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AT HOME IN  
THE NORTH

Newsletter

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*“We are excited for the ways in which the ‘pivoting’ we have done with At Home in the North has led to new forms for connection and collaboration. Ultimately, we hope this new path leads us toward more sustainable and effective ways of engaging in northern research moving forward.”*

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**We create, share and mobilize knowledge on homelessness and housing insecurity in the Canadian North.**

**Check out our website:** <https://athomeinthenorth.org/>

## Introduction

I hope that everyone is enjoying a beautiful fall season, and that you, your families and your communities are healthy.

As you are all well aware, the past year has been a challenging one in many ways as we navigate the pandemic and its impacts on our lives, individually and collectively. Indeed, it has also posed some challenges for the launch of At Home in the North. Yet while these challenges have forced us to let go of some plans (for example, an in-person Knowledge Gathering this year), we have been able to identify new opportunities (for example, smaller Partner-led research initiatives and an Online Knowledge Exchange program). We are excited for the ways in which the “pivoting” we have done with At Home in the North has led to new forms for connection and collaboration. Ultimately, we hope this new path leads us toward more sustainable and effective ways of engaging in northern research moving forward.

The pandemic has brought under harsh light the persistence of the northern housing crisis and the many ways in which it undermines the health of northerners. At the same time, northern communities have responded to the pandemic and the new challenges it poses to northern housing insecurity in swift and innovative ways, demonstrating that real action can be taken quickly when public support is there. We need to build on this momentum and use the lessons learned to push for long-term, sustainable approaches to alleviating northern housing need based on community-led decision making.

At Home in the North provides us with a unique opportunity to bring university and community researchers and partners together to share experiences, challenges and opportunities between and across northern locales, and work together to address northern homelessness and housing insecurity. I look forward to the coming years as we grow our partnership and collaboratively develop and implement community-led initiatives to better understand, evaluate and address northern housing insecurity.

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*“We aim to provide opportunities for learning about innovation and challenge to improve our collective capacity to reduce homelessness and ensure a safe and supportive home for all northerners.”*

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## Research Direction updates

### RD1: Supportive housing, programs and services

The Supportive Housing Programs and Services working group was delighted to get to work on Stage 2 of our Partnership project. Our plans for this coming year are to continue development of our northern supportive housing programs inventory tool. We plan to implement that tool in early 2021 to collect information on supportive housing programs and innovations across the North. Our goal is to better understand the ways that northerners have innovated supportive housing programs, as well as challenges experienced in the creation and administration of housing programs. We aim to provide opportunities for learning about innovation and challenge to improve our collective capacity to reduce homelessness and ensure a safe and supportive home for all northerners. The interests of this group also align closely with other partners in the Canadian Housing Research Network, and we will be working this year in particular with Community Housing Canada to share learnings on the supportive and community housing sectors. The group is also interested in better understanding the impacts that COVID-19 has had on supportive housing programs and services and has discussed opportunities for shared learnings on this issue. Finally, we were delighted to welcome postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Travis Hay at Lakehead University, who will be working closely with the group on these priorities throughout the year.

**RD1 Co-lead- Rebecca Schiff**

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Under the supervision of Dr. Rebecca Schiff, and under the mandate of At Home in the North Research Direction 1, Postdoctoral fellow Travis Hay and graduate assistants Clifford Mushquash and Chrystal Hardy are unmapping the transfer payments of the Indigenous Community Services Fund. Announced in August of 2019, these transfer payments are being used to fund a series of urban housing and supportive services for Indigenous peoples, many of them at the end of their operating agreements. This information will be arranged into a series of spreadsheets that offer an extensive but incomplete survey of supportive housing services for Indigenous peoples off-reserve.

Further, Drs. Schiff and Hay are in the process of drafting an article speaking to a particular transitional housing site in Thunder Bay that became a controversial subject of national interest in 2019. Previous publications or knowledge mobilization activities associated with this project can be found at the following links: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com> and <http://transitionalhousingfacts.ca>

**Travis Hay (Lakehead University)**

### RD2: Governance, self-determination and policy

The Governance, Self-Determination and Policy group is embarking on an inventory of community-led housing approaches from across northern Canada as well as other international locales that share contextual similarities with northern Canada (i.e. Alaska and Greenland) to better understand the particular actors engaging in community-led housing as well as the governance, policy and funding structures that have supported these approaches. We are interested in the opportunities and barriers of access to community-led housing initiatives, as well as specific groups within northern communities who are underserved by current community-led housing models. We are also pursuing the development of a contextually- and culturally-responsive tool for the community-led assessment of housing needs. Recent efforts by AHIN partners to develop such a tool independently mean that we will be able to learn from, and build on, these community-led efforts. The group is also working together to visualize through graphic design a typology of community-led housing models so that it is shareable and accessible across the Partnership and beyond.

