An Examination of Métis Women's and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Folks' Housing Needs and Experiences

Indigenous Homelessness: Gendered Differences

It is important to understand homelessness through Indigenous worldviews and not just through mainstream definitions of homelessness. Indigenous homelessness includes disconnection and isolation from relationships to the land, as it comprises historical, social, and infrastructural elements of housing needs and not solely lacking residence (Thistle 2017). Indigenous homelessness must be culturally understood, in which solutions need to be informed by Indigenous peoples' experiences and worldviews. It must take into account the gendered experiences of homelessness that are inextricably linked to violence and mental health.

Indigenous peoples are over-represented among the homeless population in Canada and eight times more likely to be homeless (Bingham et al. 2019; Thistle & Smylie 2020). Indigenous peoples approximately comprise 10% of the Canadian homeless population, which trace back to the continuing legacies of colonialism (e.g., *Indian Act*, residential schools, Sixties Scoop). However, there exist stark gendered differences among homeless Indigenous women and men. In comparison to Indigenous men and non-Indigenous peoples, Indigenous women are more likely to experience homelessness and housing insecurity (e.g., Bingham 2019; Ruttan et al. 2008; Whitzman 2006). Additionally, Indigenous women are more likely, in comparison to non-Indigenous women, to experience *hidden homelessness*. This suggests that Indigenous women reside in precarious, transient, or over-crowded housing conditions exclusive of adequate or safe circumstances (e.g., Christensen 2013a; Peters 2012). Indigenous women who become homeless may experience "chronic moving" —moving at least three times in the past couple of years (Patrick 2013; Skelton 2002). This may be a result of affordability, size of accommodation, and cultural attachment to certain areas.

With Indigenous women already facing overwhelming forms of housing needs and disproportionate levels of violence, the COVID-19 pandemic and the additional strains it has caused on existing homelessness resources, Indigenous women and girls are at greater risk as a result of their marginalization that stems from multifaceted and intersectional factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and class.

Métis Homelessness

One of the greatest limitations in understanding the experiences of Métis women and girls with homelessness, and Métis homelessness, is the dearth of available data on this issue. Particularly, there is also a lack of disaggregated data, in which the current aggregated data that combines the experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations universalize and generalize the distinct experiences of the Métis population. Additionally, there exists far more research on the living conditions and experiences of First Nations people, which tends to treat the lived experiences of Métis as the same (e.g., Patrick 2014; NWAC 2019; Thistle 2017). This does not consider the sociohistorical conditions that have distinctly impacted the Métis population and

their experiences with homelessness. However, Peters (2008) discusses that Métis people may be more disproportionately impacted as a result of their socio-economic status, which is also lower than the status of their non-Indigenous counterparts. These circumstances are likely to put this population at greater risk in becoming homeless. Thus, policy initiatives in dealing with Métis homelessness and housing needs must consider that this population is not clustered in cities, rather that they are dispersed, in addition to a gender-based approach to understand the further marginalization of Métis women and girls.

Métis Women and Girl's Experiences with Homelessness and Housing Needs

Gendered differences exist when accounting for the lived realities of Métis women and girls' experiences with homelessness and housing needs. The interrelated nature of (un)employment, health and well-being, domestic violence, access to accommodations and services, and education combine to disproportionately impact Métis women. This has created unequal life outcomes and distinct experiences that have led to dire outcomes of homelessness and housing needs. First, a discussion on some of the current movements in addressing housing precarity will be highlighted. Second, the importance of the transmission of cultural knowledge will be reviewed to illustrate how precarious housing impacts Métis identity and cultural ties. Third, there will be a discussion on the root causes to illustrate how Métis women and girls have become vulnerable and marginalized through employment, education, health and well-being, and domestic violence, which is directly linked to Métis homelessness and precarious housing. Lastly, recommendations are made regarding ways forward in attending to research and funding on Métis homelessness and housing needs.

Yet, some progress has been made to address Métis housing and homelessness. In July 2018, the Government of Canada and the Métis Nation signed the Métis Nation Housing Sub-Accord. To address the distinct socio-economic conditions that Métis people face, in addition to addressing their housing needs, the sub-accord is funded by a $500 million investment that will run over 10 years. The agreement looks to provide funding to Métis people in addressing issues such as the buying of affordable houses, the repair and maintenance of existing houses, and providing rent money for families in need (Government of Canada 2019). While this is a promising step in advancing mutual priorities as outlined in the Canada-Métis Nation Accord, there still seems to be missing and vague information on how the funding will be distributed across communities[1] and whether it will address gendered experiences in the context of housing needs and homelessness. For instance, who will ensure that houses are regularly maintained and that repairs are being address in a timely manner? It is no coincidence that this funding comes in

[1] The allocation of funds across the five provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec are public. The Métis Nations in the Prairies will each receive 25%, while Ontario and Quebec will split the remaining allocated funding (Narine 2020).

nearly two years after the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling in *Daniels v. Canada* (2016), which ruled that the federal government has a fiduciary responsibility for Métis people and non-status Indians—ending the jurisdictional battle between the federal and provincial levels of government.

