services such as meals, housekeeping and social and recreational activities (MacDonald 2008). These characteristics allow elderly residents to maximize their independence, privacy, dignity and decision-making abilities in a comfortable and welcoming setting. Another important element to both aging in place and supportive housing is affordability. As the majority of elderly individuals live on a limited, fixed income, the places where they reside must be affordable as well as safe and accessible.

According to a recent report published by The Special Senate Committee on Aging (2008), all Canadians should be able to grow older in the place of their choice. This report states that most elderly individuals, regardless of ethnicity, express a strong

preference for staying in their homes as they age, if at all possible, or at least, in their home neighbourhoods or communities.

Recently, there has also been a great deal of discussion surrounding the issue of aging in place and supportive housing for elderly people of Aboriginal origin (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs 2007; Buchignani and Armstrong-Esther 1999; Parrack and Joseph 2007). For many of these elderly individuals, this would mean continuing to reside on-reserve in their home communities rather than moving into larger urban centres where the majority of supportive housing, assisted living and care home facilities are presently located.

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (2007) reports that 95% of elderly Aboriginals interviewed would prefer to receive continuing care in their own community. However, current services are insufficient to meet existing and projected needs. This report also states that in the late 1980s, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) placed a “moratorium on the construction of new care facilities for the on-reserve elderly” (Assembly of First Nations 2007, p. 15). Although this moratorium has since been lifted, it has “been replaced with very restrictive terms for approval of new facilities” (p. 15). As a result, First Nations communities have an extremely difficult time accessing federal funding for these types of services and facilities. Furthermore, First Nations communities are unable to access provincial funding for any type of care facility for the elderly because the Province of Manitoba takes the position that First Nations are a federal responsibility. This is a concrete example of how the well-being and

responsibility for the needs of Canadian Aboriginals is constantly being shuffled between various governmental departments.

Consequently, medical and support needs force many elderly to move to the city, despite evidence suggesting that their quality of life would be much higher if they could age in place in their home communities (Assembly of First Nations 2007; Parrack and Joseph 2007). For example, the majority of elderly Aboriginals enjoy visiting and being visited by others, and going to places where they have the opportunity to socialize with others (Buchignani and Armstrong-Esther 1999). They are sociable individuals who place great value in the gift of storytelling and sharing with family and friends. However, elderly Aboriginals living in urban centres are visited approximately half as often as their peers who remain living on-reserve and in small communities (Buchignani and Armstrong-Esther 1999). These statistics mirror those of urban Canadian elderly overall, who are said to be almost three times more likely than their rural counterparts to be at risk of social exclusion (Macdonald 2008). Furthermore, according to Holzberg (1982), one of the most critical chronic problems facing elderly Aboriginals who live outside of their home communities is the 'loss of continuity in their lives' (Holzberg 1982 qtd. in Buchignani and Armstrong-Ester 1999, p. 23).

Elderly Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals are alone for much longer periods of time in urban centres than those living in rural areas. They are also much more likely to be left to 'fend for themselves' (Cranswick and Thomas 2005) in urban settings. Many elderly newcomers to cities suffer from a strong sense of loneliness and isolation, particularly when they initially arrive. Furthermore, the Special Senate Committee on Aging (2008)

notes that rural and on-reserve elderly often benefit from more family, neighbourly and peer support. This is due to an increased likelihood that people know one another outside of the city and are therefore more willing to extend their support and generosity to those in need.

The Assembly of First Nations (2007) argues that the availability of supportive housing or similar facilities on-reserve would help alleviate many of the issues associated with feelings of displacement, isolation and loneliness for elderly Aboriginals in cities. Furthermore, if the elderly had the option to remain in supportive facilities on-reserve, this would assist with rectifying problems of overcrowding, family/informal caregiver burnout, and may help prevent complications arising from inadequate informal care of individuals with chronic medical conditions. Moreover, these types of facilities would enable elderly Aboriginals to age comfortably in place.

On-reserve supportive housing facilities and care homes could be the answer to several of the identified issues regarding housing for elderly people of Aboriginal origin. However, there is currently a severe lack of funding for projects such as these (Assembly of First Nations 2007).

#### **4.4 Formal versus informal care**

Several elderly Aboriginals require supportive housing as well as personal support and care. However, formal support is not always available or accessible either on or off-reserve. In many cases, informal care by family members or friends fills the niche of formal care (Assembly of First Nations 2007; Buchignani and Armstrong-Esther 1999;

Hardey et al. 2001; Parrack and Joseph 2007). There are several reasons for this. First of all, formal care is expensive and government support for these services is presently meagre and indirect (Buchignani and Armstrong-Esther 1999). Very few elderly Aboriginals are financially prepared for independent living in old age or have the means to purchase private care. In addition, elderly Aboriginals do not tend to access the formal care services which could be subsidized and are currently available (Buchignani and Armstrong-Esther 1999). Reasons for this include; language and cultural barriers, being uninformated about existing programs and services, as well as difficulties accessing and filling out the required forms and applications (Butler-Jones 2008; Parrack and Joseph 2007).

Therefore, the responsibility of many elderly Aboriginals is downloaded to their families and friends. This is especially difficult for Aboriginal families, as the needs of the Aboriginal elderly are intensified due to their health status. Many may require support several years earlier than non-Aboriginal elderly (Canada 2009). Presently, one of the most prevalent and devastating diseases among Aboriginal elderly is diabetes, which, over time, may require a significant amount of both informal and formal care.

Up until the 1940s, diabetes was relatively unknown among Aboriginal peoples (Mulligan 2007). However, by 2001, it became the fifth most prevalent health problem among adult non-reserve Aboriginal persons, with seven percent diagnosed with the disease compared to 2.9 percent for the total Canadian population. Diabetes is especially prevalent in older Aboriginal women, with one in four diagnosed compared to one in ten for all older Canadian women. For elderly Aboriginal men, one in five is

diagnosed with diabetes, compared to one in seven for all Canadian elderly men (Statistics Canada 2004). Many individuals diagnosed with diabetes will eventually require regular dialysis treatments. These treatments can be administered at home, but more commonly require professional medical care. However, additional informal care is frequently needed (and preferred) to assist with transportation, medical prescription pick up and delivery, mobility issues and other everyday life tasks.

Research outlines arguments both for and against informal care. Those in favour assert that informal care is “authentically Native and the main culturally appropriate way to fulfill the need for care” (Buchignani and Armstrong-Esther 1999, p.7). It is said to be consistent with tribal values that have traditionally emphasized familial obligation and interdependence. However, Buchignani and Armstrong-Esther (1999) argue that while one side of informal care is consistency with tradition, another is the neoliberal agenda, which downloads responsibility onto family members rather than the state. This transfer of responsibility can unfortunately lead to crowded housing conditions as well as financial and personal stress on family members (Joseph, Leach and Turner 2007) rather than being the ideal form of elderly care.

Additional arguments against informal care further suggest that family caregivers are often asked to “undertake health care procedures which they are not necessarily qualified to perform” (Joseph, Leach and Turner 2007). Moreover, many Aboriginal caregivers, (who are predominantly women), (Cranswick and Thomas 2005; Parrack and Joseph 2007), are torn between their responsibilities for childcare and elderly care, between their responsibilities for work and for their family.

The fact that Aboriginal people tend to have lower-than-average incomes in Canada (Statistics Canada 2006), only further exacerbates problems for informal care providers. Many do not have the necessary funds or resources to properly care for their elderly relatives. In addition, many of these care providers do not have adequate housing for elderly individuals, particularly for those with disabilities (Cranswick and Thomas 2005; Parrack and Joseph 2007). Often, family members must take time off work and/or turn down employment opportunities in order to provide the necessary care to their elderly relatives. Financial strain is great for the majority of Aboriginal informal care providers, which may consequently result in personal and household stress for both the caregiver and the family as a whole (Joseph, Leach and Turner 2007).

Whether or not informal care is the answer to Aboriginal elderly care, the fact of the matter is, it is currently the most predominant form of elderly care for both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals across the country, providing 80 percent of needed care (Macdonald 2008). Therefore, the Special Senate Committee on Aging (2008) believes that an important issue which must be addressed is how we support these informal caregivers.

Being a caregiver presents physical, mental, emotional and financial challenges, particularly for those who attempt to balance caregiving and paid employment. A few support options recently discussed include: providing much needed information to caregivers; creating a National Respite Program; making changes to the compassionate care benefit; providing financial support to caregivers; and a Canada Pension Plan dropout for caregivers (Macdonald 2008). These supports all have the potential to

increase the quality of life for informal caregivers and relieve some of the personal and financial stress which many undoubtedly experience. The Special Senate Committee on Aging (2008) views these options as a starting point to a more shared and integrated responsibility between the federal government and traditional family caregivers. Moreover, these options could work towards shifting away from a neoliberalism agenda and the downloading of responsibility from one party to another, for both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals alike.

#### **4.5 The Aboriginal Senior Resource Centre (ASRC) and Kekinan Centre**

Life for elderly Aboriginals in Canadian cities is not easy. There are various hurdles to overcome. At times, many describe feelings of loneliness and isolation in unfamiliar urban settings (ASRC 2009). In Winnipeg, the Aboriginal Senior Resource Centre (ASRC) attempts to bridge this challenging gap between reserve and urban living. As mentioned previously, their mission is to increase access to information, resources and supports which directly improve the health and well-being of elderly people of Aboriginal origin (ASRC 2009).

One of the ASRC's fundamental concerns is to assist elderly individuals in locating and securing adequate housing. In fact, in 2009, they joined forces with Kekinan Centre and the Kekinan Assisted Living Committee to work towards providing 30 new assisted living dwellings for elderly Aboriginals.

Kekinan Centre has been in existence since 1990. Until this past year, it was an independent living complex comprising of 32 units. Approximately 15 years ago, the

Kekinan Centre Board submitted a proposal to the Province of Manitoba for funding to build additional units which would be assisted-living in nature. Assisted-living facilities are those which offer one-bedroom suites, complete with a range of services such as prepared meals; laundry; as well as trained medical staff on-site, 24-hours a day. In December 2009, Kekinan's proposal became a reality as the \$4.8 million three-storey addition opened its doors to the public. The new assisted living wing is physically connected to the original 32 units within the independent living facility. With the expansion of 30 assisted living units, there will be an increase in housing for elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg. Moreover, the Aboriginal Senior Resource Centre now has a permanent and easily accessible head office, which is located near the main entrance of the addition.