**RD2 Co-lead- Julia Christensen**

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*“We will examine housing across the provincial and territorial north in Canada, looking for innovations beyond standardized, ubiquitously reproduced, suburban family-style homes which have been inappropriate for many of their climate, culture or geography.”*

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### **RD3: Housing, community design and the built environment**

The Housing, Community Design and the Built Environment group has met to reassess our goals and reflect on how to appropriately complete the work during the Weird Times™. We will examine housing across the provincial and territorial north in Canada, looking for innovations beyond standardized, ubiquitously reproduced, suburban family-style homes which have been inappropriate for many of their climate, culture or geography.

Similar to other groups, our work will focus on three strategies: Tools, Typologies and Definitions. In our context, Tools will focus on uncovering, synthesizing and mobilizing learnings in community-based design and distinct housing adaptations. A series of case studies will be compiled through interviews with community housing leaders recording their approach to innovations and culturally appropriate housing. Case studies will examine both final projects themselves and processes undertaken, including programs used and funding models in the case study contents. We will be completing the template for gathering the housing and community design innovations this fall and then will be seeking communities from across areas of the partnership to share their innovations in early 2021.

Typologies will synthesize the innovations from the case studies. From small-scale ‘hacks’ to complete designs, a database will be assembled demonstrating the diversity of northern design. Particular attention will be paid to ‘hacks’, the adaptations of existing structures which will be understood as the design voices of the communities they are found in. Hacks demonstrate an organic, community-based process which presents alternative place-based designs, acting as a guide for future housing. Each change to the standard home represents a specific need previously unmet, an inappropriate assumption or point of divergence between housing systems. Learning from these design failings and the solutions created will present an opportunity to reflect on the existing and powerful design created by- and for-northern Indigenous peoples. The Housing, Community Design and the Built Environment group looks to amplify the voices of northern *designers*, and demonstrate the need to expand the housing conversation to those occupants with distinct needs.

Thirdly, Definitions will be undertaken in future phases through a lexicon of culturally appropriate terminology across the north. Building on learnings from Tools and Typologies, this lexicon will represent both the unique needs of the north and the existing solutions being created.

**RD3 Co-lead- Shelagh McCartney**  
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### **RD4: Health synthesis stream**

Like many other groups within this partnership, the Health Synthesis Stream had to adjust original plans for Year 1, as social distancing has shifted the type of work we can complete over the coming months. Mylène and Michele, the co-leads of the Health Stream, met in May 2020 to discuss what the Health Synthesis Stream might focus on over the next year to begin answering the project objectives. We are currently finalizing a report detailing a sub-analysis of a CIHR-funded knowledge synthesis on housing and health. This report presents a review of the quantitative evidence connecting housing and health in Northern Canada, Alaska, and Greenland. We hope to begin a comparative analysis of housing and health policies in the coming weeks, using documents originally collected during the writing of the annotated bibliography last year.

**RD3 Co-leads- Mylène Riva and Michele Wood**  
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## A Brief Reflection on COVID-19 and Resilience

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*“Home is often described as our sanctuary where all of our most valuable possessions (children, Elders, loved ones) are housed, but sometimes an abuser lives there as well. This means that there is a heightened need for safety planning for women and children by frontline workers, communities and survivors of violence.”*

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**Fireweed on the Ingram Trail.**

In the spring of 2020, applications for Emergency Protection Orders in the Northwest Territories (NWT) increased with the spread of the pandemic virus and the necessity to physically isolate (personal communication, GNWT & YWCA, 2020). At the same time, use of territorial shelters was drastically reduced and shelter workers speculated that fear of the virus locally in the NWT was the reason (personal communication, Lyda Fuller, May, 2020). In addition, domestic violence researchers began to identify the conundrum of the negative consequences of health interventions correlated with actions to contain the virus (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020; Froimson et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2020). Domestic violence (intimate partner violence, family violence) intersects with social determinants of health including housing (Moffitt & Fikowski, 2017). Home is often described as our sanctuary where all of our most valuable possessions (children, Elders, loved ones) are housed, but sometimes an abuser lives there as well. This means that there is a heightened need for safety planning for women and children by frontline workers, communities and survivors of violence. In a recent camping trip on the Ingram Trail, I photographed an area of the bush that had undergone a forest fire and where there was a vibrant field of fireweed splendidly thriving. This photograph relates the resilience of the land to the resilience of survivors to step up to the emergency and make alternative plans to enhance their safety. As well, researchers and community partners are documenting and writing about the effects of COVID-19, which will enhance the territory's emergency planning efforts.

**Pertice Moffitt (Aurora Research Institute, Aurora College)**

## Northern Housing in a Pandemic Sub-projects

Congratulations to all recipients of At Home in the North's Pandemic Sub-project research fund. Below you will find project summaries describing the funded projects.

