



Indigenous-led Housing Needs Assessment Tool

Glossary of Terms

Prepared by the Aboriginal Housing Management Association in partnership with the Housing Assessment Resource Tools project at the University of British Columbia.

This glossary explains key terms used in the Indigenous-led Housing Needs Assessment Tool including official statistical definitions, IHNAT operational definitions, and Indigenous specific definitions. Many definitions describe official statistical measures used by Statistics Canada, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, BC Stats, or provincial ministries. These measures allow comparisons across communities but do not fully represent Indigenous experiences, relationships, rights, or understandings of home. Other definitions reflect AHMA's interpretation of housing need and the importance of Indigenous rights, governance, cultural safety, community knowledge, and Indigenous-led solutions.

A

Acceptable housing

A technical housing measure used by Statistics Canada and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Housing is considered acceptable when it meets all three of the following standards:

- **Adequacy:** The dwelling does not require major repairs.
- **Suitability:** The dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of the household, according to the National Occupancy Standard.
- **Affordability:** The household spends less than 30% of its before-tax income on shelter costs.

While the Statistics Canada and CMHC definition of acceptable housing measures whether housing is adequate, suitable, and affordable, it does not fully reflect Indigenous understandings of housing and home. From an Indigenous perspective, housing is more than a physical dwelling; it is connected to culture, identity, family, kinship, community, safety, and overall well-being. Housing may meet technical standards yet still be inappropriate if it is culturally unsafe, disconnected from community and support networks, inaccessible, insecure, or unable to accommodate Indigenous family structures and cultural practices. A more holistic Indigenous approach recognizes that housing should support not only physical shelter, but also belonging, self-determination, cultural continuity, and the social, emotional, mental, and spiritual wellness of individuals, families, and communities.

Accessibility

IHNAT refers to accessibility in a few ways:

1. The extent to which housing, services, spaces, and information can be used safely and independently by people with diverse physical, sensory, cognitive, communication, and other access needs. Housing accessibility can be supported through features such as step-free entrances, wider doorways, accessible washrooms, adaptable kitchens, appropriate lighting, visual or audible alarms, and sufficient space for mobility devices. Accessibility also includes whether services, information, and community spaces can be reached and used without barriers.



2. Accessibility also refers to the extent to which housing, services, spaces, information, and community supports can be safely, meaningfully, and equitably accessed by all Indigenous people, including vulnerable populations. From an Indigenous perspective, accessibility must come from an intersectional lens and extend beyond physical design and includes cultural safety, freedom from discrimination, access to family and kinship networks, proximity to community supports and cultural resources, transportation, affordability, and opportunities to participate fully in community life. Accessible housing supports diverse abilities, family structures, cultural practices, and life circumstances while promoting belonging, inclusion, self-determination, and overall well-being.

Administrative data

Information collected through the operation of government programs, services, or systems, such as child welfare, corrections, healthcare, or income assistance. Administrative data can show patterns in how people interact with systems, but it does not necessarily show the full extent of community need. People who do not access a service, are excluded from a program, or are not accurately identified in a dataset may not be represented.

From an Indigenous perspective, administrative data should be interpreted with caution. Much of the data collected about Indigenous Peoples has historically been generated through colonial systems and may perpetuate deficit-based narratives, obscure systemic causes of inequity, or reinforce harmful assumptions. Administrative data should therefore be complemented (where possible) by Indigenous-led data governance, Indigenous knowledge systems (only when granted permission by the knowledge keeper), lived experience, and culturally safe and trauma informed approaches to evaluation that support Indigenous self-determination, data sovereignty, and community well-being.

Adequate housing/Adequacy

A technical measure of whether a dwelling requires major repairs. Housing is considered adequate under the Census and core housing need framework when residents report that it does not require major repairs. Major repairs include defective plumbing or electrical wiring, or structural repairs to walls, floors, or ceilings.

This measure does not determine whether the housing is culturally adequate, accessible, safe from discrimination, or appropriate to the household's wider needs.

Affordable housing/affordability

In the Canadian housing datasets used in IHNAT, housing is considered affordable when all total shelter costs (e.g., rent, utilities, property taxes) are less than 30% of before-tax household income. This is a technical measure that allows comparison across households and communities. Affordable housing can include rental, ownership, cooperative, non-profit, public, supportive, and other forms of housing. Broader housing affordability also depends on income adequacy, household size, debt, transportation, food, childcare, healthcare, accessibility, utilities, and other essential expenses.

