



**MEETING SD 50-20-25**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2025  
DET'ANCHOGH KÙÉ - EAGLE ROOM  
1030 AM**

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**AGENDA**

1. Call to Order
2. Prayer
3. Review and Adoption of Agenda
4. Declarations of Conflict of Interest
5. Public matters
  - a) Public Briefing on Housing as a Human Right with Dr. Julia Christensen, Queen's University
6. In Camera Matters
  - a) Debrief
  - b) Confidential correspondence
    - i. 2025-01-15 Honourable Minister HSS
    - ii. 2025-01-16 Honourable Minister HSS
    - iii. 2025-01-16 Honourable Minister ECE
  - c) Workplan
7. New Business
  - a)
8. Date and Time of Next Meetings:
  - a) February 6, 2025 at 7PM
9. Adjournment

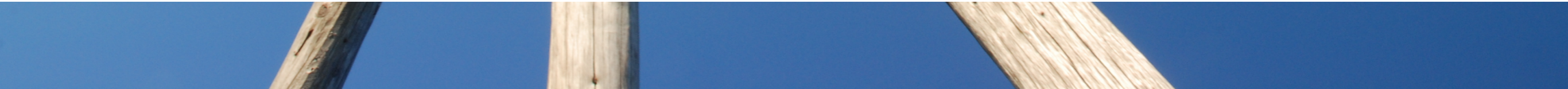


# HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT IN THE NWT:

## PRESENTATION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



*Dr. Julia Christensen  
Associate Professor, Geography and Planning  
Director, At Home in the North  
Queen's University*