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*“Filling the Gap builds on a previously developed unit being piloted to address youth housing needs, to identify the material and infrastructure requirements to adapt the unit for emergency rapid deployment.”*

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### **Filling the Gap: Creating health equity for remote First Nations through rapid deployment housing units**

Filling the Gap looks to address the health equity gap for Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) First Nations during the COVID-19 pandemic through the development of appropriate infrastructure. NAN First Nations are nearly 6 times more likely than the rest of Canadians to live in crowded housing, preventing safe social distancing and isolation practices as set out by Health Canada and Public Health Ontario. Without places to properly socially distance or quarantine resulting from a lack of physical infrastructure available in First Nations, the susceptibility of outbreak is significantly higher and risk of transmission to those most vulnerable is increased. Filling the Gap builds on a previously developed unit being piloted to address youth housing needs, to identify the material and infrastructure requirements to adapt the unit for emergency rapid deployment. Learnings will be shared with member First Nations and Tribal Councils, creating a new option in emergency management of locally developed crisis housing. Fitting within At Home in the North's "Housing, Community Design and the Built Environment" subsection, this project is focused on the development of a specific infrastructure model that would address inequitable health outcomes for First Nations peoples in northern Ontario.

**Project team members:** Michael McKay (Nishnawbe Aski Nation), Ashley Atatise (Nishnawbe Aski Nation), Shelagh McCartney (Ryerson University), Jeffrey Herskovits (Ryerson University)

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*“Particular attention will be paid to assessing the level of culturally relevant safe programs, services and models for northern housing being offered. It will then focus on external pressures of the pandemic that have caused these services to change their focus.”*

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### **Housing and COVID-19 in Thompson**

There are limited shelters and supportive/transitional housing programs in northern Manitoba. Consequently, there is little known about the meaning of home and how services and housing programs are working across the housing continuum towards northern housing security in this regional context. For a long period of time, the City of Thompson has struggled in accommodating those with housing needs through initiatives focused on homeless emergency shelter, Housing First, and supportive transitional housing. Since these services began this work a number of issues have come forth to challenge their sustainability. One main challenge has been the COVID-19 pandemic.

This formative evaluation study intends to capture the transitional process that these services have gone through in the City of Thompson in the last year. It will begin with a review of their initial visions of health and wellness in relation to housing and home, and how that progressed pre-COVID-19. Particular attention will be paid to assessing the level of culturally relevant safe programs, services and models for northern housing being offered. It will then focus on external pressures of the pandemic that have caused these services to change their focus. Finally, it will glance into what the future might look like for culturally relevant housing security in northern Manitoba in terms of 2<sup>nd</sup> wave and/or post COVID-19.

To accomplish this task, a number of qualitative and quantitative research methods will be utilized. We hope to capture voices and ideas from across the community, including those of service providers and clients, to help build on a framework for promoting northern housing security across northern contexts. And, by bringing together partners across academia, government and advocacy, such a framework can lead to effectively bridging the gaps between research outcomes and impact on northern housing. These efforts can facilitate the translation and implementation of research into policy and practice.

**Project team members:** Colin Bonnycastle (University of Manitoba), Lee Anne Deegan (University of Manitoba), Marleny Bonnycastle (University of Manitoba), Judy Hughes (University of Manitoba), Giselle DeMeulles (Addictions Foundation Manitoba), Chris Bignell (Keewatin Tribal Council) and Kim Hicks (YWCA Thompson)

## News Items

### **Memorial University has launched the School of Arctic and Sub-Arctic Studies**

The school of Arctic and Sub-Arctic Studies is Memorial's first academic unit to be based at the Labrador campus in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Dr. Ashlee Cunsolo, Director of the Labrador Institute has been appointed as Interim Dean.

<https://gazette.mun.ca/campus-and-community/northern-sovereignty/>

### **'COVID-19 and Pandemic Planning in the Context of Rural and Remote Homelessness' has received SSHRC-PEG funding**

Congratulations Dr. Rebecca Schiff, Dr. Carol Kauppi, Dr. Jeannette Waegemakers Schiff, Dr. Julia Christensen and Dr. Kristy Buccieri on receiving a SSHRC Partner Engage Grant for their project entitled; 'COVID-19 and Pandemic Planning in the Context of Rural and Remote Homelessness'.

<https://athomeinthenorth.org/covid-19-and-pandemic-planning-in-the-context-of-rural-and-remote-homelessness-receives-a-sshrc-partner-engage-grant/>

### **The K'ásho Got'ı̄ne Housing Society has released their newsletter 'Year in Review-2020'**

The K'ásho Got'ı̄ne Housing Society has released their newsletter profiling the 'Indigenous Homes Innovation Initiative', developments towards a 'Maintenance Program Pilot', the 'Kádúyíle Transition Home' and their '5-year Strategic Plan' adopted over the last year. The K'ásho Got'ı̄ne Housing Society works to support responsible housing and address the housing needs of the residents of Rádeyılı̄ Kō, Northwest Territories.