Based on AHMA's Cultural Safety Framework, housing affordability is linked to the ability to access long-term stability, belonging, and a good life. Affordable housing allows individuals, families, and communities to thrive without sacrificing their well-being, cultural identity, community connections, or ability to meet basic needs.

Affordable housing deficit



An estimate of the gap between the affordable housing available in a community and the amount and type of housing required by households at different income levels, household sizes, and life circumstances.

IHNAT's affordable housing deficit should be interpreted as a minimum estimate. Indigenous housing need may be understated because of Census undercounting, data suppression, hidden homelessness, suppressed household formation, overcrowding, frequent mobility, and housing needs that are not captured by standard affordability measures.

The full deficit may also be underestimated from an intersectional and gendered lens, especially among populations that are often absent, underrepresented, or difficult to identify in conventional housing datasets, including:

- People experiencing hidden homelessness or couch surfing.
- Individuals transitioning from child welfare systems, including youth aging out of care.
- Individuals transitioning from corrections, treatment, healthcare, or other institutional settings.
- People fleeing violence or unsafe living situations.
- People who remain in inadequate housing because no suitable alternatives are available.
- Individuals disconnected from their home communities, family, kinship networks, or cultural supports due to housing shortages.
- People who would form independent households if appropriate and affordable housing were available.

Aging out of care

The transition that occurs when a young person reaches the age at which they are no longer eligible for certain child welfare placements or services. Young people transitioning from care may face increased housing instability where adequate housing, income, family, cultural, and community supports are not available.

Indigenous youth leaving care may experience changes in housing, income, overcoming trauma and abandonment, community connections, and support networks. Culturally safe and trauma informed transition to and access to stable housing, trusted relationships, cultural connection, education, employment opportunities, and ongoing supports can contribute to positive transitions and reduce the risk of housing instability or homelessness.

Area Median Household Income (AMHI)

The median income of all households within a defined geographic area. Half of households have incomes above the median and half have incomes below it. IHNAT uses Area Median Household Income to organize households into income categories. Because each geographic area has a different median income, the income ranges for these categories can vary between communities, census divisions, provinces, and other geographic levels. AMHI is built around a standardized monetary and household framework that may not adequately capture diverse Indigenous household structures and housing contexts.

B

Before-tax Household Income (Gross Income)

All income received before taxes and other deductions or credits. The total income received by all members of a household before income taxes are deducted. IHNAT compares before-tax household income with shelter costs when presenting housing affordability measures.



C

Census Division (CD)

A national survey conducted by Statistics Canada every five years to collect information about people, households, housing, income, identity, and other characteristics.

Census data provides an important source of comparable information, but it does not fully capture Indigenous realities. Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, frequent mobility, insecure housing, distrust of government data collection, or living in communities that were incompletely enumerated may be underrepresented.

Census Division (CD)

A geographic area created through provincial or territorial law or used by Statistics Canada as an equivalent statistical area.

In British Columbia, census divisions generally correspond to regional districts. Census divisions are larger than census subdivisions and smaller than the province.

These statistical boundaries do not represent Indigenous territories, governance, or jurisdiction.

Census Family

A Statistics Canada classification that includes:

- a married or common-law couple, with or without children;
- a one-parent family with at least one child living in the same dwelling; or
- grandparents living with grandchildren where no parent is present.

Members of a census family live in the same dwelling. A household can include one census family, multiple census families, people who are not part of a census family, or a person living alone. Children may be biological or adopted children, regardless of their age or marital status as long as they live in the dwelling and do not have their own married spouse, common-law partner or child living in the dwelling.

Census Sub-division (CSD)

A municipality or an area treated as the statistical equivalent of a municipality by Statistics Canada. Census subdivisions can include cities, towns, villages, reserves, treaty settlement lands, regional district electoral areas, and unorganized territories.

Census subdivisions are colonial administrative and statistical boundaries. They do not represent Indigenous territories, legal orders, governance, or jurisdiction.

Census Tract

A geographic region defined for the purpose of taking a census. Sometimes these coincide with the limits of cities, towns or other administrative areas and several tracts commonly exist within a region.

Child welfare system



The laws, agencies, services, and institutions responsible for responding to concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children and youth.

For Indigenous people, the child welfare system cannot be understood separately from the history of residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and ongoing colonial policies that remove children from their families, communities, and cultures. Indigenous children and youth continue to be disproportionately represented in child welfare systems due to the lasting impacts of colonization, systemic racism, poverty, housing insecurity, and barriers to culturally appropriate family and community supports.