Kekinan is managed and run completely by Aboriginal professionals and volunteers. This is important to note, as self-governance has been identified as a fundamental step in working towards the sustainability of Aboriginal communities in Canadian cities (MUNHA 2007; Peters 2002; Walker 2004). Moreover, current and potential Kekinan residents participated in the layout and design of the new addition. Residents shared their thoughts and insight with design professionals and directly influenced the construction and design of the new addition. Acute attention was paid to cultural values. For example, the new addition has an Elder's room which is circular in design, representing the importance of the Sharing Circle. It also incorporates the four colours of the Medicine Wheel, exemplifying its significance in many Aboriginal cultures. Moreover, the addition incorporates features made of completely natural materials,

such as cedar wood paneling, demonstrating the strong connection between Aboriginal people and the Earth.

Affordable and supportive housing options for elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg are also available through the Dakota Ojibway First Nations Housing Authority Inc. (DOFNHA), Dial-a-Life Housing (temporary shelter), Kanata Housing Corporation, and a few units through the Kinew Housing Corporation (Partners for Careers 2001; MUNHA 2007). However, Kekinan is the only housing complex in Winnipeg dedicated solely to elderly Aboriginals. The aforementioned groups provide Aboriginal-specific housing, but the majority of dwellings consist of two to four bedroom units reserved for families.

These housing providers, as well as many other affordable housing providers across the city, are actively trying to improve the living situations for Aboriginal peoples in Winnipeg (Partners for Careers 2001). Unfortunately, there remain thousands of Winnipeg Aboriginals who do not have a safe place to call home. An advocate from Shilom Mission (2006) estimates there are well over 2,000 people in Winnipeg who are homeless and it is estimated that 75-80% of the homeless people in Winnipeg are of Aboriginal descent. However, it is important to note that it is difficult to give precise numbers to the homeless population in any city, as these individuals do not have proper government identification and often do not participate in Statistics Canada surveys or inquiries. Although these estimates do not specifically relate to elderly Aboriginals, according to MUNHA, “the Aboriginal population is growing much more rapidly than the overall population and this includes large portions of both youth and the elderly”

(MUNHA 2007, p.23). This suggests that a significant portion of these estimates have the potential to be elderly individuals.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg and other Canadian urban centres face a compounding set of issues and concerns. Their migration from familiar rural reserves into unfamiliar urban centres frequently results in feelings of loneliness and isolation. Responsibility for their welfare is not clearly assigned to band organizations or any level of government (ASRC 2009). There is an insufficient supply of affordable urban housing units dedicated specifically to elderly Aboriginals. Therefore, they have very few options as to where they will reside. Consequently, many end up living in inadequate and substandard housing conditions.

A handful of housing programs attempt to address these issues throughout Winnipeg. Programs and housing authorities include Kekinan Centre, Dakota Ojibway First Nations Housing Authority Inc., Dial-a-Life Housing (temporary shelter), Kanata Housing Corporation and a few units through the Kinew Housing Corporation. Although all of these housing providers supply affordable and supportive residences for elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg (Partners for Careers 2001), unit availability does not meet current demand.

Moreover, the number of affordable housing units for Canadian urban Aboriginals will be significantly reduced over the next 20 years. This will be the result of the ending of subsidy (operating agreements) between low-income housing providers and various

government-subsidized housing programs. For the past few decades, these agreements enabled low-income housing providers to offer units at below market rents, with government subsidies covering the difference. However, the majority of these agreements were fixed to 20 and 30 year mortgages which will soon be coming to an end. Once these mortgages have been paid in full, the subsidy agreements will expire and housing providers will be forced to charge market rents in order to cover operating costs. For many urban Aboriginals, particularly the elderly, the majority of whom are living on fixed incomes, paying market rent is inconceivable.

Kekinan Centre, with both independent and assisted living suites, is an example of a near-ideal living arrangement for elderly Aboriginals. However, even with the new 30-suite assisted living addition, it is still only home to approximately 80 residents. There remain many other elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg, and throughout Canada's urban centres, who require similar housing and services. This issue needs to be brought to the forefront of Canadian policy. Band organizations and governments need to take responsibility for these individuals. Many of whom are forced to relocate to urban centres only because they are no longer able to adequately care for themselves and require additional supports. Elderly Aboriginals face several difficult barriers when migrating to cities. They need powerful advocates to voice their needs and ignite both band and government assistance.

## **Chapter Five: Findings and analysis**

Once all pertinent literature has been read and empirical work completed, a researcher must then begin to organize and analyze their research findings. The ultimate goal is to “somehow begin to construct and present a convincing explanation or argument on the basis of the data” (Mason 2000, p.147). Mason (2000) suggests that the first step in this process is to decide how to read the data. For this study, I have chosen to read the data in a reflexive manner (Mason 2000) meaning that I have attempted to form coherent arguments based on my personal interpretation of the research findings, but understand that another analyst could portray an entirely different interpretation of the same material. According to Mason (2000):

A reflexive reading will locate you as part of the data you have generated, and will seek to explore your role and perspective in the process of generation and interpretation of data. You will probably see yourself as inevitably and inextricably implicated in the data generation and interpretation processes, and you will therefore seek a reading of data which captures or expresses those relationships (Mason 2000, p. 149).

I realize that the following analysis has been significantly influenced by my interaction with the individuals who participated in this study as well as my personal interpretation of relevant literature. I ask that all readers kindly bear this in mind while reading this chapter.

Mason (2000) explains that once a manner of reading has been selected, the data can then be read successively and indexed or coded (Neuman 1997). The majority of

interviews conducted for this study were audio-recorded and transcribed at a later date. Detailed written notes were manually recorded for interviews and focus groups without audio-recordings. Once all transcriptions and notes had been typed and filed, they were all read in a reflexive manner and organized into three groups: (1) semi-structured interviews with Elders and elderly individuals; (2) semi-structured interviews with service workers and officials; and (3) focus group interviews.

With all of the data organized into these three main groups, I then began to analyze the findings. This was achieved through several successive readings and a 3-pass coding process as described by Neuman (1997). A 3-pass coding process employs three stages of coding (or highlighting): open coding; axial coding; and selective coding. For the analysis, each of the three groups was coded separately. Again, this included interviews with Elders and elderly Aboriginals; interviews with service workers and officials; and focus groups with Elders and elderly Aboriginals. The three data sets were then cross-referenced.

The 3-pass coding process I performed was as follows. First, I performed open coding on each of the data sets in order to highlight similarities and differences between the various interviews (keeping elderly persons' separate from service workers and officials) and between the 3 focus groups. I also used open codes for quotations or comments which appeared particularly unique or poignant. Next, I compiled a list of themes identified while reading through the data sets. Neuman (1997) illustrates three reasons why this is an important step: (1) it makes clear the emerging themes; (2) it encourages

themes in future coding; and (3) it contributes to the overall list of themes to assist in future analysis.

Axial coding follows open coding and “focuses on the initial coded themes more than the data” (Neuman 1997, p.423). Therefore, during this pass, I compiled a list of subcategories which were inspired specifically by themes identified during the open coding stage. For the third pass, selective coding, I aimed to identify particular themes which illustrated contrasts and comparisons within the data sets. These final themes make up the majority of the findings, as they illustrate the true correlations between the various pieces of data.

Once I completed the 3-pass coding process, I began to organize my findings by supporting them with key concepts and theories from the literature regarding Aboriginal migration to urban centres; housing for urban Aboriginals; housing and supports for elderly individuals; aging in place; and Canadian affordable housing policy, among others.

Qualitative analysis can be a lengthy and complicated process. However, if conducted carefully, the analysis will clearly identify key issues and concerns arising from the study and ultimately assist the researcher in providing recommendations for how to address them (Mason 2000). The following presentation of the study’s findings and analysis incorporates quotations from many of the interview and focus group participants. However, all of their names have been changed or coded to respect their anonymity.

In interviews and focus groups, Elders and elderly people of Aboriginal origin shared their experiences of migrating from rural reserves into Winnipeg. They described their homes on the reserves, their homes in Winnipeg and the challenges and obstacles involved in moving from one to the other. Successive readings of the session transcripts led me to identify several categorical indexes. Each index included a vast number of pertinent quotations and statements. However, the more I read and cross-referenced the data sets, the more it became apparent that the majority of the data could ultimately be organized within four broad indexes: (1) migration obstacles and challenges; (2) housing and neighbourhood; (3) supports; and (4) family issues.

Therefore, the first portion of the following analysis and supporting text will be organized under the framework of these indexes, with several subcategories emerging within them. The second portion of the analysis will highlight the views of service workers and officials and will be organized within two indexes: (1) awareness of the housing needs of elderly Aboriginals in cities; and (2) the question of responsibility for meeting those needs.

The Elders and elderly who participated in this study were all ASRC members. Each participant had been living in Winnipeg anywhere from 6 months to 60 years. The majority originally moved to Winnipeg from Manitoban reserves and are currently living in Winnipeg's North End and broader inner city. They are residing in a variety of different housing types, including: apartments, houses, duplexes, income-based housing, assisted living facilities, with family members, or in other forms of temporary

housing. The preceding paragraphs are a collaboration of their stories and experiences as well as those of the service workers and officials who work with them.

### **5.1 Migration obstacles and challenges**

For most participants, moving to the city was not voluntary. Many were forced to relocate in order to access regular specialized medical treatments, such as dialysis.

Others moved to be closer to family and friends who could provide both companionship and informal care. However, most expressed preferring to age in place on the reserve:

*I really want to move back home, up North. I know everyone there. I would have lots of company, all the time. In the city, I'm all alone (Bernice).*

*If I could, I would move back to the reserve in a heartbeat. It will always be my home (G3-7).*

*On the reserve, there is always someone looking out for you. In Winnipeg, you have to learn how to be a lot more independent (G1-3).*

*Life might be difficult on the reserve, but you find a way to have fun when you're living together with all of your family and friends (Nelson).*

Despite their preference to age in place, several participants eventually found themselves in the city. Unfortunately, migrating to the city and within the city was not easy for most. Many of these individuals had never lived in an urban setting. Some had

never even visited a city. Everything was unfamiliar and overwhelming upon arrival. One participant stated:

*Up north, people don't know what it's like to be in the city. They have no idea. A lot of people have to move for various different reasons, but they're not prepared for it. It's expensive. Many do not realize this before they arrive. And unfortunately, often, whenever a landlord gets a new tenant, they increase the rent. In the last two years, the average low-income bachelor suite rent has gone from approximately \$280/month to \$400/month in Winnipeg. This is a huge increase. There are so many people out there who are in trouble. We have to help them... somehow (Carl).*

Carl highlights one of the most severe challenges facing elderly Aboriginals upon their arrival in Winnipeg; many are not prepared for the high costs associated with living in an urban centre. Affordability of urban housing was a recurrent theme throughout our interviews and focus group sessions. The most prevalent obstacles and challenges, in regards to migrating and attempting to secure a place to live, including affordability, are summarized in the subsequent sidebar.