[https://athomeinthenorth.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/KGHS-Year-in-Review-13\\_SEPT\\_2020-1.pdf](https://athomeinthenorth.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/KGHS-Year-in-Review-13_SEPT_2020-1.pdf)

### **At Home in the North launches an Online Knowledge Exchange**

At Home in the North has hired an Online Knowledge Exchange Coordinator, Miranda Monosky, to develop and launch our webinar series. The first webinar will take place on October 22, 2020 and will feature presentations from the recipients of the Pandemic Subproject funding, followed by a question and answer period. Connection details and an agenda will be circulated soon. The second webinar will be scheduled for November. If you are doing COVID-related housing research and would like to give a short presentation at our second webinar, please contact Miranda [mnmonosky@mun.ca](mailto:mnmonosky@mun.ca)

### **At Home in the North soon to launch a second call for Pandemic Subproject funding**

Stay tuned for a second call for Pandemic Subproject funding offered through AHIN. The call will be circulated by email soon.

### **The YWCA in Thompson receives additional funding to provide temporary shelter to individuals with elevated risk of the novel coronavirus in need of housing**

<https://www.thompsoncitizen.net/news/thompson/mko-provides-funding-to-help-ywca-continue-providing-shelter-for-25-vulnerable-homeless-people-1.24181475>

<https://www.thompsoncitizen.net/news/thompson/a-few-homeless-people-housed-at-the-ywca-have-moved-on-to-more-permanent-housing-mayor-says-1.24129552>

## The 'Living in Northern Québec' research partnership (SSHRC 2015-2021) has launched a series of vignettes profiling the home design research of its members

Check out the link below for a brief description, a link to their videos and a link to a short view profiling their new book 'Imaging: The North in 50 projects'.

[https://mailchi.mp/eff1140b7b50/vlogue-hlmg\\_lmq-vlog\\_2020-4849854?e=e7a00b44ea](https://mailchi.mp/eff1140b7b50/vlogue-hlmg_lmq-vlog_2020-4849854?e=e7a00b44ea)

## Publications

Christensen, Julia (2020) Call to Action, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 74:2, 173-175, DOI: 10.1080/10464883.2020.1790916

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10464883.2020.1790916>

Christensen, Julia (2020) COVID-19 has changed how we respond to northern homelessness, *Policy Options*, June 16, 2020.

<https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/june-2020/>

Christensen, Julia and A. Pugsley (2020) Thinking Outside the Crisis: Housing as Healthcare in the North, *The Independent*, May 29, 2020.

<https://theindependent.ca/2020/05/29/>

Christensen, Julia (2020) Housing is health: Coronavirus highlights the dangers of the housing crisis in Canada's North, *The Conversation*, April 16, 2020.

<https://theconversation.com/housing-is-health-coronavirus-highlights-the-dangers-of-the-housing-crisis-in-canadas-north-135594>

Hansen, Charlotte B.; C.V. Larsen; P. Bjerregaard and M. Riva (2020) The effect of housing crowding and composition on health in an Inuit cohort in Greenland, *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 1-10.

<https://athomeinthenorth.org/pubs/>

McCartney, Shelagh; J. Herskovits and L. Hintelmann. "Developing occupant-based understandings of crowding: a study of residential self-assessment in Eabametoong First Nation" in *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, (), 1-18. DOI 10.1007/s10901-020-09768-y

Perreault, Karine; M. Riva; P. Dufresne and C. Fletcher (2019) Overcrowding and sense of home in the Canadian Arctic, *Housing Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/02673037.2019.1602720

<https://athomeinthenorth.org/pubs/overcrowding-and-sense-of-home-in-the-canadian-arctic/>

Riva, Mylène; K. Perreault; P. Dufresne; C. Fletcher; G. Muckle; L. Potvin; R. Bailie and M. Baron (2020), Social housing construction and improvements in housing outcomes for Inuit in Northern Canada, *Housing Studies*

<https://athomeinthenorth.org/pubs/>

Riva, Mylène; C. Fletcher; P. Dufresne; K. Perreault; G. Muckle; L. Potvin and R.S. Bailie (2020) Relocating to a new or pre-existing social housing unit: significant health improvements for Inuit adults in Nunavik and Nunavut, *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 111: 21-30.

<https://athomeinthenorth.org/pubs/>

Schiff, Rebecca; K. Buccieri; J. Waegemakers Schiff; C. Kauppi and M. Riva. (forthcoming).

Pandemic planning in the context of rural and remote homelessness. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*.