# No Home in a Homeland

Indigenous Peoples and Homelessness  
in the Canadian North



Julia Christensen

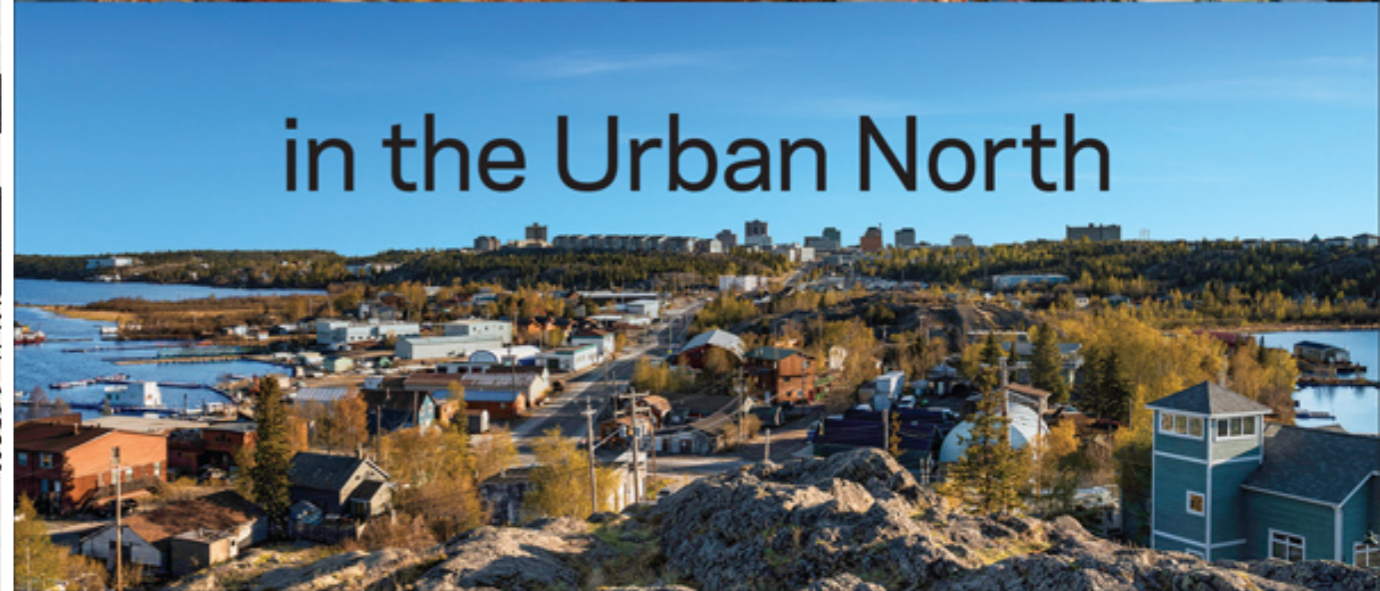
Housing, Homelessness,



and Social Policy



in the Urban North



EDITED BY JULIA CHRISTENSEN, SALLY CARRAHER,  
TRAVIS HEDWIG, AND STEVEN ARNFJORD



# IMMIGRATION, HOUSING, AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEFICITS IN THE URBAN NORTH:

SITUATING NORTHERN IMMIGRATION POLICY  
AND EQUITABLE PROSPERITY WITHIN A  
CONTEXT OF CHRONIC HOUSING NEED

**Yolande Pottie-Sherman and Julia Christensen**

Preliminary publication (December 4, 2024)



THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY  
PUBLICATIONS

SPP Research Paper

VOLUME 16:25 | AUGUST 2023

CANADIAN NORTHERN CORRIDOR SPECIAL SERIES

## IMPLICATIONS OF A NORTHERN CORRIDOR ON SOFT INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE NORTH AND NEAR NORTH

Julia Christensen

<http://dx.doi.org/DOI 10.11575/sppp.v16i1.75178>



A Home for All Northerners:  
Towards a Northern Housing  
Ecosystem Approach

# AT HOME IN THE NORTH

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- Project Director
- Pan-northern research partnership bringing together Indigenous and public governments, NGOs and other community initiatives from across the North working to alleviate the northern housing crisis
- Funded by CMHC as part of the National Housing Strategy and its Collaborative Housing Research Network
- <https://athomeinthenorth.org/>



# HOUSING IN THE NWT

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- Relatively recent introduction of housing programs in the territory designed to bring northerners into the wage economy and administer social welfare and health programming
- Policy indecision and culturally and contextually inappropriate design and administration characterized the early decades of housing provision



# HOUSING IN THE NWT

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- Rates of Core Housing Need are among the highest in Canada, with significant regional variation
- Role of government in the provision of affordable housing is unique to the territories—in particular the NWT and Nunavut
- 29 out of 33 communities considered non-market





# HOUSING IN THE NWT

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- Housing needs vary across the lifespan, with housing playing a critical role in the health, safety and wellbeing of all northerners, including children and families, survivors of intimate partner violence, youth, students and Elders.
- Yet demographics in the territory are changing, with an increasing number of newcomers to the territory also experiencing unique housing needs.



## A Strategy for Renewal of the **Northwest Territories Housing Corporation**

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Purpose

People

Programs

Partnerships

October 2021

# HOUSING IN THE NWT

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- In its Strategic Renewal, Housing NWT (formerly the NWT Housing Corporation) recognized its responsibility to “promote reconciliation, recognizing that choices about housing location and type have been a tool of colonization in the NWT in the past.”

# A Strategy for Renewal of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation

Purpose

People

Programs

Partnerships

October 2021

## HOUSING IN THE NWT

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- Commitment of Housing NWT to facilitating Indigenous self-government of housing included a specific call to “advance self-government, even where Indigenous governments have not yet chosen to exercise their law-making powers under a self-government agreement.”