#### **Obstacles and challenges related to migration and housing**

- affordability
- apartments requiring large down payments
- availability
- discrimination and racism
- illiteracy
- lack of family and/or peer support
- language barriers
- needing a co-signer to sign a lease
- no clear explanation of rental agreements
- no credit history
- no rental history
- waiting lists

Many elderly Aboriginals do not know where to go to seek assistance in overcoming these obstacles and challenges. Moreover, once directed where to go, they do not always receive the type of support they require.

Harry told us that:

*Sometimes the bands will refer us to transition organizations throughout the city. There are workers there, but not always. Or, they're not there very often. And I don't think they're doing anything specifically for Elders. And when they are there, sometimes they don't know how to answer your questions, which is fair, but then they give you a number to call, and then that person gives you another number to call, and another number, and another number, and you end up getting caught in the run-around. And in the end, your question remains unanswered (Harry).*

William illustrates the difficulties in renting a place when you have no previous rental history and are unable to provide references:

*You need to have lived somewhere previously to get these things. This is impossible if you're moving straight into the city from the reserve. You have to pass all the checks. I know this from personal experience. That's why there is so much homelessness in Winnipeg. Sometimes you even need to have a credit card. A lot of Aboriginal people don't have any of these things, so where can they go? That's why so many people end up living on the street (William).*

Participants described a multitude of issues regarding landlords in Winnipeg. One Elder observed that:

*Someone has to get rid of the slumlords and the rooming houses. Sure, we need a lot more affordable housing, but we don't need it to be affordable like that. They're dirty and they're unsafe, but sometimes our people have nowhere else to go. They have nowhere else to go, but how can that be legal? (Sophie).*

Others mentioned:

*There are definitely a lot of slum landlords out there. All they want is money. And they're willing to do whatever they can to get it. Even if that means charging expensive rates for places that look as though they might be condemned (G2-9).*

*Landlords ask so many questions. Are you working? Are you on welfare? Do you have children or dependents? If you answer any of these questions incorrectly, it will be very hard for you to find a place to live (Bernice).*

*A lot of landlords look down on people who are on welfare. They don't want you living in their buildings (G3-5).*

Expanding upon these comments, several of the Elders and elderly spoke of experiences laced with discrimination and racism:

*Sometimes when you're trying to find a place, and people see that you're Aboriginal, they lie to you and say that the suite is already taken. I'm tired of people saying 'it's taken' (Sophie).*

*You're trying to find a decent place to live, and landlords just think you're going to party all the time because you're Native. They think you're going to have a whole bunch of people over every night. They're judging you even before you move in (Nelson).*

Another issue for elderly individuals attempting to find a place to live is the fact that the majority of affordable housing units in Winnipeg are reserved specifically for families with children. One participant explains:

*Many of the affordable housing units are only available to families and people with children. If you are single and living alone, you often have a much harder time. There are very few single, seniors units in the city – let alone single senior units which are geared specifically towards Aboriginal seniors (G2-8).*

Grace further mentions that:

*While I was taking care of my granddaughter, and she was living with me, we had a nice little place. But as soon as she turned 18, she moved out, and so I had to move out too. Even though I had been living in the same house for almost 10 years, I had to go because I wasn't allowed to live there without a dependent. I guess that makes sense, but I really wish I didn't have to move. I liked it there. It was my home (Grace).*

Others brought up issues surrounding illiteracy and language barriers:

*A lot of us Elders are illiterate and some of us don't speak English when we first come to the big cities. This makes it very difficult to find a place to live. And if we don't have anyone to help us, what do we do? Where do we go? (G1-8)*

Another participant added that:

*We need interpreters to help assist with the migration of elderly Aboriginals into cities (Jane).*

Some participants felt that if interpreters were readily available and accessible, in many cases, the transition process for the elderly would be much smoother and far less intimidating.

The preceding paragraphs provide a brief snapshot of the issues facing elderly Aboriginals as they migrate from rural reserves into urban centres. The remainder of the challenges and obstacles included in the previous sidebar will be expanded upon throughout the following sections of the findings and analysis chapter.

## **5.2 Housing and neighbourhood**

As mentioned previously, the process of migration for participants often involved substandard housing. Several key characteristics were used to describe their housing

conditions and were repeated throughout the interviews and focus group sessions. A brief summary of these descriptions is included in the accompanying sidebar.

#### **Housing characteristics (for those who are poorly housed)**

- cold
- confined
- difficult to access
- far from services and amenities
- in need of significant repairs
- located in poverty-stricken areas
- low-income
- poor security, if any
- small
- unsafe

#### **Housing characteristics (for those who are satisfied with their housing)**

- comfortable
- large enough to have company
- near services and amenities
- near family and friends
- personal space and yard
- safe

Many described living in places requiring major repairs and renovations. This would be inconvenient and dangerous for anyone, but particularly for the elderly, as many have mobility issues, impairments or disabilities. Yvonne speaks to this as she states:

*I am cold all the time. It is always freezing in my apartment. But I have been here for 19 years because I feel as though I have no where else to go...My landlords don't fix anything and I am afraid to ask them to turn up the heat. I am afraid and I am blind. The tiles in my apartment are very loose. I have asked the landlords to fix this many times, but they never do. They actually wrote me a letter saying they would fix the issue right*

*away. That was six months ago. I am so scared to complain because they'll throw me out and I don't know where I'd go (Yvonne).*

Other participants mentioned:

*Some of these places are like little rat-holes. It's awful that anyone would have to live there. The stories that come out of these places, they're terrible (Sophie).*

*A lot of the affordable places are infested with mice, roaches and bedbugs (G2-3).*

*Many of the places where we might be able to live, where we can afford to live, aren't even liveable (G3-5).*

Again, the issue of affordability is forefront in the discussion of housing for elderly Aboriginals. In the words of another Elder:

*Of course it's not affordable. Unfortunately, housing is no longer affordable in Winnipeg. It used to be. But now, it seems as though almost everyone is struggling. And most elderly Aboriginals do not have much money. Many of us (I'm an Elder), do not have any savings, we haven't saved, we don't have a pension, and if we're not careful, we'll have a very limited income as we get older (Grace).*

Affordability was clearly seen as the most significant barrier to securing safe and adequate housing among participants. Many have experienced, and continue to

experience, financial difficulty due to low rates or absence of Canada Pension Plan benefits and a lack of retirement savings. Most have lived pay cheque to pay cheque their entire lives, while never having the luxury to save for the future.

Women, in particular, often find themselves in difficult situations because pensions, other than Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement, are tied to contributions made during the working years. Many spent the majority of these years working in their homes and taking care of their children, consequently making them ineligible for benefits through contributory plans.

The majority of participants described their present housing as being in poor condition, unaffordable and in neighbourhoods that, in many cases, were unsafe:

*When my friend first moved to Winnipeg, he lived in the (name) Hotel. He was there by himself for two years, in a wheelchair, before we were able to find him a place to live.*

*People were cruel to him and most of the time he was stuck in his hotel room. He felt as though he was stuck there partially because he couldn't really go too far on his own and partially because he never felt safe wandering around that part of the city (Carl).*

*You have to be careful. You need to keep your blinds down. Stay safe. Don't leave the windows open. Make sure you have at least two locks on the outside door (Eleanor).*

*My neighbours, they smoke that funny stuff and they drink and fight, pretty much every night. I'm scared to go out at night. Sometimes I'm scared to go out during the day (G3-4).*

*I live in the heart of the violence of the North End. I'm surrounded by drive-by shootings, parties, death. If I'm going to be out after 10 PM, in and out of my place, I have to take extra precautions. I have to think ahead, even if I'm not going very far. Am I going to be safe? Should I get someone to accompany me? Should I take a cab? I have to think about all of these things. I love my home and my landlord is great, but the neighbourhood isn't the safest (Doug).*

*Seniors shouldn't be walking too far around here. It's too dangerous. You'd be scared for them now...especially now. This place is getting bad. Every time you listen to the news, there is a stabbing or a killing or something. It's been so bad lately. I believe if they had a lot of places for seniors in the city, I believe it would be much easier to get these people out of the area. But there's no where for them to go. So they have to stay here, in the North End. If people could leave this area, I'm pretty sure they would. If they could, they would (Eleanor).*

Several of our participants expressed safety concerns regarding their neighbourhoods, particularly those living in the North End of Winnipeg. However, as mentioned in the previous quotation, for many, there is no alternative. In addition, another participant explains that:

*If you write on your application that you don't want to live in the North End, you'll never find a home. That's where the majority of 'affordable' homes are located, in the North End. (Linda).*

However, the importance of having a place to call home, despite its poor condition, also came through clearly:

*My place is very small. My appliances are quite old and they don't work that well. My door doesn't close properly, which is kind of scary. Whenever I call my landlord, no one ever comes to help me. And I hate calling people and bothering them, but I need help and I can't fix these things by myself. But you know what? At least I have a place to live (G2-6).*

Furthermore, some participants are quite happy in their current living situations and feel fortunate to be living where they do. For example, Josephine told us that her landlords are quite helpful, as:

*They usually come and fix things right away and they're both very nice. If I ever need anything, they're always there to help. I also have very good neighbours. They look out for me, and I look out for them. I'm very lucky to be living in my apartment. It's my home (Josephine).*

Mildred is presently renting a one-bedroom apartment in downtown Winnipeg. She told us that:

*It's a good place to live. I am very comfortable. There are no holes in the walls or anything like that. If there is ever a maintenance issue, it's always fixed right away. The only thing I would change is that I wouldn't mind having a little more room. It's a small space, a little cramped, but I like it (Mildred).*

A long-time Winnipeg resident explained:

*I have a nice little home. I've been living in the same house for almost 35 years. It's a two-bedroom house with a living room, kitchen and a big garage. I will stay there until I kick the bucket...I feel like I have security in my home. I live on a quiet street, with good neighbours. I haven't had any real problems, and we all seem to get along very well in my neighbourhood (G2-2).*

Another participant added:

*I've worked in the core my whole life and am definitely not afraid of being in the area. My friends are worried about me, but I can't wait to move here. The violence that is happening is happening with people who are living violent lives. I'm in the process of getting a kidney transplant and am very excited about having a support system (through the people in the downtown Aboriginal community and the people living in Kekinan Centre), which is not currently available to me in the south end of the city (G2-1).*

These statements suggest that although many elderly Aboriginals are living in substandard and unsafe housing conditions throughout Winnipeg, some are very happy

and comfortable in their current homes. Furthermore, as is expressed in the previous statement, some value living in the North End because they feel more closely connected to the majority of Winnipeg's Aboriginal community.

