



NAN HOUSING STRATEGY

Solutions Lab Summary

March 2021

National Housing Strategy Solutions Lab

In May 2019, NAN Housing and Infrastructure team and Together Design Lab at Ryerson University began working on "Developing Appropriate First Nations Housing Metrics: Nishnawbe Aski Nation" after receiving funding from the National Housing Strategy under NHS Solutions Labs.

The Solution Lab activities were designed to support the development of the larger NAN Housing Strategy. As part of the Solutions Lab, eight communities were visited including: Brunswick House First Nation, Fort Severn First Nation, Mattagami First Nation, Marten Falls First Nation, Kasabonika Lake First Nation, Cat Lake First Nation, Slate Falls Nation, and Lac Seul First Nation. In addition a one-and half day workshop was hosted in November 2019 with housing and health experts to explore issues with the current housing system and develop recommendations for further Strategy development.

The Local Labs hosted in community were a vital part of the Solution Lab which focuses on learning directly from community members about their unique experiences with housing. From the Local and Advisory Labs the NAN Housing Survey used issues and priorities identified by communities and workshop attendees to develop relevant metrics. The original Solution Lab goal was to complete surveying in 6-8 communities in summer 2020. However, with COVID-19 Lab activities had to be reconsidered.

Reviewing 2020

In early 2020, the team was finishing the development of the NAN Housing Survey and hosted housing workshops at the NAN Women's Gathering and the NAN Youth Gathering. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic paused summer planning for an additional 6-8 community visits and in-person surveying. As the pandemic continued, Lab activities were reviewed to accommodate the new reality of social distancing and lockdowns.

Developing the NAN Housing Strategy

The Nishnawbe Aski Nation Housing Strategy will fulfill the right of access to adequate housing and end the collective housing emergency in NAN territory. NAN and Together Design Lab have partnered with NAN First Nations for a 3 year project to:

1. Work at the community and regional level to develop housing solutions and action plans that recognize the unique needs, geographies and cultures of NAN First Nations.
2. Create community-led approaches to data collection and problem identification.
3. Support NAN First Nations' right to self-determination to their housing systems.
4. Encourage flexibility and creation of design solutions rooted in local lived experience.

In early 2020, the team was finishing the development of the NAN Housing Survey and hosted housing workshops at the NAN Women's Gathering and the NAN Youth Gathering. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic paused summer planning for an additional 6-8 community visits and in-person surveying. As the pandemic continued, Lab activities were reviewed to accommodate the new reality of social distancing and lockdowns.

To keep the Solution Lab moving forward, a pilot for long distance surveying was developed. A Facilitator's Guide was created to help train local surveyors who could safely complete community surveys. Currently, two communities are still surveying while following local COVID-19 protocols.

The team identified two projects to pursue based on learnings from the previously-held Local and Advisory Labs. The first project sought to build integrated models for estimating immediate housing and infrastructure need using existing data at the NAN level. Estimates were developed using data sources and look to scale of the ongoing housing emergency and its interrelationship with infrastructure and community development planning processes.

The estimates—which are based on target household densities—demonstrate the significant number of new houses and replacement units needed to appropriately house all NAN members. Models demonstrate that 33% of housing in NAN territory is in need of replacement, based on a 30-year housing life span, representing a significant portion of the ongoing housing emergency. Further, through its examination of capital and linear infrastructure; the model demonstrates the need for an integrated approach to planning to address current need.

The second project reviewed the current NAN Housing Procurement Project Management Toolkit (NAN HPPMT) in light of Local and Advisory Lab learnings. The review identified several ways the guide can be updated to better meet the needs of NAN First Nations. Recommendations included developing material guidelines and standards, provide example contracts or contract components to support procurement goals and advocate for policy changes which will support First Nations control of procurement.

Road Map

In reviewing the last two years of Solutions Lab research and activities a final Road Map was outlined to guide future NAN Housing Strategy work. The Road Map highlights 5 main themes:

Engagement prototype process/housing data

The pilot of the NAN Housing Needs Assessment Tool will continue. When the pilot has been completed, the survey and facilitator guide will be reviewed and revised to reflect community-level learnings. The tool itself will also be revised and will be made available to NAN First Nations who wish to control data collection processes.

Housing for those in greatest need

Housing for youth and young adults, supportive & long-term housing and emergency housing were identified as missing from many NAN communities. Developing a NAN Housing Continuum will help to identify current gaps and provide a guide to meeting those in greatest housing need.

On-reserve housing programs and policies

Current housing policies, programs and funding mechanisms will be reviewed to support the development of local housing systems including updating the NAN HPPMT.

Integrated housing and infrastructure planning

Local Labs emphasized the need to develop strategies that integrate hard and soft infrastructure and higher environmental standards into long-term planning. Training and skills development Supporting local housing systems includes promoting pathways into housing related careers from trades to design to project management as well as supporting peer mentorship.

Lab activities have provided a foundation of knowledge that will support the further development and implementation of NAN-specific strategies that promote local control over housing. In particular, the focus on local control of housing data and metrics has provided unique, place-based understandings of the housing emergency that will contribute to the development of the necessary, required solutions.

CONTACT US

Michael McKay

Infrastructure & Housing Director
Nishnawbe Aski Nation
mmckay@nan.on.ca | (807) 623-8228

Shelagh McCartney

Assistant Professor & Director, Together Design Lab at
Ryerson University | hello@togetherdesignlab.com
(416) 979-5000 ext. 2133