Moreover, Minister of Housing & Property Management from the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF), Will Goodon, announced in April 2020 that MMF will launch a Home Enhancement Loan Program (HELP) in May 2020. This is a needs-based program to help low and moderate-income Métis households to make urgent repairs to their homes — with $1.5 million is dedicated to this program (Goodon 2020). MMF-HELP will also provide a forgivable loan up to $15 million for eligible Métis homeowners so that they can either make enhancements or repairs for the homes. For those who are eligible, their total gross income cannot exceed $85,000 and their assets cannot exceed $300,000 (Goodon 2020). Preference is given to Métis persons who exhibit urgent needs or health and safety-related housing necessities; however, there is no illustration of whether it is also gender-based.

Additionally, on April 15, 2020, Minister Goodon announced MMF's homelessness initiative during the COVID-19 response. MMF has reached out to prominent homelessness organizations to collaboratively work together to address the needs for this vulnerable population. For instance, 500 sandwiches distributed each day to Bear Clan and Mama Bear Clan (Métis Nation 2020).

Moreover, MMF also announced the unveiling of an affordable housing initiative in Winnipeg within the community of St. Boniface. This six-unit multifamily home is currently under construction, which will feature two five bedroom-units and one three bedroom-unit (NationTalk 2020). Another housing complex opened on August 17th, 2020 for seniors in St. Laurent, which is a nine-unit complex (Narine 2020; Wong 2020). Criteria for the latter includes that one's annual income not exceed approximately $56,000; 55 years or older; good credit; and rental history (Narine 2020). However, it seems that neither initiatives consider the relationship between gender and housing needs. Métis women have been severely impacted by the deep-rooted intricacies of settler colonialism that have created long-lasting issues relating to intergenerational trauma and the cultural transmission of knowledge. A lack of access to safe, secure, and affordable housing has interrupted the transmission and facilitation of knowledge (e.g., harvesting, planting, access to animals) resulting in dire health outcomes (e.g., Monchalin, Smylie, & Nowgesic 2020).

With the COVID-19 pandemic having drastic implications on communities, the Trudeau government has committed approximately $2 billion to Indigenous and northern communities and organizations. A total of $75.2 million is allocated for the 2020-21 academic year for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students who will be pursuing post-secondary education, which is a notable distinctions-based support (Government of Canada 2020). Additionally, $44.8 million will be distributed over a five-year period to construct 12 new shelters to protect Indigenous women

and girls who are experiencing and escaping violence. Starting this year, an additional $1 million a year will be given to “support engagement with Métis leaders and service providers on shelter provision and community-led violence prevention project for Métis women, girls, LGBTQ and two-spirited people” (Government of Canada 2020). Shelter space is essential for Métis women fleeing from violence; however, the funding is not nearly enough.

Further, both the Métis Urban Housing Association of Saskatchewan Inc. and the Métis Capital Housing Corporation work to provide affordable housing; however, it is not explicitly stated what steps are taken to incorporate a gendered lens in addressing the needs of Métis women and girls.

Cultural Transmission

As briefly mentioned earlier, housing needs and homelessness are related to the transmission of cultural knowledge within Indigenous communities—Métis communities are no exception. Safe, secure, and affordable housing is imperative in maintaining strong cultural ties and knowledge.

Residential schools have played a significant factor in the hindrance and interruption of the transmission and facilitation of Métis cultural knowledge. The abuse and shame perpetuated by residential school staff caused additional divisions and representational violence among and between Indigenous children (e.g., Chartrand, Logan, & Daniels 2006). For instance, Métis children who were “better” off (from families with money) were treated more favourably than Métis children who were “poor” (living off land) (MMIWG 2019). This historic trauma (e.g., land dispossession, child welfare system) coupled with residential schools has interrupted the flow of cultural knowledge among Métis communities (e.g., Chartrand, Logan, & Daniels 2006; MMIWG 2019; NCCAH 2016). From being forcibly separated from their families to being indoctrinated with Christian values, the forced removal is reflected within the homelessness crisis that Métis women and girls currently face as a result of the lasting impacts of colonial policies.

The suppression of language and cultural identity stemming from residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and child welfare system, illustrates a higher prevalence of suicide ideation for Métis women and girls (Kumar et al. 2012; Thistle 2017). In a study by Kumar et al. (2012:7), they illustrate that the foster care experience for Métis women is a unique gender difference finding that is compounded by identity confusion and loss of culture. This loss of culture and identity crisis, when also aggravated by the lack of stable housing, hinders participation in the continuance of cultural values and practices—they become double disadvantaged. Overcrowding homelessness or a lack of stable housing needs, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, also exposes the homelessness crisis where individuals may not be able to isolate in safe and healthy conditions (Thistle as cited by Rogers 2020). Homelessness is not just about having a lack of access to housing but also includes land dispossession, the loss of a loved one, and traumatic experiences that perpetuate a consistent flow of intergenerational trauma leading to a loss of cultural knowledge and practices. Yet, in not having access to stable housing, the

historic displacement and treatment of Métis women and girls, this *dislocation* becomes reflected in emotional, physical, and spiritual relationships that would have been.

Understanding homelessness from Indigenous worldviews illustrate how the concept of *home* is understood through emplacements as opposed to a "built environment" (Thistle 2017:15). It is a circle of interconnectedness that builds the basis for spiritual emplacement—kinship relationships (Christensen 2013b). The physical structure of the home itself is an indicator for one of the many root causes of homelessness and affordable housing, which also comprises being without emotional, physical, mental, spiritual, and cultural relationships (Christensen 2013b). Linguicide and the state-sanctioned cultural destruction of Indigenous values and displacement play a significant factor in the breakdown of cultural values, evident through intergenerational trauma.