Colonial geographic boundaries

Boundaries created by colonial governments for administrative, legal, property, or statistical purposes, such as municipalities, regional districts, census subdivisions, and provincial borders.

These boundaries may divide or overlap Indigenous territories and do not define Indigenous title, jurisdiction, governance, or relationships to land and water. Data, planning, service delivery, and housing assessments often rely on these boundaries even though they may not reflect Indigenous realities.

Indigenous Nations predate municipalities, provinces, and Canada. Colonial boundaries fragmented Nations, families, governance systems, harvesting areas, and cultural relationships. Many Indigenous Peoples maintain connections across multiple colonial jurisdictions.

Colonization

Colonization refers to the processes through which Indigenous lands were invaded, occupied, and governed without consent, including settlement, resource extraction, and forced assimilation.

In Canada, colonization has included land dispossession, the reserve system, residential schools, child apprehension, restrictions on culture and ceremony, exclusion from housing and services, and attempts to replace Indigenous legal and governance systems. Colonization continues through present-day laws, institutions, policies, funding arrangements, land and resource decision-making, and systemic discrimination.

Core Housing Need

A household is considered to be in core housing need when:

1. its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability, or affordability standards; and
2. the household would have to spend 30% or more of its before-tax income to obtain alternative housing in the local market that meets all three standards.

Core housing need is a technical measure. It does not include everyone experiencing homelessness or living in collective dwellings, and it does not assess cultural safety, accessibility, discrimination, security of tenure, connection to community, or various forms of overcrowding and hidden homelessness.

Cultural adequacy

The extent to which housing supports the cultural identities, values, relationships, practices, and ways of life of the people who live there.

For Indigenous people, culturally adequate housing may support:

- family, kinship, and community relationships;
- ceremony, language, and cultural practices;



- connection to land, water, food, and community;
- gathering, caregiving, and multigenerational living;
- safety from racism and discrimination;
- appropriate relationships with Elders, youth, and extended family;
- Indigenous governance, ownership, and service delivery; and
- the ability of Indigenous residents and communities to determine what adequate housing means for them.

Culturally appropriate housing

Housing that reflects and supports the cultural identities, relationships, needs, and priorities of the people and communities it is intended to serve. What is culturally appropriate should be determined with Indigenous residents, Nations, and communities rather than assumed by an outside organization.

Culturally grounded housing

Housing that is designed, governed, operated, or supported through Indigenous values, knowledge, relationships, and community priorities.

Culturally grounded housing goes beyond adding cultural elements to a mainstream housing model. It may involve Indigenous ownership or governance, relationships with local Nations, cultural programming, community-based supports, and approaches to housing based on care, belonging, kinship, and collective wellbeing.

Cultural safety

Cultural safety is an outcome determined by the person receiving a service, not by the organization providing it. A culturally safe housing or service environment recognizes and works to address colonialism, racism, discrimination, and unequal power; respects Indigenous identities, rights, cultures, and ways of knowing; and enables Indigenous people to access housing and services without having their identity diminished, challenged, or harmed. Cultural safety requires accountability and is more than cultural awareness, sensitivity, or competency.

Custody centre release

A recorded release from a provincial custody centre.

Depending on the dataset, release data may represent release events rather than unique individuals. A person released more than once during the reporting period may therefore appear more than once. Release data also does not indicate whether a person had safe or stable housing upon release.

D

Data suppression

The removal or withholding of information from a public dataset to protect confidentiality or because the data does not meet quality or reliability requirements.



Statistics Canada and other data providers may suppress values where the number of observations is small, where disclosure could identify an individual, or where the data is considered unreliable. As a result, a blank or missing value does not necessarily mean that no people or households are present.

Suppression can disproportionately affect smaller Indigenous populations and communities and can make housing need appear lower than it is.

Distinctions-based

An approach that recognizes the distinct identities, rights, histories, governments, legal orders, and circumstances of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

A distinctions-based approach does not treat Indigenous peoples as one homogeneous population. It also recognizes diversity among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities and governments, and supports the development of policies, programs, services, and data that reflect these distinctions.

In IHNAT, distinctions-based data is presented separately for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples whenever possible and appropriate. This approach supports a more accurate understanding of experiences and outcomes while respecting Indigenous data sovereignty, privacy, and cultural safety.