Yet, even though several of the elderly participants are satisfied with their current housing conditions and situations, it is important to note that the majority are not. A far greater number are living in unsafe, substandard housing conditions than are living in safe, affordable housing units. However, as previously stated, one of the overall goals of this thesis is to influence policy-makers to increase the number of safe, affordable homes in Winnipeg, with hopes that one day these study results will be reversed.

One Elder felt that the only significant downfall of living in her neighbourhood in the North End was the fact that there are very few services nearby:

*You know, the only thing bad about living around here is that there are no stores. There are no shopping malls or anything. The closest one is at Mountain and Arlington. That's going to be one deterrent for people moving here (Kekinan Centre), because they will need to get someone to drive them places, to Safeway, or whatever. That's one complaint that has been made for years. And you need to go to the grocery store at least once a week, you know? And (name) is way too expensive. No one around here can afford to go there (Bernice).*

Another respondent agreed:

*Around here you have to get someone to drive you if you can't get around by yourself, because everything is so far away (Ruth).*

### **5.3 Supports**

For some participants, family members and friends facilitated their migration by providing shelter, networking, advocacy and other resources. However, many of our participants did not have this kind of support. Many felt lost and all alone when they first arrived in Winnipeg. Some of their remarks included:

*We didn't know who to contact when we first got here and we had no idea how we were going to find a place to live (G1-1).*

*I didn't know how to fill out the housing application forms. It was difficult and intimidating. I didn't want to make a mistake (G1-2).*

Furthermore, those who did fill out application forms without assistance expressed feelings of insecurity and uncertainty afterwards:

*We didn't know what was going to happen next. We had to just wait. And we waited for a long time before we heard anything. Some people never hear back from housing agencies or landlords. There are simply too many people looking for a place to live and not enough homes to go round (G3-6).*

Some participants feel that there should be more assistance provided by band councils on the reserves; before, during and after elderly Aboriginals migrate to the city. Others feel that the provincial and federal governments should be assisting with the migration process. Harry expresses a hybrid of these thoughts as he states:

*As an Aboriginal man in the city, sometimes, I have a hell of a time. The band says that we don't get any assistance from them once we move off the reserve, but then who should be helping us find a place to live and get settled in this new environment? What about all of those people who move here from other countries? They seem to get a lot of help when they first get here, but what about us? We are right next door. What about our opportunity? (Harry).*

Harry's comments reflect a sensitive subject among a few of the participants. Many feel abandoned by their band councils and by all levels of government once they move off the reserve. Some are particularly frustrated by the support and financial assistance they feel new Canadians receive from both the provincial and federal governments. They feel that the government should first focus on helping current residents to improve their quality of life before encouraging new Canadians to relocate here. Harry's thoughts regarding the relationship between the state, Aboriginals and new Canadians highlights a relatively recent and relevant social issue. This sub-topic moves beyond the scope of this research, but warrants future investigation by Canadian scholars and researchers.

In Winnipeg, there are a few highly valued support centres for elderly Aboriginals. These include, but are not limited to:

- Aboriginal Senior Resource Centre (ASRC)/Kekinan Centre
- Winnipeg Friendship Centre
- Eagle Transition Centre
- Dial-a-Life Housing

Some participants had been able to access formal services during their migration process and were highly appreciative, as these comments about the ASRC suggest:

*When I first arrived in the city, I had no idea where to go or what to do. But someone at the Friendship Centre told me about the ASRC, so I thought I'd come check it out. Everyone was very friendly and they helped me out right away. I was living with my sister at the time, but they helped me contact landlords, and eventually helped me find my own place. And now I come to the Centre all the time. We have a nice group of people here. We're very lucky to have this place (Tina).*

*This place (ASRC) has been a godsend to a lot of us in the community, even those who don't live here. So many Elders have nothing else and no one else, but the ASRC is somewhere...somewhere where we can always come and a place where we feel as though we belong. This place does a lot for people (Violet).*

In addition, all of the participants currently living in Kekinan Centre, where the ASRC main office is located and from which member events are hosted, said they are happy with their living arrangements:

*I really like living in Kekinan. I'm a Treaty Indian and I kind of go towards the Aboriginal culture. I'm comfortable. This place has a feeling of security. There are security guards doing rounds between 11 PM and 7 AM. I have my own bedroom. I have my own facilities. I have a one-bedroom suite. This is a good place. I feel at home here (G3-2).*

*We need more Kekinans. I've brought that up so many times. We need more Kekinans because there are a lot of Native people who want to get in here. So, if anyone asks us what we need – that's it (Susan).*

According to participants, Kekinan Centre is affordable, culturally-sensitive and is home to the ASRC office. It serves as an example of best-practice housing for elderly Aboriginal people in Canada. However, with only 60 units in Kekinan, and approximately 4000 Aboriginal people aged 55+ in Winnipeg (Mulligan 2007), this centre only begins to fill the need.

The Winnipeg Friendship Centre and the Eagle Transition Centre offer support and guidance for Aboriginals of all ages upon their arrival in Winnipeg. Their staff members answer questions; assist in accessing medical services and treatments; make referrals to housing providers; provide food provisions and clothing and; ultimately provide a safe and welcoming place for newcomers. Dial-a-Life Housing provides temporary shelter for

individuals who travel from remote reserves to Winnipeg for regular medical treatments, such as dialysis. Dial-a-Life staff members organize transportation to and from medical facilities. They also ensure that the necessary prescriptions and treatments are delivered to the appropriate recipients. However, it is important to note that all of these organizations, although extremely valued, are not specifically geared towards the elderly. ASRC and Kekinan Centre are the only facilities in Winnipeg which are specifically designed to assist and support elderly Aboriginals. They are also among some of the few housing and support centres geared specifically towards elderly Aboriginals across all of Canada.

#### **5.4 Family issues**

Those who relied on family to provide them with accommodation upon their arrival in Winnipeg were very grateful for the support. In some instances, the elderly were able to reside with their families for extended periods of time while adjusting to their new urban surroundings. Some continue to reside with their families and may remain there indefinitely.

However, others expressed their family ties as being barriers to securing safe and adequate housing. They noted that a cultural acceptance of family living will often prevent elderly people from seeing family as problematic, and from considering other living arrangements. Yet, as the following statements will exemplify, these elderly people can end up in stressful and sometimes dangerous living situations after moving in with family members or allowing family members to move in with them. A few

participants showed how stresses and hardships of marginalized lives led to both conflict and abuse. For example, Nelson told us:

*No one is looking out for anyone else anymore. People our age are all looking after their grandchildren. We're letting our children and our grandchildren live in our homes. Sometimes this is a good thing, but, sometimes our generosity is taken advantage of. Our children eat all our food and use us as free babysitters. This can't go on for much longer. We're tired. We can't do this forever. There is so much elder abuse going on out there, but no one talks about it. This is an issue which needs to be brought to the public's attention. It can't stay hidden any longer (Nelson).*

Denise told us about a friend of hers:

*You know what's going on a lot...like a senior lady I know who stays with her family, or actually they stay with her in her home...when she gets her pension cheque, they take all of it. And there's nothing she can do. She says, 'I never get anything. They take everything'. She is so unhappy and uncomfortable in her home, but she feels as though there is nothing she can do to help herself (Denise).*

Ruth remembered a story from last year:

*We had this one couple coming in here last spring...couldn't get a place on account of one of their sons who was living with them...they got evicted so many times because of*

*him, because he was drinking and bringing friends home and he spoiled it for his parents. I don't know where they've gone now...They just sort of disappeared (Ruth).*

Rose mentioned that:

*I love living where I do, in our 55+ complex, but this place used to have a lot of problems. It has never been the tenants who have caused the problems though; it has always been the children and grandchildren of tenants. Some of them used to always be coming and going. A lot of these family members had alcohol and/or drug problems, and they caused a lot of frightening disturbances within the building (Rose).*

However, Rose also explained that over the past few years, most of these issues have been rectified within her 55+ complex. The building managers have since made rules restricting family members from staying with tenants in their one-bedroom suites. If tenants are found disobeying these rules, they will first receive a warning and a second infraction will warrant eviction. Rose told us that she initially believed this to be quite severe, but now feels that their building managers are only looking out for the safety and well-being of the residents.

Family issues and tensions run deep with some Elders as they state:

*A lot of seniors are trapped by their own children. They are taking their money and getting them kicked out of their homes (G3-5).*

*Sometimes we don't even realize that our own children are abusing us (G2-1).*

*So many elders fear their children. The children put guilt trips on their parents and trick them into giving them all their money, food, everything, you name it (G3-4).*

It must be noted that not all of our participants expressed having negative experiences with family members. The previous stories were shared by only a few individuals. However, elder abuse by family members was a prevalent issue throughout the interviews and focus group meetings and warrants further investigation and immediate attention.

For some elderly individuals, having their family members living with them would not be an issue if they lived in a space large enough to fit everyone comfortably. Maria explains that:

*My house is like a hotel. My daughter is living with me, her husband and her two children. They are trying to get into a low-rental building, but they keep getting turned down. There just aren't enough homes. And some of the low-rental houses out there are in terrible neighbourhoods. I don't mind having them live with me, but my house is much too small for three grown adults and two children (Maria).*

Maria does not feel threatened by her family, but instead wishes she had a bigger place where they could all live comfortably together. Unfortunately, the majority of affordable housing units in Winnipeg are not designed to meet the needs of large families who

would prefer to live together. Consequently, this ties back into one of the most severe challenges faced by elderly Aboriginals and anyone in search of affordable housing; there is simply not enough availability to meet the needs and demands of Winnipeg's population. Whether one is searching for a one-bedroom unit for a single elderly individual or a five-bedroom unit for a family and grandparent or grandparents, the problem is availability. In turn, the lack of availability and larger units leads to the issue of overcrowding within low-income and affordable homes.

### **5.5 Service workers' and officials' views**

Our interviews with service workers and officials participating in the study centred around 15 open-ended questions and two underlying themes permeated the discussions: (1) awareness of the housing needs of elderly Aboriginals in cities and; (2) the question of responsibility for meeting those needs.

Workers who participated in this study came from a variety of professional backgrounds and cities. They were members of indigenous organizations, community groups, housing providers and government agencies. National participants were initially identified through their affiliation with their local Aboriginal Friendship Centre. Winnipeg participants were identified through their work with elderly Aboriginals and affordable housing provision.