Root Causes

Fur trade, Scrip System, Road Allowances

Métis women produced goods during the fur trade. Métis communities at the Red River fostered peculiar social and political cultures (MMIWG 2019). However, these communities encountered pressure from European institutions such as the Christian Church to conform to patriarchal ways of operation—economic systems, social conventions. This worldview created severe friction, which led to a transition away from maternal knowledge to one that imposed a Euro-Canadian system of gender, defined by the Church. Gendered ideas such as the husbands as the head of the household and women subservient to male authority led to negative outcomes for Métis women in their communities. These colonial perspectives were also bundled in talks of miscegenation, or mixing blood, as this was seen as a primary source of moral deterioration and impure behaviour. This ultimately also caused a problem for settler efforts in further taking more Indigenous land (i.e., scrip system).

During the 19th century, the Canadian nation-state worked to expand its presence in acquiring land without consultation and consent with Indigenous peoples in the Prairies, especially with the events at Red River in 1870. Canadian soldiers were keen on ensuring that Manitoba joined Confederation, which included further harassment of the population and drunk soldiers targeting and abusing Métis women. Métis women were at the front of the resistance against Canadian forces in 1885, led by Louis Riel. They played an instrumental role in the Battle of Batoche. Yet, continued Canadian military intervention during this time led to intergenerational trauma, as the continuing legacies of these violent interventions are seen in the precarious living conditions of Métis women (MMIWG 2019).

Scrip systems had severe consequences for the Métis community—Métis women in particular. It was a way for the Canadian government to remove Aboriginal title of Métis communities, which endured between 1870 and 1924. Recipients would receive land or cash payments (MMIWG

2019; O'Byrne 2013). Métis women could apply for scrip, however this was usually in the name of a male figure such as their brother or father, if unmarried. Married women, in the eyes of the Canadian government, were not perceived as heads of the household, hence rather dependent within this patriarchal structure (MMIWG 2019:287). As a result, this enabled Métis women to be placed in categories as wives who do not have ample property rights. This played a stark role in the defining of gendered expectations. Additionally, these scrip commissions undermined Métis rights, while also pushing families into poverty, alienation, and crippling communities. With changes to scrip regulations, land that was originally promised to the Métis was turned over to new immigrants by land speculators for a quick profit (O'Byrne 2013).

When scrip commissions came to an end, Métis people were still not recognized under the *Indian Act*. This meant that the Canadian government had no obligations regarding Métis rights. What made this further problematic is that responsibility for Métis people would be passed back and forth between the federal and provincial levels of government. Under the *Natural Resources Act*, responsibility was transferred to the provinces, thus Métis people became a practical group to ignore, particularly in discussions of fiduciary responsibility.[2] With both levels of government not taking responsibility, they further hindered any form of relationship they had with Métis people––women, girls, LGBTQ2A––and aggravated the living conditions of these communities, which disproportionately impacted Métis women and girls.

In 1938, the *Métis Population Betterment Act* was passed by the provincial government of Alberta to provide land allotments to Métis people. The act was also in a way to address Métis homelessness. With the establishment of the report by the Ewing Commission in 1934, which was set up to address the socioeconomic disadvantages facing Métis communities in Alberta, it was the first instance in which a provincial government identified Métis as a distinct people (O'Byrne 2013). Moreover, the diaspora of Métis people is seen through the enactment of road allowance communities in peripheral rural areas within the Prairie provinces (Troupe 2019). They became known as "The Road Allowance People" (Troupe 2019). After the resistance movements in both Manitoba (1869) and Saskatchewan (1885), Métis people were left without a homeland––landless. They were forced to live on land that was taken by the government for the construction and/or expansion of roads. These makeshift communities and road allowance homes were a reflection of the dire poverty Métis people experienced. Squatting on Crown land was a way to support the family as individuals were paid minimal wages or with food.

Road allowances during the 1950s in the Prairie provinces were unique. Families were organized around kinship ties, while relying upon a subsistence lifestyle, such as fishing or trapping (Troupe 2019). Men worked to clear fields, while women would maintain the majority of the domestic responsibilities, harvesting and preparing food, alongside providing medicine for their family. The communities were also a strong source of maintaining Métis language and cultural traditions.

[2] However, this changed with the decision from *Daniels v. Canada* (2016), in which the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the federal government has a fiduciary responsibility for Métis people.

However, once the Saskatchewan government worked on policies to remove Métis people from the road allowances, these communities became disbanded as they were forced to find employment within the cities, with no guarantee of stable housing. Yet, in the 19th and 20th century, Métis women did not have strong political power as their roles centered around supporting the leadership of men within their communities (Troupe 2009:61). Their assertion of political power came from their refusal of work or making appeals to leaders of their communities.

Further, a town known as Rooster Town originated in 1901 in Winnipeg. Métis families in this community built their own dwellings to address homelessness. Many residents were squatting, renting, and paying taxes. However, poverty and unemployment emerged with the beginning of the Great Depression and the city's chronic housing shortages, which meant that squatting and buying cheap land was an attractive strategy as a means of getting access to the labour market (Burley 2013). The middle-class suburbs complained about the closeness of the families to them, in which this *anxiety* gave rise to a municipal colonialism as the city worked to deny Métis people a place and space in the city. This forced removal disproportionately impacted Métis women who were already at higher risk of being labelled and targeted for being "prostitutes" and "drunks" (Burley 2013:10). Their bodies were perceived as "disease-stricken" and "dirty" (Turner 2016).