## Full Length Article

## “Home has always been at the heart of our self-government”: Housing, home and Indigenous self-determination in Fort Good Hope, Canada

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<sup>c</sup> K'ásho Go'ine Housing Society, PO Box 68, Fort Good Hope, NT, XOE OHO, Canada

## A B S T R A C T

The colonial geographies of northern and Indigenous housing have long been the focus of research attention, particularly the transformative and destructive role the assimilative power of social welfare has played in State interventions into Indigenous lives at the bodily, familial, community and national scales. Recent literature in the areas of northern and Indigenous housing has underscored the need for increased community self-determination over housing in order to uproot structures of colonial domination and attend to specific cultural and contextual realities, visions and needs—necessary for the sustainable alleviation of a longstanding “housing crisis” in northern Canada. This paper examines differing discourses of Indigenous self-determination through recent efforts by the K'ásho Go'ine Housing Society (KGHS) – an Indigenous community housing organization – and the territorial and federal governments to promote Indigenous self-governance of housing. Drawing on critical analyses of self-determination led by Indigenous scholars, and engaging a series of qualitative interviews with Indigenous and settler policymakers and housing administrators at the community, territorial and federal levels, we examine how differing Indigenous and settler conceptualizations of the self-determination of housing are evident in critical barriers presented by the governance of land and the “compartmentalization” of home. Ultimately, we argue that full self-determination of Indigenous home through housing is fundamentally impeded by current housing governance processes, though the multiscale nature of Indigenous home simultaneously challenges the capitalist, settler-colonial structures holding up these processes, and also cultivates the everyday, placed-based resistance of the individual, family and community by creating space to imagine housing through Indigenous epistemologies.

## 1. Introduction

*“Our Dene sense of home has always been at the heart of our self-government. We have always been clear that housing and home are at the center of everything for our communities.”* - Edwin Erutse, President of the Yamoga Land Corporation, the governing body for all Sahtu Dene

In 2016, the K'ásho Go'ine Housing Society was incorporated in the community of Fort Good Hope, Northwest Territories, Canada to address persistent housing need in the community. Using funds acquired through the Sahtu Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (SDMCLCA), the Society was to work with Fort Good Hope's Chief and Council to build consensus around community housing objectives and strategic planning. This development was part of a long trajectory of community resistance to colonial housing policy, and the welfare colonialism introduced by the settler State in northern, Indigenous communities in Canada since the mid-20th century. Deliberate efforts on the part of the State to undermine Indigenous home through housing policy, as well as specific policies directed at the disintegration of Indigenous families and cultural modes of knowledge transmission (for example,

residential schools and the child welfare system), have rendered home a particularly profound site of settler colonial intervention in the lives of Indigenous peoples (Christensen, 2017; De Leeuw, 2016). Home in this context captures values, feelings, and the relations of homemaking that support wellbeing, extending beyond the physical infrastructure and material space of a dwelling to which housing refers. It is no surprise, then, that the self-determination of Dene homemaking and housing delivery has been central to the visions of self-government offered by Sahtu Dene leaders for decades, as home and its nuanced meanings across scales is seen as the defining nexus point for the intersection of all components of Dene life.

The need for Indigenous self-determination of housing as a critical and sustainable response to persistent, systemic failures in northern housing delivery has been repeatedly highlighted by Indigenous leaders and housing advocates. Refusal to continue waiting for meaningful response from settler State governments – at the territorial/provincial level where issues such as housing are governed locally through specified programming, and the federal level where the higher State power over housing is held and exercised through national policies and funding – has led to the development and implementation of community housing

“Our Dene sense of home has always been at the heart of our self-government. We have always been clear that housing and home are at the centre of everything for our communities.”

- Edwin Erutse,  
President of the Yamoga  
Land Corporation

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# UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