#### **Awareness of the housing needs of elderly Aboriginals in cities**

Workers consistently emphasized the fact that there is an urgent need to fill the deficit of safe, affordable housing for elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg and throughout Canada's

urban centres. Securing a decent place to live is difficult and sometimes impossible for many, due to issues of availability and affordability, as well as other compounded barriers including racism:

*You know, I hate to say it, but racism is still a huge barrier for our elderly. I have spoken with several seniors who feel they were denied a place to live because of landlords who pre-judged them because they were Aboriginal. And even if they do get the apartment or whatever, they feel as though someone is always watching them and waiting for them...waiting for them to do something wrong (Sylvia).*

Workers also realize that these individuals suffer from a feeling of displacement upon arrival in the city. This is noted as Cynthia tells us:

*So they come because they have special needs or they have medical reasons...so that's why they have to leave their home communities. And then to be placing them in a seniors' centre which is non-Aboriginal, is just culture shock for many of them and they often feel very isolated and get very lonely...So it's important for us to recognize that we need to really accommodate, particularly people who have to be here and those who have left their communities and no longer have that community support (Cynthia).*

In addition, they recognize that there are language barriers which often hinder the elderly from being able to adequately express what they need. This is one of the most fundamental issues and further highlights the need for interpreters and translators. The

fact that they cannot verbally express their fears, needs and desires is a huge problem.

This is evident as Cynthia goes on to state:

*When you don't speak English or French very well, to be able to express what it is you need...what you need and what you want...it's very difficult (Cynthia).*

However, not everyone is aware of the specific needs of elderly Aboriginals in cities.

Speaking to political officials in Manitoba and throughout the country, it is apparent that it is occasionally assumed that family members will take care of their elderly relatives. In many cases, this is true, and their assumptions are correct. However, as previously stated, many families have deeply rooted issues which hinder family members from being able to provide adequate informal care for their elderly parents and grandparents. Therefore, it cannot always be assumed that the responsibility of the elderly can be shifted solely towards family members without support from the government. When asked where elderly Aboriginals would seek assistance when moving to an urban setting and attempting to secure housing, a few officials stated:

*I don't know for sure, but I would guess that most of them would seek assistance and support from their family members in the city. Aboriginal people are predominantly very family-orientated. They trust their family, and a lot of their families are very large, so there's usually someone already living in the city...That's where I would guess they would go for help when they first move to the city and are trying to get set up (Bill).*

Bill's statement exemplifies a disconnection between constituencies and officials and political figures. This disconnection is also apparent when speaking with a representative from one of the higher level Aboriginal organizations:

*Unfortunately, we don't really work directly with elderly Aboriginals. That is one thing we haven't really looked at. We are currently focusing and looking at the mobility of those individuals who continuously move back and forth, between the reserve and the city, for Aboriginals of all ages. So, I guess, this area includes the elderly individuals who are also moving back and forth between the reserve and the city. But, you know, I think that is something we should really start looking into (David).*

David's comments highlight a gap in the research and in service provision. Some organizations are only now beginning to realize that there are issues surrounding the influx of elderly Aboriginals into urban centres.

Others have recognized that the problem may not be the availability of support services, but rather the lack of information and direction as to where these services are located and how to access them.

*I think a lot of the support services are here, but I think the main problem is that a lot of people don't know about them. No one has told the Elders about them...they don't know where to go...So, I think a lot of people just don't go anywhere and they don't end up receiving the support they require (Hannah).*

In a number of cities, workers were aware of some appropriate housing supply, but highlighted its scarcity. Tanya mentioned:

*There are no residences here dedicated solely to elderly Aboriginals, but I know they exist in other cities (Tanya).*

Sylvia added:

*The hospital is a really great support. But other than that, we don't really have a separate 'seniors centre' per se. There are the (name) housing units. These units are only a few years old, and were designed specifically for homeless seniors. So, there's that place. And it seems to be doing really well and is helping a lot of people. But again, there are only a limited number of units in that facility. We need more – a lot more (Sylvia).*

Workers in Friendship Centres provide referrals to housing providers, but lament their incapacity to do more:

*Mostly we refer our seniors to housing providers and non-profit organizations, but I don't think any of them have residences where it's just elderly Aboriginals...But that would be great...They would just feel safer and more comfortable and at ease around their own people (Gina).*

Comments from across Canada describe the need for a concept similar to that of the ASRC, a support centre that focuses primarily on the needs and care of elderly Aboriginal people.

Workers suggested that some communities are actively dealing with the issues, but the majority stated that the issue is not being addressed within their own urban centres. Some, while acutely aware that their facilities were far from fulfilling the need, spoke with appreciation of what they had been able to do towards providing culturally appropriate services:

*Our Human Services Program would have to be the most successful program in regards to housing provision for elderly Aboriginals. No only is this program about getting the elders off the street and into safe homes, but it's all about the follow-up. How are these people doing? How is the transition going? What do they need to make the transition as easy as possible? Are they getting enough human interaction? The thing with elderly Aboriginals, especially, is that they love to be visited and engage in conversation. They love to talk and talk and talk. They love having people around. So, we try our best to not only make sure they have a roof over their heads, but to also ensure they always have someone they feel comfortable talking to and someone who they can go to for help and assistance in times of need (Samantha).*

### **Responsibility of meeting the housing needs of elderly Aboriginals**

While needs around housing for elderly Aboriginal people were consistently recognized, responsibility for acting on them was seen in different ways. Some demanded that the

federal government act; others placed the blame at the provincial level. The confounding complexity of responsibility involves Aboriginal organizations as well:

*As you move from the reserve into the city, you are given the run-around from all forms of government (bands, provincial, federal) and you receive fewer and fewer supports. Where is the money going? We need to ensure our leaders are being held accountable for this funding (Sylvia).*

Some workers expressed frustration with their bands and with what they had been able to achieve:

*Several local bands have discussed the need to fight for an increase in urban housing for their elders, but, at this point in time, this only appears to be 'talk'. I want to see these word turned into action (Pamela).*

Several of our participants agreed that the majority of band leaders are not helpful when it comes to dealing with off-reserve issues. Moreover, many strongly believe that there needs to be an increase in transparency among the Aboriginal leaders in this country. In reference to this topic, one of our participants stated:

*We all know about it, we all talk about, but what are we going to do about it? (Jenna)*

Many feel that government officials are simply passing responsibility from one level of authority to another and failing to actually increase the number of affordable housing units for elderly Aboriginal people and more broadly. Some workers saw a way out of

the morass of unplaced responsibility by calling for local Aboriginal autonomy, leaving a door open for band involvement in the urban communities. One service worker told us:

*Right now, there isn't enough focus...On seniors, on youth, on anyone. The federal government needs to clearly define what it is that each province needs in regards to housing and then act as quickly as possible, based on those needs. However, I think the government needs to allocate the funding to organizations at the grassroots level. Or, at least talk to the grassroots organizations to see what it is the communities actually need (Julie).*

Julie's call for a funding focus at the grassroots level is reiterated by Alice as she states:

*If we want to improve the housing situation for this demographic, the plans and the power and the initiative all need to come from within...It needs to be based on community-based organizations and what they know is needed. Housing projects need to be started and run by those who are involved with the community on a daily basis (Alice).*

Other participants realize that before responsibility can be assigned to anyone, communication between organizations and the various levels of government need to improve. This is evident as Walter explains:

*There is a lack of communication between band officials and the Elders. There is a lack of communication between band officials and housing officials in urban centres. There is a lack of communication between government officials and housing authorities and the Elders. You know, I would say communication is the biggest issue which needs to be*

*addressed. Everyone needs to start communicating openly. People in charge, those who have the money and who are leading housing projects, they need to communicate their ideas and be held accountable for all of their decisions. And, the Elders need to be involved in the projects that will affect their lives and their living situations. Let them be involved culturally (Walter).*

Moreover, nearly all of the participants mentioned that funding for programming, as well as capital costs, is essential if elderly Aboriginal people's housing needs are to be met:

*We have to quit cancelling programming. What good is a brand new building if all the funding for programming is cut? Yes, it's great if we can build these brand new places for Elders to live when they come to the city, but then we also have to realize that they will hopefully be here for awhile, and how do we help make it as smooth a transition as possible? How do we make them feel comfortable, safe and happy living in an urban centre? That's where the programming comes into play (Neil).*

Comments similar to Neil's were shared throughout the interviews. Workers want to see action; they do not want 'quick-fixes'. They want an increase in housing units, complete with programming and services that not only support the elderly, but ensure that their transition into the urban centre is as comfortable as possible and culturally sensitive.

Other workers added to the fact that there may be adequate services, but they are scattered throughout the cities, and elderly individuals, particularly those who are new to the cities, do not know how to access them. One housing provider told us:

*You know, I think that there probably are adequate support services, but they are scattered all over the city. There needs to be a 'one-stop-shop' where elderly Aboriginals can seek answers for all of their questions. There needs to be a centralized centre (Conner).*

ASRC is an example of a 'one-stop-shop' and will hopefully serve as an example of best-practice for future centres for elderly Aboriginals across Canada.

Of course, people also noted the positive aspects of Canada's current service provision for elderly Aboriginals:

*There are some great community groups in this city (Winnipeg). Community groups, church groups, Kinew Housing, and of course, the ASRC, just to name a few. The grassroots organizations seem to be the ones who can work the most successfully here in Winnipeg. Not because they're stronger than the government, but because they're closer to the people and they know what it is the people need and want (Linda).*

An interesting point was brought to our attention in reference to Winnipeg and Manitoba specifically. This comment reverts back to the disconnection between

constituencies, grassroots organizations and political entities, and calls for immediate policy change:

*One thing the federal government or provincial government, or whoever, needs to do is find a way to get some funding to MUNHA. MUNHA is not funded by the government. That's ridiculous. Their full title is the Manitoba Urban Native Housing Association, and they are not funded by the provincial government...I don't see how that makes any sense at all. At the moment, the urban Aboriginal doesn't have a voice because no one has enough power or money to ensure that it's heard. The Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg doesn't have any money or any clout either. Everyone has to fight for dollars and no one wins in Winnipeg. MUNHA used to offer training sessions and capacity development, and now they don't have the money for any of that. Even the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative, even they have to try and satisfy funders and groups and don't always get to fight for what they believe in (Carrie).*

## **5.6 Conclusion**

Elderly Aboriginals face numerous challenges and barriers when transitioning from their homes on rural reserves into urban centres. Those who have been living in Winnipeg for a significant period of time experience many of these same challenges, but perhaps on a smaller scale, due to their familiarity with the city. New residents face issues such as language barriers; having no rental history; filling out complex housing application forms; having no idea where to seek assistance; a sense of loneliness and longing for their home on the reserve; and a general feeling of displacement. In addition, many

elderly Aboriginals have issues with their landlords. Several experience the effects of racism and discrimination when applying for a place to live.