The stories of Métis women not having enough resources and why they have become disproportionately vulnerable to state-sanctioned violence is a by-product of the sociohistorical circumstances of state-sanctioned racism. These events and policies became a refuge for racism. Systemic barriers in improving access to education, employment, and health services congeal the violence that Métis women and girls experience and contribute to the poverty and precarious housing for Métis women.

Domestic Violence

The occurrence and prevalence of domestic violence within Indigenous communities and households is linked to severe levels of homelessness and precarious housing that Indigenous women face. Métis women, alongside other Indigenous women, are more likely to be subject to abuse and violence than non-Indigenous women (e.g., O'Donnell & Wallace 2011; MMIWG 2019). They are at risk of gendered violence at higher rates in comparison to non-Indigenous women, particularly if between the ages of 25 and 40—they are four times more likely (Hargreaves 2017). In understanding this through a feminist intersectional approach, Gilchrest (2010) laments that the intersecting elements of sexism, racism, and colonialism, which inevitably perpetuate the vulnerabilities of Indigenous women in settler Canada, further exposes the racialized, sexualized, and gendered violence of settler colonialism.

Preliminary results from a COVID-19 survey on how the pandemic has impacted First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women illustrate that 1 in 5 Indigenous women have been subject to violence (e.g., physical, psychological) during the first three months of the pandemic (Wright 2020). The

home is not *always* a safe place, and with the lack of shelters and sexual assault centres within the country that are not operated by Indigenous peoples, many are reluctant on accessing them (Wright 2020). The combination of being victims of sexualized and gendered violence, while dealing with precarious housing needs or homelessness, amplify any mental health concerns and access to programming. The pandemic has caused additional strain on Indigenous women, which calls for the need for distinct based policies that meet the needs of Métis women. In 2019, Elaine Durocher, a Métis woman from Saskatchewan, shared her story of homelessness and violence:

> I was in three foster homes by the age of six years old… I went from a White foster home to the reserve with my mother and stepfather. I felt unsafe immediately. I had nothing; no food, no love…Then I went to residential school as a day student. I started there as a six year old for five years… I learnt to run by the time I was 10 years old. I was homeless when I was 12 years old. At the age of 14, I was sleeping under bridges and near railway tracks… I remained in unsafe housing all my life. Even when I was with my kids' fathers I faced abuse and rape but I still had to stay. I felt I had to stay because those guys were the fathers of my children, and my mom never left even though she was beaten by my stepdad… After they took my baby girl away, I was homeless again and back on the street. Then I had another girl. In 1986, during the Expo Games in Vancouver, I was homeless again with two girls and pregnant. In 2007, I became homeless again. I was living in Port Coquitlam and was 50 years old (Martin & Walia 2019:101-103)

Elaine's story and experiences illustrate the troubling and unsettling conditions that some Métis women face throughout their life, starting from a very young age. This calls for the need for safe and affordable housing. Abuse and violence, particularly sexualized violence is one of the most common forms of violence among Métis girls in care, a recent British Columbia report revealed (Alam 2020). Between 2015 and 2017, Métis youth who experienced critical injuries were also seldom placed with Métis families and thus not connected with their culture. With Métis children and youth already being over-represented in care, being placed in this type of housing environment further dispossesses them from their identity and culture, exposing them to greater risks of abuse and neglect.

Across Canada there are shelters and/or organizations that have a domestic violence mandate. In British Columbia, Atira Women's Resource Society is a non-for-profit organization committed in ending violence against women. It is an accessible organization that is open to anyone who identifies and lives full time as a woman and experiences gendered violence, including trans and Two-Spirit women. Waaban Housing for these women is dedicated in empowering them through shared life experiences and sisterhood. Programming is free of charge. In Ottawa, Minwaashin Lodge is dedicated in providing programs and services to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women––survivors of violence and those dealing with the continuing trauma from residential schools. Programming is provided through culturally appropriate means to provide a holistic approach in the healing process.

During 2017-2018, 85 shelters across Canada had ties to Indigenous communities and/or organizations functioning to help those who have been subject to violence and abuse, with 30 located on reserves (Maxwell 2020). A large proportion comprise Indigenous women (70%) and children (68%) living in these shelters (Maxwell 2020). The unique and troubling social, economic, and political histories of Indigenous peoples in Canada that stem from the legacy of colonialism have put them at higher risk of victimization and gendered and sexualized violence. However, the lack of disaggregate data makes it difficult to understand and recognize the distinct experiences of Métis women and girls, such as in residential schools (e.g., see Chartrand, Logan, & Daniels 2006).

Violence is the foremost cause of women's homelessness in Canada (Ontario Women's Native Association 2018). With Indigenous women being more likely than non-Indigenous women to experience victimization, precarious housing only escalates their risks of experiencing violence. Housing policy and research must include a gender-based lens to support Indigenous women and identify distinct needs for Métis women and girls to develop culturally appropriate housing and programming.

Rehabilitation Branch

Further, in Alberta, the Bonnyville Indian-Métis Rehabilitation Centre is committed in addressing addiction, including drugs and alcohol. Through a holistic healing approach, the Centre focuses on recovery pathways, ranging from mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical. There are many stories of how intergenerational trauma, violence, and abuse may lead to increase drug-dependent behaviour as a result of the continuing effects of colonialism (e.g., homelessness). Thus, the Centre embraces culturally specific programs in ensuring that individuals are treated with respect and dignity, while also empowering them.