United Nations

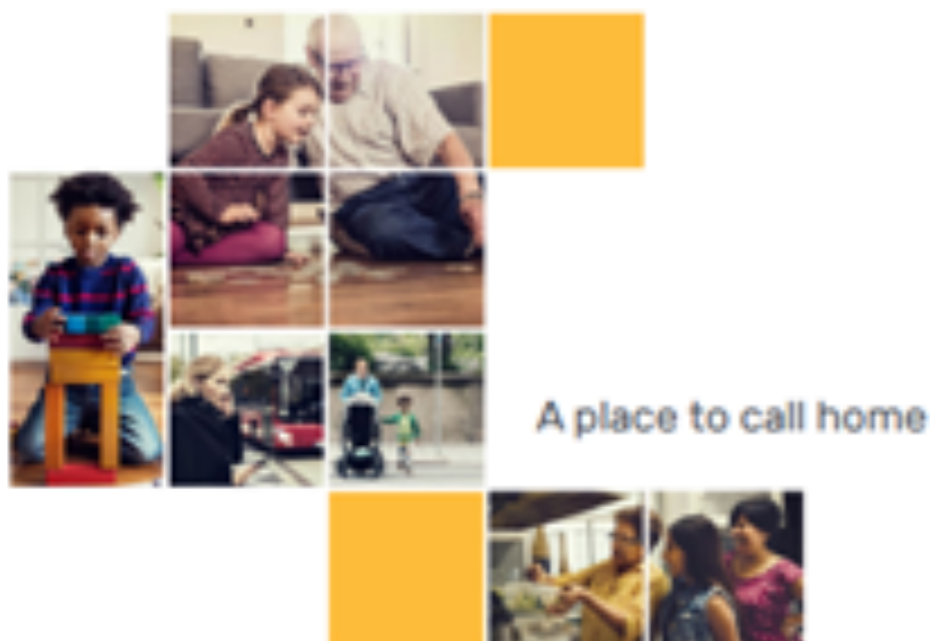
## HOUSING AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

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- Bill 85: The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act
- Focus on the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples to Land, Sovereignty, Dignity and Self-Determination
- To recognize housing as a human right in the context of the NWT would mean recognizing the inextricability of housing from the other core elements of Indigenous home



## Canada's National Housing Strategy



# HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT

- Canada's 2017 National Housing Strategy/A Place to Call Home
- 2019 National Housing Strategy Act (S.C. 2019, c. 29, s. 313): "recognize(s) that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right affirmed in international law" and that "housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities."

## CRITICAL RESOURCES: IMPLEMENTING HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT IN THE NWT

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1. Incredible **community knowledge, innovation and capacity** built from generations of self-determination
2. Diverse array of Indigenous and NGO community-led housing initiatives that are **responsive to the cultural and contextual needs** of northern communities
3. Housing NWT with strong leadership and a desire to **promote homemaking for all northerners**
4. **Strong leadership and vision** from Indigenous governments

# CORE CHALLENGES: IMPLEMENTING HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT IN THE NWT

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1. Lack of adequate, sustainable funding
2. **Siloed housing governance: housing as home**
3. Federal approaches to northern and Indigenous housing, including the **Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy**
4. Housing across the **lifespan**
5. **Homelessness on the rise**
6. **Climate change** sensitivity of the northern housing system
7. Market-based housing system in a **largely non-market context: privileging the CMHC's Housing Continuum**



## Introduction

The governance of housing in northern Canada – through policies, budgets, and standardized regulations – repeatedly fails to recognize the North’s unique, place-based housing needs and social, cultural and economic contexts that have been shaped by colonial state relationships. This failure shapes a housing landscape that is characterized by insecurity, unaffordability, inconsistency, and inadequacy.

This decontextualized approach to northern housing governance is driven in large part by a one-size-fits-all housing continuum model that frames federal housing policy. Utilized across Canada, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) housing continuum (Figure 1) displays the housing options that are or should be available to people at all income levels and life circumstances and illustrates an ideal progression through the continuum towards the end goal of market home ownership. To that end, the continuum shapes housing dialogues, governance, and experiences in Canada, with much of what it means to be successful in housing connected to the provision of housing along the continuum and a person’s progress along it.