Dwelling

A set of living quarters where a person or group of people resides.

Statistics Canada distinguishes between private dwellings, such as houses and apartments, and collective dwellings, such as shelters, care facilities, correctional institutions, hotels, and some forms of congregate accommodation. Many Census housing indicators apply only to private households living in private dwellings.

E

Elder

A person recognized by an Indigenous family, community, or Nation as holding cultural knowledge, wisdom, teachings, language, leadership, or other responsibilities.

Elder is a culturally and community-recognized role and is not simply another term for an older adult or senior. Not every older Indigenous person identifies as or is recognized as an Elder, and Elders may not necessarily be above a particular age.

Eviction

A legal process that enables a landlord to seek an order to end a lease agreement or occupancy agreement with a tenant. Every province and territory has different rules around evictions, but in Canada there must be a valid reason for the eviction, a right to a fair hearing, and sufficient notice of the proposed action.

For Indigenous people, eviction may have broader impacts on cultural, family, and community connections and can contribute to housing insecurity and homelessness.

Extreme core housing need



A more severe form of core housing need. A household is generally considered to be in extreme core housing need when its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability, or affordability standards and it would have to spend 50% or more of its before-tax income to obtain alternative local housing that meets all three standards.

Like core housing need, this technical measure does not capture all experiences of housing insecurity or Indigenous understandings of housing need. It does not fully capture factors that are important to many Indigenous people, including connections to family, community, culture, land, language, and self-determination. The measure may also overlook experiences such as hidden homelessness, overcrowding related to housing shortages, and the need to remain connected to home communities and territories.

F

Family Type

A statistical classification describing the composition of families and households.

Categories may include couples with or without children, one-parent families, multifamily households, and people who are not part of a census family. These categories do not fully represent all Indigenous kinship, caregiving, chosen family, and extended family relationships.

First Nations

One of the three constitutionally recognized groups of Indigenous peoples in Canada, alongside Métis and Inuit.

First Nations include many distinct Nations, governments, communities, languages, legal orders, cultures, and territories. The Census category “First Nations” is based on self-identification and is not the same as registration under the Indian Act, First Nation membership, citizenship, or belonging to a particular Nation.

G

Gross Income

All income received before taxes and other deductions or credits.

H

Hidden Homelessness

A situation in which a person or household lacks stable, permanent housing but is temporarily staying with friends, family, acquaintances, or in another provisional arrangement.



People experiencing hidden homelessness may not appear in shelter, street, or Point-in-Time Counts. Hidden homelessness can include couch surfing, temporary stays, overcrowded living arrangements, and remaining in an unsafe situation because no other housing is available.

Homelessness

A situation in which a person, family, or household does not have stable, permanent, safe, appropriate housing or the immediate ability to obtain it. Homelessness can include unsheltered homelessness, emergency shelter use, temporary accommodation, hidden homelessness, and being at immediate risk of losing housing.

For Indigenous people, homelessness cannot be understood only as the absence of a physical structure. It can also involve displacement and disconnection from land, water, family, kin, culture, language, identity, community, and relationships.

Household

A person or group of people who usually occupy the same dwelling. A household may include one family, multiple families, a group of related or unrelated people, or a person living alone. A household is a statistical concept and does not necessarily represent all family, kinship, caregiving, or community relationships.

Household Maintainer

A census term meaning the person in a household identified as someone who pays the rent or the mortgage, or the taxes, or the electricity bill, and so on, for the dwelling. In the case of a household where two or more people are listed as household maintainers, the first person listed is chosen as the primary household maintainer. Generally, an adult is listed first followed, if applicable, by that person's spouse or common-law partner and by their children.

Housing Needs Reports (HNRs)

Housing Needs Reports (HNRs) are mandatory, census-based documents that municipalities across BC must complete to identify local housing gaps and plan future development. Governed by the Local Government Act, these assessments identify needs for 5- and 20-year horizons and require local governments to update their zoning and Official Community Plans. These reports can help identify existing and projected gaps in housing supply by collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative information about local demographics, economics, housing stock, and other factors.

Housing target

An estimate or policy goal describing the number and type of housing solutions required within a specified period.

A housing target is not necessarily a funded government commitment or a prediction of how many homes will be built. AHMA's housing targets illustrate the scale of investment and action needed to address current and projected Indigenous housing need.



Indigenous ancestry

A Census concept based on whether a person reports ancestors who were First Nations, Métis, Inuit, or otherwise Indigenous.