Employment and Education

There is a strong link between precarious work and financial instability when it comes to Métis women meeting basic household needs (Hahmann 2019). According to the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, Métis women, between 25 to 54, employed in a permanent job were more likely to report that they were not able to meet the basic household needs (i.e., transportation, housing) in comparison to Métis men (17% versus 11%). Gendered differences in employment rates illustrate that Métis men are more likely to be employed than Métis women, and tend to earn less. However, higher education reduces the earnings gap. With precarious and limited employment opportunities, migration becomes crucial for many Métis women. As mentioned earlier, living costs play a significant role in Métis homelessness. For instance, for people who are homeless in the Northwest Territories (particularly Inuit or Métis), the uneven social and economic geographies mark a peculiar landscape of vulnerability to homelessness when living in these northern and rural areas (Christensen 2012 as cited by Patrick 2017). Inadequate employment opportunities coupled with systemic and structural barriers that impact Métis communities, all levels of government have left these communities chronically underfunded. The

fiduciary desertion by the state further aggravates the economic realities of Métis women in search of affordable and adequate housing.

In a 2017, a report published by Statistics Canada on the labour market experiences of Métis people highlighted that Métis women, in comparison to Métis men (49% versus 37%), were more likely to disclose not having ample work experience, which made it challenging to find work. Unemployed Métis women reported that having more academic education would have been beneficial in finding a job and that more childcare assistance would also relieve domestic responsibility as a means of looking for work. Métis women, in comparison to Métis men, also reported in having multiple jobs (10% versus 8%) and work part-time jobs (27% versus 12%) (Statistics Canada 2017). A common reason for working part-time was due to childcare responsibilities, in which for most older Métis women (36%), working part-time was not a voluntary decision (Statistics Canada 2017). These statistics illustrate the importance of access to education in finding employment, and thus, increasing odds in having secure housing. However, this has not been the case for all Métis women, as precarious employment is a factor in having precarious housing conditions. The statistics illustrate that higher education, particularly post-secondary, increases and improves odds in having employment for Métis women (Statistics Canada 2017).

Health and Well-Being, and Access to Services

The health and well-being of Métis women and girls goes hand in hand with their experiences of homelessness (NCCAH 2017). Métis women experience greater rates of mortality from diseases and external causes in comparison to non-Indigenous women (NCCAH 2011). This ultimately results in lower life expectancy numbers. The socioeconomic conditions of Métis women are directly linked to their health outcomes. For instance, the median income for Métis women in 2005 was approximately $17,500—around $3,000-$4,000 less in comparison to non-Indigenous women and Indigenous men, respectively (O'Donnell & Wallace 2011; NCCAH 2011).

Off-reserve Métis women also report greater likelihoods of suicidal thought in comparison to both Métis men and non-Indigenous women (Kumar 2016). In a Statistics Canada report (Kumar 2016 as cited by Kumar et al. 2012), it is noted that 23.4% of Métis women have suicidal thoughts in comparison to 14.9% of Métis men and 13.8% of non-Indigenous women. These statistics are attributed to mood and anxiety disorders, drug use, and self-worth. The prevalence of suicidal thoughts stem from experiences of residential schools and physical and sexual abuse. These mental health concerns are further aggravated due to homelessness and housing needs. Crowded housing is a major concern for Indigenous peoples, which is linked to a myriad of health and social issues ranging from family violence to respiratory infections (O'Donnell & Wallace 2011). While the 2006 Census illustrates that approximately the same percentage of Métis women and girls live in crowded conditions as non-Indigenous women and girls (3%), it also shows that 14% reside in homes that required significant repairs, which was twice the number of non-Indigenous women (7%). Health, as described by Métis women, involves physical health,

while well-being encompasses spiritual, emotional, and mental facets of life that is inextricably linked to homelessness and crowded housing (Bartlett 2005).

Those who find themselves homeless have likely experienced and encountered poverty, unsafe living conditions, mental health issues, and abuse in early life. As a result, some Métis women find themselves facing social disadvantages and further marginalization throughout adulthood. Researchers have demonstrated that many Métis female youth, in addition to First Nations and non-status youth, hold strong understandings of structural injustices and wished to reduce passing down these effects to their prospective children by returning to their Indigenous cultures (Ruttan et al. 2008 as cited by Patrick 2014). This is perceived as a pathway in homelessness prevention. In addition, earlier research by Baskin (2007 as cited by Patrick 2014) reports that many Indigenous youth associate their conditions and experiences of homelessness with structural causes. Further, the cost of home care services is of great concern and is a deterrent in accessing health care. For instance, Métis communities do not have the same coverage as First Nations' reserves (Krieg et al. 2007). As a result, housing policies must be geared toward distinct needs that are in parallel with discussions on gender.

On August 25th, 2020, the Government of Canada announced $82.5 million dollars in funding for Indigenous communities to address mental health needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Barrera 2020). This funding aims to expand "culturally appropriate services", which include virtual counselling and substance use treatment services, and community-based programs (Barrera 2020). The funding will be distributed across First Nations, Métis, and Inuit regional organizations, however more specific detail is not available. More needs to be outlined from the government and the organizations regarding how the funding will be used to improve the quality of mental health care services. For instance, in Saskatchewan, access to health care services for elderly Métis women depended on accessibility, availability, affordability, acceptability, and accommodation (Krieg et al. 2007). Transportation to and from appointments, the number of on-site health personnel, drug coverage, holistic medical responses, and a range of services are imperative in ensuring that Métis women do not fall through the cracks.

