



**CAP NYC**

Congress of Aboriginal Peoples  
National Youth Council

# YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Off-reserve Indigenous youth account for a disproportionate amount of homeless youth in Canada. Throughout the pandemic, all of the challenges related to accessing social determinants of health are amplified.

There is a lack of programming for the homeless population, and in some regions, there is no access to shelter or services for Indigenous males, versus specific initiatives geared towards Indigenous women.

The homeless youth population is also more vulnerable to COVID-19 and its related impacts, as the focus on survival and basic needs like food and shelter often outweigh things like sanitation or distancing. Some youth are also avoiding housing-related services as there is fear that there may be an increased risk of exposure to COVID-19.

There are examples of previous stop-gap measures to support off-reserve homelessness. In the past, shelters for men in Prince Edward Island were partially funded by the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC). This ended in 2006 when funding shifted to on-reserve Indigenous needs. Many of the existing housing supports for off-reserve Indigenous peoples cater solely to women and not to men.

## It's also important to consider several factors around Indigenous youth homelessness:

- Homelessness is a barrier to access programs and services. Without adequate housing, youth are less likely to access services such as mental health supports or health care.
- Winter makes homelessness more problematic for people.
- There is racism in the shelter system and this creates a disconnect.
- Barriers to Social Determinants of health are amplified during COVID-19. This should draw attention to the rights of off-reserve Indigenous people, particularly as rights pertain to health issues, including adequate housing.
- Homelessness is more visible now: staying with friends, couch surfing, etc, not allowed during the pandemic.
- Child welfare has also been impacted through restricted access of families to children as a result of COVID-19.

The CAP National Youth Council (NYC) consists of provincial and territorial youth representatives from across Canada who are tasked with advocating for the rights, needs and interests of Off-Reserve Indigenous youth at the national level.

The CAP NYC is especially concerned with the socioeconomic factors that affect Off-Reserve Indigenous peoples in Canada. As a result, CAP NYC wanted to explore how Indigenous youth in Canada can get actively engaged in the policy processes that impact their lives, families and communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented Indigenous youth with unique challenges across the country. This website allows CAP to connect youth with resources and information to help them navigate this difficult time, while also maintaining a vital sense of community.