Indigenous ancestry and Indigenous identity are different Census concepts. Reporting Indigenous ancestry does not necessarily mean that a person identifies as Indigenous or is a citizen or member of an Indigenous Nation or government.

Indigenous data governance

The policies, relationships, protocols, institutions, and decision-making processes through which Indigenous peoples exercise authority over data concerning their peoples, communities, lands, and interests.

Indigenous data governance can address how data is collected, stored, accessed, analyzed, interpreted, shared, protected, and used.

Indigenous data sovereignty

The inherent and collective right of Indigenous peoples to govern the collection, ownership, stewardship, interpretation, use, and sharing of data relating to their peoples, communities, lands, cultures, and resources.

Indigenous data sovereignty recognizes that data is connected to Indigenous rights, jurisdiction, self-determination, and relationships. It requires more than privacy protection or consultation about data collected and controlled by others.

Indigenous household

A household classified as Indigenous according to the Census or custom-data methodology used in IHNAT. The exact classification may depend on the Indigenous identity of a household maintainer or another person within the household. The IHNAT methodology should be consulted for the precise rule used in each table.

“Indigenous household” is a statistical category. It does not determine Nation citizenship, community belonging, cultural connection, or whether a household is governed or led by an Indigenous organization.

Indigenous homelessness

An experience of homelessness that may involve separation or disconnection from stable housing as well as displacement from land, water, family, kin, culture, language, identity, community, and relationships. Indigenous homelessness is rooted in colonization, land dispossession, residential schools, child apprehension, systemic racism, and the failure of housing and other public systems to uphold responsibilities to Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous homelessness is best understood through Indigenous knowledge and the experiences of Indigenous people and communities, not solely through mainstream definitions based on physical shelter.

Indigenous identity

A Census concept based on whether a person self-identifies as First Nations, Métis, Inuit, or as having more than one Indigenous identity.



Census identity data does not determine registration under the Indian Act, citizenship or membership in a First Nation or Métis government, Inuit enrolment, Nationhood, territorial relationships, or community belonging.

Indigenous jurisdiction

The inherent and, in some contexts, constitutionally or legally recognized authority of Indigenous peoples and Nations to govern their lands, waters, peoples, institutions, laws, and affairs.

Indigenous jurisdiction exists independently of municipal and provincial statistical boundaries.

Indigenous peoples

A collective term referring to the original peoples of the lands now known as Canada and their descendants.

In the Canadian constitutional context, Indigenous peoples include First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. These are distinct peoples with diverse Nations, governments, cultures, languages, territories, legal orders, rights, and histories.

Indigenous territory

The lands and waters to which an Indigenous Nation has enduring legal, political, cultural, spiritual, economic, and stewardship relationships.

A Nation's territory may extend beyond or overlap colonial municipal, regional, provincial, or international boundaries. Online maps and statistical tools can provide a starting point for learning but do not definitively determine territorial boundaries, title, jurisdiction, or the relationships among Nations.

Intergenerational trauma

The continuing effects of trauma and disruption experienced across generations as a result of residential schools, child removal, displacement, cultural suppression, family separation, systemic violence, and other forms of colonization. It exists alongside Indigenous strength, resistance, cultural continuity, healing, and resurgence.

Inuit

One of the three constitutionally recognized groups of Indigenous peoples in Canada, alongside First Nations and Métis.

Inuit are a distinct Indigenous people whose traditional homelands include Inuit Nunangat. Inuit also live in urban, rural, and other communities throughout Canada.

The Census category "Inuit" is based on self-identification and does not determine enrolment, citizenship, or community belonging.

M

Market Housing

Also known as for-profit housing; housing that is privately owned by an individual (or a company) who generally does not receive direct subsidies to purchase or maintain it. Prices are set by the private market.



About 95% of households in Canada live in market housing, either rental market housing or home ownership.

Median household income

The income level at which half of households have higher before-tax household incomes and half have lower incomes.

Household income should be interpreted alongside household size and the number of income earners or household maintainers. Larger households may have higher total household income while still having limited income available per person.

Métis

One of the three constitutionally recognized groups of Indigenous peoples in Canada, alongside First Nations and Inuit.

The Métis are a distinct Indigenous people with their own histories, communities, cultures, languages, kinship networks, and systems of governance. Métis identity is not based only on having an Indigenous ancestor.

The Census category “Métis” is based on self-identification and does not by itself determine citizenship in a Métis government or community.