Recommendations

The definition of homelessness, as defined in its current context, does not capture the breadth and extent of Indigenous homelessness. Currently, the mainstream definition of homelessness includes "a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with people being without any shelter at one end, and being insecurely housed at the other" (Thistle 2017:13). However, "Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing" (Thistle 2017:6). The Western definition of homelessness does not differentiate between settler and Indigenous homeliness. It does not incorporate Indigenous worldviews. The latter includes:

> individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships (Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness 2020 as quoted in Thistle 2017:6).

Thus, the definition must expand to acknowledge and recognize how settler colonialism has created prejudicial housing outcomes and homelessness for distinct Indigenous communities in Canada (e.g., Martin & Walia 2019). In doing so, this will create more space on understanding Métis homelessness, as there currently exists more studies and research on First Nations people experiencing homelessness (e.g., Patrick 2014).

There is a plethora of aggregated data on how homelessness impacts Indigenous peoples in Canada. However, there needs to be a push for the collection of disaggregated data regarding how homelessness impacts certain Indigenous communities (e.g., Christensen 2013b). There does exist some disaggregated data on some of the root causes that lead to homelessness (e.g., health, education, employment), however the experiences and stories of Indigenous peoples, in the context of homelessness, is not universal. Data must not homogenize their experiences as the Métis population, particularly Métis women and girls, have unique experiences and distinct needs. For instance, there must be a gender-based analytic approach as a means to consider the experiences of all Métis people in their communities (e.g., Bingham et al. 2019). These responses, however, must be developed and led by Métis people, with the approaches being rooted in their ways of knowledge, understanding, and worldviews.

Future research must also address the relationship between housing and domestic violence. Research needs to address the effectiveness and helpfulness of housing options for Indigenous women (Yerichuk et al. 2016). Particularly, women fleeing violence and ensuring ways to make housing culturally appropriate, affordable, available, and safe. The interconnecting relationship between domestic violence and housing needs experienced by Indigenous women is not just restricted to the aforementioned factors, but also broader systemic colonial policies and structures. For Métis women and girls, both the collection and typical publication of gender-disaggregated data will aid in illustrating the continuing social, economic, and health conditions of Métis women and girls (e.g., Amnesty International 2014). Eligibility criteria should be expanded to include a gender-lens when accounting for the experiences and needs of Métis women fleeing from violence and abuse (e.g., children, on-site programming).

In addition, future research on Métis homelessness must include gender-diverse people when working on solutions. Their voices must be at the front of the planning (e.g., NWAC 2019). There is a dearth of research on Métis members from the LGBTQ2IA+ community. In doing so, responses and funding to Métis homelessness can address the need for distinct based funding.

There are also calls for more longitudinal data on Métis health (Macdougall 2017). The lack of data arises from the means the federal government functioned its fiduciary obligations towards Indians, Métis, and Inuit. Now that the *Daniels v. Canada* (2016) decision ruled that the federal government has a fiduciary obligation for Métis people, these gaps on the information knowledge on Métis health data can be better collected and established.

Summary

It is important to understand homelessness through Indigenous worldviews, not just through mainstream definitions of homelessness. Indigenous homelessness includes disconnection and isolation from relationships to the land, as it comprises historical, social, and infrastructural elements of housing needs and not solely lacking residence (Thistle 2017). Indigenous homelessness must be culturally understood, in which solutions need to be informed by Indigenous peoples' experiences and worldviews. It must take into account the gendered experiences of homelessness that are inextricably linked to violence and mental health.

Métis Homelessness

One of the greatest limitations in understanding the experiences of Métis women and girls with homelessness, and Métis homelessness, is the dearth of available data on this issue. Particularly, there is also a lack of disaggregate data, in which the current aggregate data that combines the experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations universalize and generalize the distinct experiences of the Métis population. Additionally, there exists far more research on the living conditions and experiences of First Nations people, which tends to treat the lived experiences of Métis as the same (e.g., Patrick 2014; NWAC 2019; Thistle 2017). This does not consider the sociohistorical conditions that have distinctly impacted the Métis population and their experiences with homelessness. However, Peters (2008) discusses that Métis people may be more disproportionately impacted as a result of their socio-economic status, which is also lower than the status of their non-Indigenous counterparts. These circumstances are likely to put the population at greater risk in becoming homeless. Thus, policy initiatives in dealing with Métis homelessness and housing needs must consider that this population is not clustered in cities, rather they are dispersed, in addition to a gender-based approach to understand the further marginalization of Métis women and girls.

Métis Women and Girl's Experiences with Homelessness and Housing Needs

Gendered differences exist when accounting for the lived realities of Métis women and girls' experiences with homelessness and housing needs. The interrelated nature of (un)employment, health and well-being, domestic violence, access to accommodations and services, and education combine to disproportionately impact Métis women. This has created unequal life outcomes and distinct experiences that have led to dire outcomes of homelessness and housing needs.