### THE HOUSING CONTINUUM



Figure 1. CMHC Housing Continuum (CMHC, 2018)

Yet the CMHC housing continuum fails to reflect the real landscapes, options, and end goals of housing in northern Canada, particularly in Indigenous and non-market communities outside of central hubs such as Yellowknife, NWT and other service centers in the territorial and provincial Norths. A significant flaw of the CMHC continuum is that it fails to consider the other

## Reframing Indigenous housing policy in northern Canada

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<sup>d</sup>University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

### ABSTRACT

This review offers a critical discussion of the contemporary housing policy framework in northern Canada. The severity of housing need among Indigenous households in northern Canada has led to a 'crisis' framing that dominates northern policy discourse, shapes northern housing policy and programs, and ultimately undermines efforts to provide meaningful, evidenced and northern-driven housing policy. We focus our attention on two critical elements of contemporary northern housing policy: 1) the linear 'housing continuum' model and metrics used to measure housing need according to national standards; and 2) sporadic, crisis-driven funding for northern housing. Each of these policy tools have significant implications for the ways in which northern housing policy is developed and implemented across the homelands of northern and Indigenous peoples in Canada, and none are responsive to or reflective of northern housing needs and realities. We call instead for a reframing of northern Indigenous housing policy towards conceptualising housing as 'home' by centring individual and community wellness and Indigenous self-determination through housing. This discussion contributes to our understanding of appropriate approaches to the development of housing policy among Indigenous communities and among other communities experiencing disproportionate levels of housing need.

**KEYWORDS:** Housing policy; northern Canada; Arctic; Indigenous; self-determination; crisis

# AT HOME in THE NORTH

Yellowknife  
Denendeh  
May 1 2024



WHAT HOME MEANS TO YOU

Where my FAMILY is

How the LAND Shaped peoples movement

HOUSING IS HEALTH

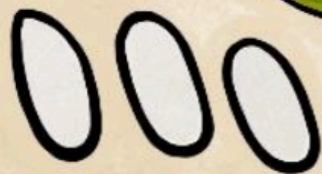


MATERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

COMMUNITY SAFETY

TO BE A HOME IS TO BE HEALTHY

HONORING LAND



Culture, LAND WAYS of LIFE

HOME is A PLACE TO TRANSFER KNOWLEDGE



PLACES of CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE IS HOME

Education



Community Strength and Development

HOUSING IN the NORTH looks different

HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT

HOUSING & HEALTH TO BE APART OF ALL POLICIES

policies made in the North for the NORTH

Health & Wellbeing



Sense of Community  
Mental health security  
Cultural Space in HOMES

Healthy Homes

AIR QUALITY



Children & Family Across the Life Course

multi-generational DEBTS  
LACK OF FUNDING  
systemic - cyclical - inter connected



Effects all stages of Life

PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCES MAKING DECISIONS  
Collaboration & flexibility

Dignity

Governance and Self-Determination



RECLAIM REIMAGINE agency & control

STRENGTH IN COMMUNITY

HOUSING FIRST

MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE

Inuit asking Inuit How they would Design their Communities

INDIGENOUS LIVED EXPERIENCES

How DO WE DESIGN COMMUNITY



INUIT CONSTRUCT supporting the WHOLE PERSON in ALL Aspects

@melaw\_nakehko

Figure 5. The relationships that make housing important in the North (by Melaw Nakehko, graphic facilitator during At Home in the North knowledge gathering May 1st-3rd).