Moreover, some have landlords who are rarely available when needed and do not adequately maintain their buildings. Issues regarding necessary repairs within suites are exacerbated by the fact that elderly individuals cannot tend to these themselves due to mobility and/or disability issues. Furthermore, many are afraid to complain to their landlords, for fear of being kicked out and having no where else to go.

The majority of affordable and low-income homes in Winnipeg are located in unsafe neighbourhoods. Several participants mentioned that they are afraid to venture out alone, particularly at night. They are also located far from necessary services and amenities, such as grocery stores; banks; hospitals; and pharmacies.

Another issue for some elderly individuals is their family. There seems to be two extremes. Either their family members never come to visit, causing the elderly to feel alone and isolated, or their family members are living with them and 'sponging' off of them. Elders mentioned older children and grandchildren who have been living with them for extended periods of time and have no plans of leaving anytime soon. Many of the elderly have also experienced or are experiencing various forms of abuse from their children and grandchildren, such as monetary, physical and/or emotional abuse.

However, most do not speak out for themselves because they are afraid to and because they do not want to cause trouble for their family members.

Some elderly Aboriginals are content living in their small homes or one-bedroom apartments, but feel as though things are about to get worse before they get better. Many are worried that at the rate rents have been increasing, that they will soon be unable to afford to live in their homes. Many already spend the majority of their senior's pension on accommodation, leaving very little for food, transportation and other necessities. Unfortunately, very few elderly Aboriginals have any retirement savings due to their previous low-paying jobs or as a result of living on welfare for several years. Moreover, most were not exposed to the importance of saving for retirement. Saving was especially difficult, if not impossible, for women, as many stayed at home and took care of their children and their households rather than entering the workforce.

Another significant issue is the disconnection between the reserve and the city. A lot of elderly Aboriginals feel as though they have no support or assistance from their bands once they move to the urban centre. According to participants and service workers, it seems as though the bands believe their members are no longer 'their responsibility' once they move off of the reserve.

Many elderly Aboriginals would prefer to age in place in their own homes on the reserve, but are unable to, primarily due to medical needs which cannot be met on the majority of reserves. On-reserve medical assistance predominately only consists of a small nursing station rather than a fully-equipped hospital, which many require for regular treatments such as dialysis.

However, all of the elderly individuals interviewed who are currently living in Kekinan Centre and a number of others who live in seniors' complexes or in their own private homes, are content with their living situations. Many enjoy a sense of community and belonging when they are living nearby other elderly Aboriginals. However, there are only a total of 60 independent and assisted living units in Kekinan Centre. As there are approximately 4000 elderly Aboriginals living in Winnipeg, and as this number is expected to rise exponentially over the next decade, there is a great need to be filled in regards to culturally sensitive housing for elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg.

## **Chapter Six: Conclusions and recommendations**

This thesis outlined many of the challenges, issues and barriers facing elderly Aboriginals as they search for safe, affordable housing in Winnipeg and in other Canadian urban centres. Participants shared valuable knowledge and information which could never have been gathered solely from books, reports or websites.

In order to draw conclusions and provide recommendations for policy change, implementation and further research, the following paragraphs revisit each of the research objectives and questions which guided this exploration from its onset. Each objective and its corresponding research question will be re-stated and then followed by a combination of conclusions, recommendations and insight from participants. This chapter will help determine whether or not the research objectives and questions were adequately addressed and answered throughout this study.

1. **Objective:** To discover where elderly Aboriginals are currently living in Winnipeg, why they are living where they are and where they would ideally like to be.

**Research question:** Where are elderly Aboriginals currently living in Winnipeg? Do elderly Aboriginals have options as to where they will live upon arrival in urban centres? Where would elderly Aboriginals ideally like to live, if given the option?

For a variety of reasons, elderly people of Aboriginal origin migrate from reserves to cities throughout Canada. Most have moved in order to receive regular medical treatments and supportive care which are currently unavailable on the majority of reserves and in remote communities. Others move to be closer to family and friends. In

many instances, as the views of individuals with lived experience documented in this paper attest, the process presents several challenges and difficulties, and supports and services that could ease the process are woefully inadequate.

Housing and services provided by ASRC and Kekinan were seen as exemplars by service workers and officials not only in Winnipeg, but across the country. It is recommended that more such facilities be developed both in Winnipeg and in other cities, and that the ASRC and Kekinan Centre serve as examples of best-practice for future endeavours of this nature.

In addition, it is clear that the success of these and other similar existing facilities has depended heavily on the insight and knowledge of those who know the communities which the facilities are serving. This includes the elderly Aboriginals and those who work with them on a day-to-day basis. They are the only ones who can properly guide the conceptualization, development and operation of urban Aboriginal housing programs and support services. They are the only ones who can adequately determine design and implementation strategies to meet their particular socio-cultural needs and aspirations (Walker 2005). Elderly Aboriginals and those who work with them must join forces to ensure that all future Aboriginal housing endeavours in urban centres are led by those who will be most affected by their creation. This recommendation is reaffirmed by the following statements:

*I believe in my heart that all issues regarding Aboriginal seniors housing in urban centres need to be de-politicized. I truly believe that. If we want to improve the housing situation*

*for this demographic, the plans and the power and the initiative all need to come from within. These projects cannot be based on a representative organization. They need to be based on the voices coming from community-based organizations. Housing projects need to be started and run by those who are involved with the community on a daily basis. (Alice)*

*The federal government needs to start building, or allocating the money to organizations which will start building...And we all need to make sure we talk to the Elders. We have to ask the Elders what they think, what they want, where they want to live...Most of the time, no one asks them what they want or what they think or how they feel. And they're afraid to speak up and tell people what they think. After years of being told that their opinions do not matter and that they should just keep quiet, they are too scared to voice their opinions. But now they can, and they should. And the feds, us, everyone, just has to make sure we talk to them and make sure we ask the Elders what they want and what they need in regards to housing and just in regards to everything (Nancy).*

Government officials and community organizations must also recognize that perhaps there needs to be a push towards enabling elderly Aboriginals to age in place on reserve. As studies have indicated, this would be preferable for 95% of the Aboriginal elderly population (Assembly of First Nations 2007). Unfortunately, for most, aging in place is not an option, due to a lack of age-appropriate housing, care homes and assisted living facilities on-reserve. However, representatives could push harder for initiatives such as these. Those with serious medical needs would still require a move to

the city, but an increase in age-appropriate on-reserve facilities would be immensely beneficial for a significant number of individuals.

2. **Objective:** To explore the barriers facing elderly Aboriginals as they migrate to urban centres.

**Research question:** What are some of the issues and challenges facing elderly Aboriginals as they migrate to urban centres?

Elderly people of Aboriginal origin who are living in poverty face several issues and challenges upon their arrival in Winnipeg and other urban centres. Affordability was seen as the most recurrent theme throughout the interviews and focus group sessions. Some of the other obstacles and challenges included: apartments requiring large down payments; lack of availability of housing; discrimination and racism when attempting to secure a place to live; illiteracy; lack of family and/or peer support; language barriers; needing a co-signer to sign a lease; no clear explanation of rental agreements; having no credit history; having no rental history; and long waiting lists for available housing units. Many elderly Aboriginals do not know where to go to seek assistance in overcoming these obstacles and challenges. Moreover, once directed where to go, they do not always receive the type of support they require. (Specific recommendations for overcoming several of these challenges can be found in the following paragraphs regarding supports and services).

It was also apparent that many of the participants faced issues regarding landlords in Winnipeg and in other urban centres. They spoke up poor, inadequate and occasionally

dangerous living conditions. These factors were often stated to be a result of their landlords not properly taking care of their units, combined with the fact that many of the available affordable units are located in unsafe neighbourhoods.

Affordable housing standards need to be monitored throughout Canadian urban centres. There needs to be stricter regulations for landlords and more frequent housing examinations conducted. Those who migrate should not be forced to live in unsafe and unhealthy conditions upon arrival simply because they cannot afford to live anywhere else.

3. **Objective:** To identify supports and services available to elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg and in other Canadian cities.

**Research question:** What types of supports and services are available to elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg and in other Canadian cities which could assist with their migration from rural communities?

For reasons of culture and in many instances poverty, specialized residential facilities and support services are required. While there is merely a small handful of residential facilities and organizations providing dedicated support, the majority of participants in this study felt that the types of programs and services needed are well understood by members of community organizations. The deficit in facilities and programming is not due to a lack of recognition, but rather to limited funding and consequently limited resources and staff. Community groups and grassroots organizations recognize the

unmet needs of elderly Aboriginals, but are without adequate funding to provide the required services, outreach or support.

Step one is recognizing the gaps in support and housing for these people. Step two is deciding what can be done to fill these gaps. Participants argue that our nation's political leaders may not realize the severity of the situation and recommend a call to action in order to educate and bring awareness. Our leaders should be informed of the needs of elderly people of Aboriginal origin from a grassroots perspective and from the Elders' perspectives. This is apparent in the following participant recommendation:

*Well, I think we have to educate our political leaders. I mean, they know in general, yes housing. Housing is bad on reserves. And the inner city has some houses which are badly in need of repair. They know in general what's going on, but I think they need a real eye opener in terms of numbers and pictures and stories of these families. We need to work towards increasing the awareness of the crisis. (Christina)*

The issues need to be amplified and potential future solutions recommended (which aligns with the core aims of this study).

Currently, it appears as though responsibility for elderly Aboriginals is constantly being shifted from one political body to another, while their needs remain unmet. Again, it is important to note that this study focuses mainly on elderly individuals of First Nations descent. However, the specific migration and housing needs of elderly Metis and Inuit peoples in Canada most certainly warrants further investigation. It is recommended

that a particular level of government, whether it be at the band, municipal, provincial or federal level, take primary responsibility for elderly Aboriginals of all ancestries. Once decided, the determined group can then begin to work towards improving migration assistance and housing provision for Canada's elderly people of Aboriginal origin. One participant offers the following recommendation as she states:

*Elderly Aboriginals need more outreach and advocacy. They need more. We need to create more partnerships and provide support and possibly the federal government could help make this a reality. Not just in Winnipeg, but across Canada. (Jane)*

It is also imperative that support agencies, community organizations and government officials begin to work in complete collaboration in order to best serve the needs of these individuals. There are helpful services and resources in almost every city, but the problem ensues when these services are scattered throughout the city, making them difficult to access and utilize, particularly for elderly individuals. It would be ideal if each Canadian city had a central location where elderly Aboriginals could ask questions, seek support and receive housing assistance. One central facility would make it possible for the elderly to easily access all of the necessary support services without feeling exhausted, frightened or overwhelmed.