Yet, some progress has been made to address Métis housing and homelessness. In July 2018, the Government of Canada and the Métis nation signed the Métis Nation Housing Sub-Accord. To address the distinct socio-economic conditions that Métis people face, in addition to addressing their housing needs, the sub-accord is funded by a $500 million investment that will run over 10 years. The agreement looks to provide funding to Métis people in addressing issues such as the buying of affordable houses, the repair and maintenance of existing houses, and providing rent

money for families in need (Government of Canada 2019). While this is a promising step in advancing mutual priorities as outlined in the Canada-Métis Nation Accord, there still seems to be missing and vague information on how the funding will be distributed across communities[3] and whether it will address gendered experiences in the context of housing needs and homelessness. For instance, *who will ensure that houses are regularly maintained and that repairs are being address in a timely manner?* It is no coincidence that this funding comes in nearly two years after the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling in *Daniels v. Canada* (2016), which ruled that the federal government has a fiduciary responsibility for Métis people and non-status Indians—ending the jurisdiction battle between the federal and provincial levels of government.

Cultural transmission

Residential schools have played a significant factor in the hindrance and interruption of the transmission and facilitation of cultural knowledge. The abuse and shame perpetuated by residential school staff caused additional divisions and representational violence among and between Indigenous children (e.g., Chartrand, Logan, & Daniels 2006). For instance, Métis children who were "better" off (from families with money) were treated more favourably than Métis children who were "poor" (living off land) (MMIWG 2019). This historic trauma (e.g., land dispossession, child welfare system) coupled with residential schools has interrupted the flow of cultural knowledge among Métis communities (e.g., Chartrand, Logan, & Daniels 2006; MMIWG 2019; NCCAH 2016). From being forcibly separated from their families to indoctrinated with Christian values, the forced removal is reflected within the homelessness crisis that Métis women and girls currently face as a result of the lasting impacts of colonial policies.

Understanding homelessness from Indigenous worldviews illustrate how the concept of *home* is understood through emplacements as opposed to a "built environment" (Thistle 2017:15). It is a circle of interconnectedness that builds the basis for spiritual emplacement—kinship relationships (Christensen 2013b). The physical structure of the home itself is an indicator for one of the many root causes of homelessness and affordable housing, which also comprises being without emotional, physical, mental, spiritual, and cultural relationships (Christensen 2013b). Linguicide and the state-sanctioned cultural destruction of Indigenous values and displacement play a significant factor in the breakdown of cultural values, evident through intergenerational trauma.

Root Causes

Socio-historical impacts of colonialism

Métis women produced goods during the fur trade. Métis communities at the Red River fostered peculiar social and political cultures (MMIWG 2019). However, these communities encountered

[3] The allocation of funds across the five provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec are public. The Métis Nations in the Prairies will each receive 25%, while Ontario and Quebec will split the remaining allocated funding (Narine 2020).

pressure from European institutions such as the Christian Church to conform to patriarchal ways of operation––economic systems, social conventions. This worldview created severe friction, which led to a transition away from maternal knowledge to one that that imposed a Euro-Canadian system of gender defined by the influence of the Church. Gendered ideas such as the husbands as the head of the household and women subservient to male authority led to negative outcomes for Métis women in their communities. These colonial perspectives were also bundled in talks of miscegenation, as this was seen as a primary source of moral deterioration and impure behaviour. This ultimately also caused a problem for settler efforts in further taking more Indigenous land (i.e., scrip system).

Road allowances during the 1950s in the Prairie provinces were unique. Families were organized around kinship ties, while relying upon a subsistence lifestyle (e.g., fishing, trapping) (Troupe 2019). Men worked to clear fields, while women would maintain majority of the domestic responsibilities, harvesting and preparing food, alongside providing medicine for their family. The communities were also a strong source of maintaining Métis language and cultural traditions. However, once the Saskatchewan government worked on policies to remove Métis people from the road allowances, these communities became disbanded as they were forced to find employment within the cities, with no guarantee of stable housing. Yet, in the 19th and 20th century, Métis women did not have strong political power as their roles centered around supporting the leadership of men within their communities (Troupe 2009:61). Their assertion of political power came from their refusal of work or making appeals to leaders of their communities.

The stories of Métis women not having enough resources and why they have become disproportionately vulnerable to state-sanctioned violence is a by-product of the sociohistorical circumstances of state-sanctioned racism. These events and policies became a refuge for racism. Systemic barriers in improving access to education, employment, and health services congeal the violence that Métis women and girls experience and contribute to the poverty and precarious housing for Métis women.

Domestic violence

The occurrence and prevalence of domestic violence within Indigenous communities and households is linked to severe levels of homelessness and precarious housing that Indigenous women face. Métis women, alongside other Indigenous women, are more likely to be subject to abuse and violence than non-Indigenous women (e.g., O'Donnell & Wallace 2011; MMIWG 2019). They are at risk of gendered violence at higher rates in comparison to non-Indigenous women, particularly if between the ages of 25 and 40––they are four times more likely (Hargreaves 2017). In understanding this through a feminist intersectional approach, Gilchrest (2010) laments that the intersecting elements of sexism, racism, and colonialism, which inevitably perpetuate the vulnerabilities of Indigenous women in settler Canada, further exposes the racialized, sexualized, and gendered violence of settler colonialism.

Violence is the foremost cause of women's homelessness in Canada (Ontario Women's Native Association 2018). With Indigenous women being more likely than non-Indigenous women to experience victimization, precarious housing only escalates their risks of experiencing violence. Housing policy and research must include a gender-based lens to support Indigenous women and identify distinct needs for Métis women and girls to develop culturally appropriate housing and programming.