Yellowknife  
Denendeh  
May 2-2024

# AT HOME in THE NORTH

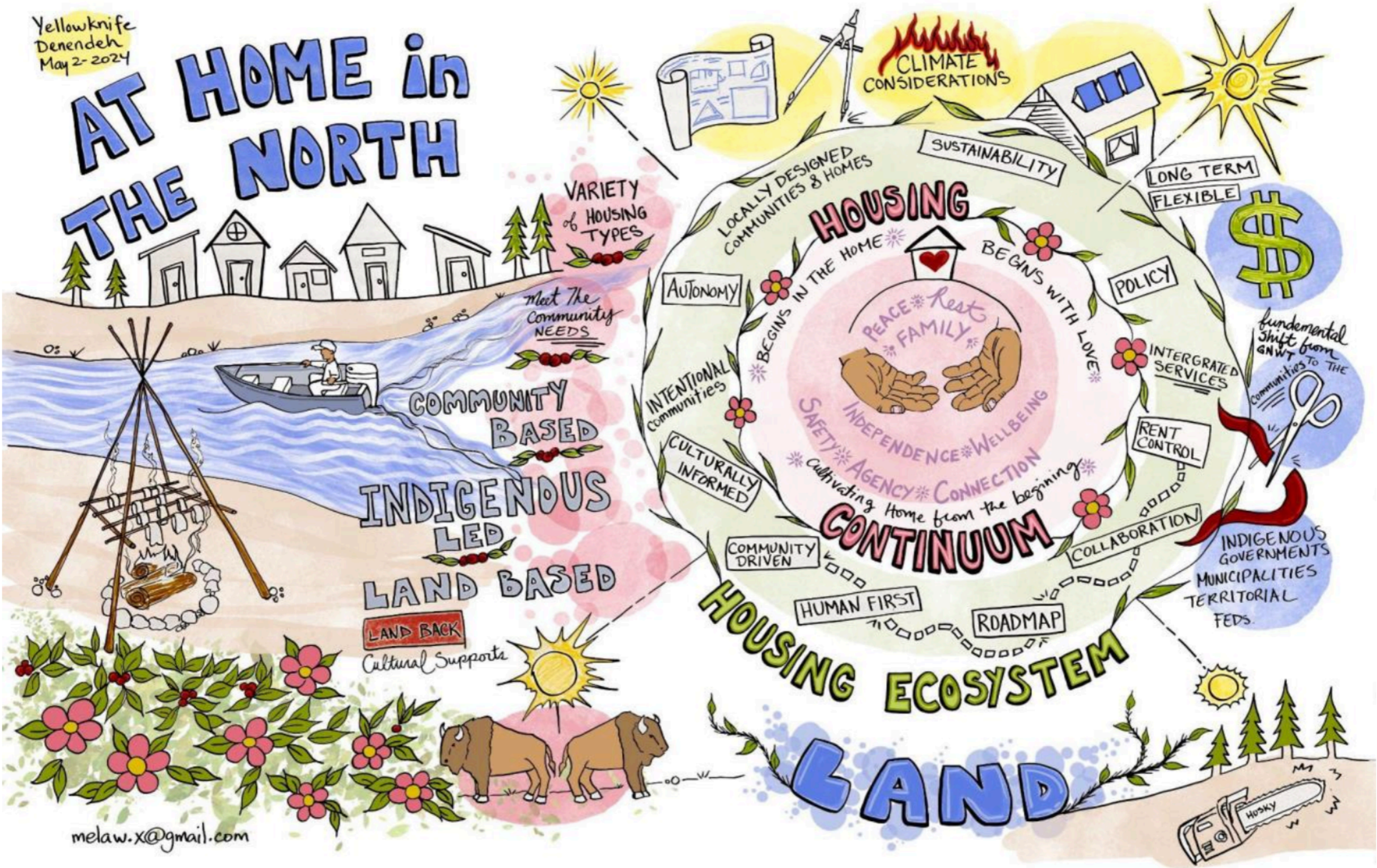


Figure 5. A northern housing ecosystem (by Melaw Nakehk'o, graphic facilitator during At Home in the North knowledge gathering May 1st-3rd).

# REQUIREMENTS: IMPLEMENTING HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT IN THE NWT

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1. **Indigenized approach** to housing governance for all northerners
2. **Home as a human right:** understanding that home underpins the health, wellbeing, sustainability and autonomy of all northerners and at all scales
3. Inter-community, **territorial geography** of housing and home
4. Promotion of **NWT housing as an ecosystem:** collaborative, intergovernmental/interagency support of homes for all northerners
5. Promotion of **sustainability across the ecosystem:** funding, policy, governance
6. Culturally- and contextually-appropriate **alternatives to a market-based approach:** a sense of home ownership for all



**MAHSI CHO / QUYANAINNI  
MARRSÎ / THANK YOU / MERCI**