There should also be an increase in programming geared towards identifying and dealing with issues of Elder abuse. Elder abuse was an underlying theme throughout several of the interviews and focus groups conducted. Even though this study focuses on safe and affordable housing provision, it is critical to note that there are also several

underlying social issues which need to be dealt with in conjunction with housing provision. Ideally, this study hopes to work towards improving the lives of elderly Aboriginals in cities, from housing security to their overall well-being. For, arguably, these issues are all inter-connected and a person cannot have one without the other.

4. **Objective:** To outline recommendations for policy and program changes to address the housing needs of elderly Aboriginals in urban centres.

**Research Question:** What can be done, at a policy level, to address and improve the housing needs of elderly Aboriginals in Canadian urban centres?

The Elders, the elderly, and those who work with them are the only ones who can determine adequate design and implementation strategies for affordable and supportive housing. In several past examples, they have guided their conceptualization, development and operation. Therefore, it is recommended that all other future endeavours also rely on the knowledge and experience of those who will utilize the proposed facilities and services in order to guide their creation.

Several studies have highlighted the significance that living in a safe, healthy and supportive environment has on the overall health and well-being of an individual. Unfortunately, all too many elderly people of Aboriginal origin do not have the luxury of living within these favourable conditions. Many have been forced to relocate to urban centres for medical, family or emergency reasons and end up living in dire conditions. This urgent issue needs to be addressed. There is a recognized deficit in the number of safe, affordable homes for these individuals. If there is one recommendation which

needs to be made it is that more homes must be built and this must be initiated immediately by at least one level of government, with subsequent government and non-profit affordable housing partnerships created. New construction needs to commence as soon as possible. Moreover, existing structures should be renovated and retrofit to support housing for low-income elderly Aboriginals. This is reaffirmed by the following statement:

*That's another thing...if you drive around Winnipeg you will notice that there are so many homes that don't have anyone living in them. They're just abandoned, or I don't know where the people go. But why are all of these homes vacant? Shouldn't something be done about that? They could be fixed up for seniors...or for anyone. It's such a waste. I mean, there are so many people out there who have no place to live, and these places are just sitting vacant. It just doesn't seem to make any sense. (Ruby)*

There needs to be an increase in affordable housing for elderly people of Aboriginal origin, but more broadly, there needs to be an increase in affordable housing for all Canadians.

The preceding chapter outlines recommendations and initiatives which could be implemented to improve housing situations for elderly Aboriginals in Winnipeg and in cities across the country. These statements represent only a handful of recommendations for policy change and implementation. Many more could be, and will be, proposed in subsequent papers and reports. However, no matter how many recommendations are made, the bottom line remains the same. There are not enough

safe, affordable homes for elderly individuals, for individuals of any age, in Winnipeg, or in the majority of Canadian urban centres. We could conduct research studies and investigate this issue for months. However, in the end, as one of our participants so clearly stated:

*Research is great. We need it. But maybe now what we really need is to stop studying and just start building.*

They are absolutely correct. We need to increase the number of safe, affordable homes for elderly Aboriginals, for people of all ages and all nationalities, throughout Canada. We need to repair, renovate, retrofit and build. We need more homes, and it is truly just as simple as that.

Always remember that the future comes one day at a time.

Dean Acheson

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## Appendix A – University of Manitoba ethics protocol submission form, interview and focus group question templates and consent form

### Ethics Protocol Submission Form (Basic Questions about the Project)

The questions on this form are of a general nature, designed to collect pertinent information about potential problems of an ethical nature that could arise with the proposed research project. In addition to answering the questions below, the researcher is expected to append pages (and any other necessary documents) to a submission detailing the required information about the research protocol.

1. Will the subjects in your study be **UNAWARE** that they are subjects?
2. Will information about the subjects be obtained from sources other than the subjects themselves?
3. Are you and/or members of your research team in a position of power vis-a-vis the subjects? If yes, clarify the position of power and how it will be addressed.
4. Is any inducement or coercion used to obtain the subject's participation?
5. Do subjects identify themselves by name directly, or by other means that allows you or anyone else to identify data with specific subjects? If yes, indicate how confidentiality will be maintained. What precautions are to be undertaken in storing data and in its eventual destruction/disposition.
6. If subjects are identifiable by name, do you intend to recruit them for future studies? If yes, indicate why this is necessary and how you plan to recruit these subjects for future studies.
7. Could dissemination of findings compromise confidentiality?

8. Does the study involve physical or emotional stress, or the subject's expectation thereof, such as might result from conditions in the study design?
9. Is there any threat to the personal safety of subjects?
10. Does the study involve subjects who are not legally or practically able to give their valid consent to participate (e.g., children, or persons with mental health problems and/or cognitive impairment)?  
If yes, indicate how informed consent will be obtained from subjects and those authorized to speak for subjects.
11. Is deception involved (i.e., will subjects be intentionally misled about the purpose of the study, their own performance, or other features of the study)?
12. Is there a possibility that abuse of children or persons in care might be discovered in the course of the study?  
If yes, current laws require that certain offenses against children and persons in care be reported to legal authorities. Indicate the provisions that have been made for complying with the law.
13. (a) Does the study include the use of personal health information? The Manitoba Personal Health Information Act (PHIA) outlines responsibilities of researchers to ensure safeguards that will protect personal health information. If yes, indicate provisions that will be made to comply with this Act (see document for guidance - <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/phia/index.html>).
13. (b) PHIA requires that all employees, students, or agents who handle or are exposed to personal health information take PHIA Orientation and sign a pledge of confidentiality that acknowledges that they are bound by written policy and procedures.

Has PHIA Orientation and pledge-signing been completed by all employees, students, and agents?

If "No," the Principal Investigator should contact UM Access & Privacy Coordinator's Office to make arrangements, [fippa@umanitoba.ca](mailto:fippa@umanitoba.ca)



nature of the study and subjects' participation in the study be explained to them **before** they agree to participate. How will consent be obtained from guardians of subjects from vulnerable populations? If confidential records will be consulted, indicate the nature of the records, and how subjects' consent is to be obtained. If it is essential to the research, indicate why subjects are not to be made aware of their records being consulted.

5. **Deception:** Deception refers to the deliberate withholding of essential information or the provision of deliberately misleading information about the research or its purposes. If the research involves deception, the researcher must provide detailed information on the extent and nature of deception and why the research could not be conducted without it. This description must be sufficient to justify a waiver of informed consent.
6. **Feedback/Debriefing:** Describe the feedback that will be given to subjects about the research after they have completed their participation. How will the feedback be provided and by whom? If feedback will not be given, please explain why feedback is not planned. If deception is employed, debriefing is mandatory. Describe in detail the nature of the post-deception feedback, and when and how it will be given.
7. **Risks and Benefits:** Is there any risk to the subjects, or to a third party? If yes, provide a description of the risks and the counterbalancing benefits of the proposed study. Indicate the precautions taken by the researcher under these circumstances.
8. **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Describe the procedures for preserving anonymity and confidentiality. If confidentiality is not an issue in this research, please explain why. Will confidential records be consulted? If yes, indicate what precautions will be taken to ensure subjects' confidentiality. How will the data be stored to ensure confidentiality? Will the data be destroyed, if so, when?
9. **Compensation:** Will subjects be compensated for their participation? Compensation may reasonably provide subjects with assistance to defray the costs associated with study participation.

**Ethics Protocol Submission Form**

Review your submission according to this:

**Checklist**

Principal Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

<input type="checkbox"/>	Item from the Ethics Protocol Submission Form
	All information requested on the first page completed in legible format (typed or printed).
	Signatures of the principal researcher (and faculty advisor, or course instructor if student research).
	Answers to all 13 questions on pages 2-3 of Ethics Protocol Submission form.
	Detailed information requested on page 4 of the Ethics Protocol Submission Form in the numbered order and with the headings indicated.
	Ethics Protocol Submission Form in quadruplicate (Original plus 3 copies ).
	Research instruments: 4 copies of all instruments and other supplementary material to be given to subjects.
	Copy of this checklist.

**NOTE: For ease of reviewing it would be much appreciated if you could number the pages of your submission (handwriting the numbers is quite acceptable).**

## Fort Garry Campus Research Ethics Board Submission Form – Question Details

5. Subjects may or may not identify themselves by name when working with any one of the researchers. In order to maintain confidentiality, full (first and last) names will not be documented (written, audio-taped, video-taped or photographed). First names may be recorded solely for the purpose of the researchers' personal notes. However, actual names will be replaced with pseudonyms for all published and/or publically accessible materials. All information will be treated as confidential and stored in a private and secure place. All unpublished materials will subsequently be destroyed after a period of one year. The principal researcher will be responsible for destroying the data. Information collected from participants will be incorporated into a final report for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA). Information may also be used to inform the writing of academic journal articles or conference presentations, particularly for the purpose of research regarding Aboriginal seniors housing.

6. Once all interviews and focus groups have been completed and transcribed, each participant will receive an individual follow-up visit by one of the principal researchers (Most feedback/debriefing will be provided by Lauren Lange). At this time, they will all be able to read the interview transcripts and/or summaries at their leisure. This feedback/debriefing will ensure all information included in the project is in accordance to the information shared by participants. In addition, participants may be interested in the results of the study.

12. There is a possibility that abuse of persons in care might be discovered in the course of the study. We recognize that current laws require that certain offences be reported to legal authorities. In this situation, we will refer the subject to our community partner, the Aboriginal Senior Resources Centre.