Education & employment

There is a strong link between precarious work and financial instability when it comes to Métis women meeting basic household needs (Hahmann 2019). According to the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, Métis women, between 25 to 54, employed in a permanent job were more likely to report that they were not able to meet the basic household needs (i.e., transportation, housing) in comparison to Métis men (17% versus 11%). Gendered differences in employment rates illustrate that Métis men are more likely to be employed than Métis women, and tend to earn less. However, higher education reduces the earnings gap. With precarious and limited employment opportunities, migration becomes crucial for many Métis women. As mentioned earlier, living costs play a significant role in Métis homelessness. For instance, people who are homeless in the Northwest Territories (particularly Inuit or Métis), the uneven social and economic geographies mark a peculiar landscape of vulnerability to homelessness in these northern and rural areas (Christensen 2012 as cited by Patrick 2017). Inadequate employment opportunities coupled with systemic and structural barriers that impact Métis communities, all levels of government have left these communities chronically underfunded. The fiduciary desertion by the state further aggravates the economic realities of Métis women in search of affordable and adequate housing.

Health and well-being, and access to services

The health and well-being of Métis women and girls goes hand in hand with their experiences of homelessness (NCCAH 2017). Métis women experience greater rates of mortality from diseases and external causes in comparison to non-Indigenous women (NCCAH 2011). This ultimately results in lower life expectancy numbers. The socioeconomic conditions of Métis women are directly linked to their health outcomes. For instance, the median income for Métis women in 2005 was approximately $17,500—around $3,000-$4,000 less in comparison to non-Indigenous women and Indigenous men (O'Donnell & Wallace 2011; NCCAH 2011).

Those who find themselves homeless have likely experienced and encountered poverty, unsafe living conditions, mental health issues, and abuse in early life. As a result, some Métis women find themselves facing social disadvantages and further marginalization throughout adulthood. Researchers have demonstrated that many Métis female youth, in addition to First Nations and non-status youth, hold strong understandings of structural injustices and coveted to reducing these effects of being passed down to their prospective children by recoupling with Indigenous cultures (Ruttan et al. 2008 as cited by Patrick 2014). This is perceived as a pathway in homelessness prevention. In addition, earlier research by Baskin (2007 as cited by Patrick 2014)

reports that many Indigenous youth associate their conditions and experiences of homelessness with structural causes. Further, the cost of home care services is of great concern and is a deterrent in accessing health care. For instance, Métis communities do not have the same coverage as First Nations' reserves (Krieg et al. 2007). As a result, housing policies must be geared toward distinct needs that are in parallel with discussions on gender.

Recommendations

The definition of homelessness, as defined in its current context, does not capture the breadth and extent of Indigenous homelessness. Currently, the mainstream definition of homelessness includes "a range of housing and shelter circumstances, with people being without any shelter at one end, and being insecurely housed at the other" (Thistle 2017:13). However, "Indigenous homelessness is human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing" (Thistle 2017:6). Thus, the definition must expand to acknowledge and recognize how settler colonialism has created prejudicial housing outcomes and homelessness for distinct Indigenous communities in Canada (e.g., Martin & Walia 2019).

There is a plethora of aggregate data on how homelessness impacts Indigenous peoples in Canada. However, there needs to be a push for the collection of disaggregate data regarding how homelessness impacts certain Indigenous communities (e.g., Christensen 2013b). There does exist some disaggregate data on some of the root causes that lead to homelessness (e.g., health, education, employment), however the experiences and stories of Indigenous peoples, in the context of homelessness, is not universal. Data must not homogenize their experiences as the Métis population, particularly Métis women and girls, have unique experiences, in which their needs are distinct. For instance, there must be a gender-based analytic approach as a means in considering the experiences of all Métis people in their communities (e.g., Bingham et al. 2019). These responses, however, must be steered by Métis people, with the approaches being rooted in their ways of knowledge, understanding, and worldviews.

Future research must also address the relationship between housing and domestic violence. Research needs to address the effectiveness and helpfulness of housing options for Indigenous women (Yerichuk et al. 2016). Particularly, women fleeing violence and ensuring ways to make housing culturally appropriate, affordable, available, and safe. The interconnecting relationship between domestic violence and housing needs experienced by Indigenous women is not just restricted to the aforementioned factors, but also broader systemic colonial policies and structures. For Métis women and girls, both the collection and typical publication of gender-disaggregated data will aid in illustrating the continuing social, economic, and health conditions of Métis women and girls (e.g., Amnesty International 2014). Eligibility criteria should be expanded to include a gender-lens when accounting for the experiences and needs of Métis women fleeing from violence and abuse (e.g., children, on-site programming).

In addition, future research on Métis homelessness must include gender-diverse people when working on solutions. Their voices must be at the front of the planning (e.g., NWAC 2019). There is a dearth of research on Métis members from the LGBTQ2IA+ community. In doing so, responses and funding to Métis homelessness can address the need for distinct based funding.

There are also calls for more longitudinal data on Métis health (Macdougall 2017). The lack of data arises from the means the federal government functioned its fiduciary obligations towards Indians, Métis, and Inuit. Now that the *Daniels v. Canada* (2016) decision ruled that the federal government has a fiduciary obligation for Métis people, these gaps on the information knowledge on Métis health data can be better collected and established.

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