### Ethics Protocol Submission Form (Required Information about the Research Protocol)

1. **Summary of Project:** (See attached: Urban Aboriginal Senior Housing Project)
2. **Research Instruments:**
  - (a) Elder interview questions: (See attached)
  - (b) Key informant interview questions: (See attached)
  - (c) Sharing circle questions: (See attached)
3. **Study Subjects:** Aboriginal elders living in Winnipeg as well as key informants from indigenous organizations, community groups and government agencies from across the city and province will be the study subjects for this project. All elders will all be recruited through the project's community researcher, Melba Laferine. Ms. Laferine has worked with and/or has direct contact with all of the subjects (through her work with the Aboriginal Seniors Resources Centre). Ms. Laferine will either visit each elder in person or will contact them via telephone. The script she will use for recruitment will be as follows:

*I (Melba Laferine), along with a University of Manitoba City Planning professor, Dr. Ian Skelton, and a student researcher, Lauren Lange, would like to invite you to participate in a research project concerning Aboriginal Seniors Housing Issues in Winnipeg. We are aiming to find out what Aboriginal seniors need and want in*

*terms of safe, affordable and adequate housing here in Winnipeg. Interviews and sharing circle discussions will be approximately one hour to one hour and thirty minutes in length. We will meet with you at a place and time of convenience for you. All questions will be in regards to your past and current housing situations and conditions. If there are any questions which you do not feel comfortable answering, you are completely free to refrain from responding. We thank you for speaking with us at this time and look forward to hopefully speaking with you at a future date.*

When recruiting key informants for an in-person or telephone interview, Ms. Laferine's script will be as follows:

*I (Melba Laferine), along with a University of Manitoba City Planning professor, Dr. Ian Skelton, and a student researcher, Lauren Lange, would like to invite you to participate in a research project concerning Aboriginal Seniors Housing Issues in Winnipeg. We are aiming to find out what Aboriginal seniors need and want in terms of safe, affordable and adequate housing here in Winnipeg. We are working with several Aboriginal elders personally, but we would also like to hear what key informants, like yourself, think and feel about the current housing situation for this demographic. Interviews will be approximately one hour to one hour and thirty minutes in length. We will meet you or call you at a place and time of convenience for you. All questions will be in regards to your thoughts and perceptions of the housing situations and conditions for Aboriginal seniors in Winnipeg. If there are any questions which you do not feel comfortable answering, you are completely free to refrain from responding. We thank you for speaking with us at this time and look forward to hopefully speaking with you at a future date.*

4. **Informed Consent:** Consent from all participants will be obtained in writing. (See attached: Consent form). Confidential records will not be consulted at any point in time.
5. **Deception:** There will be no form(s) of deception involved with this project.
6. **Feedback/Debriefing:** Feedback and/or debriefing will be given to each participant following the completion of all interviews and focus groups. Most feedback/debriefing will be provided by principal researcher, Lauren Lange.
7. **Risks and Benefits:** There will be no risk to the subjects or to a third party.
8. **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Participants will not be identified by name in any research unless they have provided us with written consent to do so. All information will be treated as confidential and stored in a private and secure place, and subsequently destroyed after a period of one year. The principal researchers are responsible for destroying the data. When it is necessary to include names, but consent has not been provided, participants will be assigned pseudonyms to preserve anonymity and confidentiality.
9. **Compensation:** Subjects will not receive compensation for their participation.

**Interview questions for Elders and elderly Aboriginals (an estimated 5 elders who have lived in Winnipeg for 5 years or longer and 10 elders who have recently moved to Winnipeg, within the last 12 months will participate in interviews)**

1. Where did you grow up?
2. Where have you lived the majority of your life?
3. When did you first move to Winnipeg?
4. Why did you originally move to Winnipeg?
5. Can you describe your move? Who, if anyone, helped you? Would you say that it was relatively easy, or relatively difficult? Could you say what (and who) helped, and what (or who) made it difficult?
6. In terms of accommodation, where did you first reside upon arrival?
7. Can you describe these living conditions? Did you feel safe and comfortable? If yes, why do you think you felt this way? If no, why do you think you felt this way?
8. Are you still living at the same location? If not, how many times have you moved within the city? Where else have you lived?
9. Can you describe the quality of each accommodation in terms of safety, accessibility and comfort?
10. Do you feel there are adequate and easily accessible resources to assist you in locating and securing housing in Winnipeg?
11. Thinking back to when you first settled in Winnipeg, can you suggest things that would have made it easier?
12. Do you feel seniors housing is affordable in Winnipeg? Why or why not?
13. When you hear the word "home", what do you think of?
14. For you personally, can you describe your "ideal home"? What does it look like? Where is it located? Who else lives with you and/or nearby? What types of services are available nearby?
15. Can you describe any personal needs which are currently unmet in terms of support, health care, finances, transportation, and/or any other services?
16. Please feel free to add any additional comments and/or share any personal stories.

**Interview questions for service workers and officials (an estimated 40 people in indigenous organizations, community groups and government agencies will participate in interviews)**

1. Where do you currently work in terms of paid employment and/or volunteer service?
2. How long have you been associated with this organization, group or agency?
3. Can you describe the organization, group or agency? What is their mandate or mission statement?
4. What is your position or role within this institution?
5. In what capacity does this institution work with and/or for Aboriginal seniors?
6. Does this institution partner with other organizations, groups or government agencies to advocate for Aboriginal seniors? If yes, which groups? If no, do you think this would be beneficial?
7. How is this work associated with the provision of affordable, supportive housing for Aboriginal seniors in Winnipeg?
8. Do you feel there is adequate availability of seniors housing for Aboriginal seniors in Winnipeg? Why or why not?
9. Do you feel housing is affordable for Aboriginal seniors living in Winnipeg? Why or why not?
10. What would you say are some of the significant barriers facing Aboriginal seniors as they attempt to secure safe and affordable housing in Winnipeg?
11. Do you feel this demographic has access to adequate support services in Winnipeg? If not, what are some of the identifiable gaps and how do you feel these could be improved?
12. What do you think is or are the most important issue(s) to be addressed by federal policy in regards to Aboriginal seniors housing in urban centres?
13. Can you speak of any personal experiences or obstacles in assisting in Aboriginal seniors housing provision?
14. Please feel free to add any additional comments and/or share any other personal stories.

**Focus group discussion questions (an estimated 8-10 Aboriginal Seniors who are currently living in Winnipeg, regardless of duration of time, will participate in each of the sharing circles = 4 x 8-10 people)**

1. Can you describe the place where you lived the majority of your life?
2. What was it like to live there?
3. Can you describe the process of moving from your home reserve into Winnipeg or another urban centre?
4. What were some of the challenges you faced before, during or immediately after moving?
5. Describe any support (family or services) available to you to assist with this move?
6. Can you describe the place where you are living presently?
7. How does this home compare to your home on the reserve?
8. When you hear the word "home", what do you think of?
9. For each of you personally, can you describe your "ideal home"? What does it look like? Where is it located? Who else lives with you and/or nearby? What types of services are available nearby?
10. Can you describe any personal needs which are currently unmet in terms of support, health care, finances, transportation, and/or any other services?
11. What are some of the issues faced by yourself and other Aboriginal seniors when looking for housing in Winnipeg?
12. Please feel free to add any additional comments and/or share any personal stories.

### **Consent Form**

Urban Aboriginal Seniors Housing Project

April, 2009

Researchers: Dr. Ian Skelton, Lauren Lange, Melba Laferine

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

### **Title of Project: Urban Aboriginal Seniors Housing**

#### **Specific Activities to be completed by Project Participant**

Participants will be involved in a participatory decision-making process and research investigation related to Aboriginal seniors housing in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This may include, but not be limited to semi-structured key informant interviews (either in person or via telephone), focus groups, community meetings and planning and design workshops. All engagements will range from one hour to one hour and thirty minutes in length.

#### **Audio-Taping**

In some cases, and with your permission, interviews, focus groups or other kinds of sessions may be audio-recorded and transcribed at a later date for research purposes, so that analyzing the material at a later date will be completed with greater ease and efficiency. Such audio-recordings will be kept in a secure place, and destroyed after they have been transcribed. Your name or any other personal information **will not** be included in any publicly disseminated materials arising from the study. Where information occurs within a session transcript that will be included in the final project report, names and other personal information will be omitted, unless such permission has been explicitly granted.

#### **Photography or Video-Taping**

In some cases, photographs may also be taken during project activities to capture group dynamics and interactions between participants. With your permission, your photograph or visual image may be included in presentation materials or reports, allowing viewers (or readers) to catch a glimpse of activities and group processes.

Photos will capture the process, but not identify individuals. Your face will not be shown in the final report. In addition, names will not be attached to any persons in photos, nor in the corresponding text, unless you have explicitly granted such permission.

*Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.*

### Contact Information

Dr. Ian Skelton, Professor, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture,  
University of Manitoba, 201 Russell Building, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 2N2

Telephone: 474-6426; Fax: 474-7532; Email: [iskelton@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:iskelton@cc.umanitoba.ca)

This research project has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) of the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122, or email [Margaret\\_bowman@umanitoba.ca](mailto:Margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Thank you for participating in this project. Your cooperation and insights are very valuable and are greatly appreciated.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to the inclusion of my name in publications \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Participant: please print) resulting from the study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, **DO NOT** consent to the inclusion of my name in \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Participant: please print) publications resulting from the study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to the dissemination of \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Participant: please print) material (including photographs and visual images) provided to the Professor, Student Researcher and Community Researcher for use within the final report and subsequent reports and articles.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, **DO NOT** consent to the dissemination of \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Participant: please print)

material (including photographs and visual images) provided to the Professor, Student Researcher and Community Researcher for use within the final report and subsequent reports and articles.

I understand that the information I provide will be incorporated in a presentation and report by the student researchers. I understand also that all information will be treated as confidential, stored in a private and secure place, and subsequently destroyed at the end of the project by the Professor, Student Researcher and Community Researcher.

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Signature of Participant

Date

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Name of Professor or Student Researcher

Date

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Signature of Professor or Student Researcher

Date

**Appendix B – Written request for telephone interview with service workers and officials**

Attn: To Whom It May Concern,

Hello. My name is Lauren Lange and I am a researcher in the Department of City Planning at the University of Manitoba. I am currently conducting a study on Housing for Elders in Canadian Urban Centres. Although my study is based in Winnipeg, working in conjunction with the Winnipeg Aboriginal Seniors Resources Centre, I am very interested in how other organizations, governmental departments, and friendship centres across the country are working towards meeting the housing needs of this vulnerable demographic. I am also working to discover what types of programming and services are available for these people in regards to housing, health and assistance for those who must deal with the transition from a rural to urban setting.

I have a short series of questions to help ignite conversation concerning this topic. I was just wondering if I would be able to set up a time to talk with yourself or someone within your organization or department to discuss these issues. Or, I could also forward my questions via email if any of your staff had time to write a few short responses back. Any information would be extremely helpful and greatly appreciated. The phone interview would last no more than 20 minutes, and could of course be cut short at anytime. With informed consent, information shared would be used to inform my study, but no names of any form (person, place, etc.) will be included in this work.

I thank you very much for your time and consideration. I am available anytime at 1.204.471.4548 and can call back right away to avoid any long distance charges to your organization.

Many thanks.

Sincerely,

Lauren Lange  
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University of Manitoba  
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