Métis Chartered Community

A local Métis community organization chartered within Métis Nation British Columbia’s governance structure. Métis Chartered Communities support Métis citizens, culture, programs, services, and community relationships within their respective areas.

Multi-family Household

A multi-family household refers to a household in which two or more census families live.

An example of this could be two single mothers sharing a home with their respective children, or a married couple living with one partner's parents.

N

National Occupancy Standards (NOS)

A standard used by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to assess whether a dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of a household.

The standard considers the age, sex, and relationships of household members. It is used to assess housing suitability and core housing need.

The National Occupancy Standard is a technical measure and may not reflect Indigenous kinship structures, gender diversity, cultural practices, caregiving, household preferences, or chosen room-sharing arrangements.

O

Off reserve



A government and statistical term generally describing people, households, services, or housing located outside lands legally designated as reserves under the Indian Act.

Living off reserve does not mean that a person is disconnected from their Nation, family, culture, rights, or community. The category also does not fully describe the diverse legal and geographic realities of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people.

On reserve

A government and statistical term generally describing people, households, services, or housing located on lands legally designated as reserves under the Indian Act.

The term does not encompass all First Nations lands, including treaty settlement lands and other forms of Indigenous landholding. It is not applicable in the same way to Métis or Inuit communities.

Overcrowding

A condition in which a dwelling does not have enough space or bedrooms for the people living there. In official housing data, overcrowding is often assessed through the National Occupancy Standard.

P

Point in Time (PiT) Count

A count conducted during a designated period to estimate the number of people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness in participating communities. A Point-in-Time Count often includes a survey about demographics, pathways into homelessness, service use, and housing needs.

The results are a minimum snapshot and do not fully include people experiencing hidden homelessness, people outside the count area, people who do not use services, or people who choose not to participate.

Priority Populations

Populations that experience disproportionate housing barriers or harms because housing and other systems do not equitably respond to their circumstances, rights, or needs.

Within IHNAT, priority populations may include Indigenous youth, seniors and Elders, women and gender-diverse people, one-parent families, people transitioning from child welfare or corrections, and people experiencing homelessness.

Purpose Built Rental Housing (PBR)/Primary Rental Housing

Also known as the primary rental market or secure rentals; multi-unit buildings (three or more units) which are built specifically for the purpose of providing long-term rental accommodations.

Purpose-built rental housing may offer greater continuity than some secondary rental arrangements, but it is not necessarily affordable, accessible, culturally appropriate, or secure from displacement.

R



Rental assistance

Government payments that help low-income individuals and families to meet monthly rent payments in the private rental market.

Residential schools

A system of church- and state-operated institutions that forcibly separated First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children from their families, communities, languages, cultures, and lands. Children experienced neglect, abuse, forced assimilation, and high rates of illness and death. Residential schools were part of a broader colonial effort to dismantle Indigenous families, governance, cultures, and identities. The tragedy and harms of residential schools continue across generations.

S

Secondary rental housing

All rental-occupied housing units that do not fall under the purpose-built rental umbrella. This may include rented condominiums, subsidized rental units, secondary suites, rented row houses and rental units in smaller buildings.

Shelter Costs

The regular expenses a household pays for its dwelling. For renters, shelter costs may include rent and utilities. For owners, they may include mortgage payments, property taxes, condominium fees, utilities, and certain other housing expenses.

Statistics Canada compares shelter costs with before-tax household income when measuring housing affordability and core housing need.

Sixties Scoop

The widespread removal of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children from their families and communities by child welfare authorities, particularly from the late 1950s through the 1980s.

Many children were placed in non-Indigenous foster or adoptive homes, often without the consent or knowledge of their families and communities. The Sixties Scoop was part of a broader colonial system of Indigenous child removal whose impacts continue today.

Spatial Access Measure

A statistical estimate of how easily people in a geographic area can physically reach selected services by walking, cycling, driving, or public transit.

Subsidized rental housing

For the Census data that IHNAT utilizes, subsidized housing includes rent geared to income, social housing, public housing, government-assisted housing, non-profit housing, rent supplements and housing allowances.



Supportive housing

Supportive housing in BC is defined as subsidized housing with on-site supports for single adults, seniors and people with disabilities at risk of or experiencing homelessness. These supports help people find and maintain stable housing.

Suppressed value

A value that has been removed or not displayed because of confidentiality, small sample size, data quality, or reliability requirements. A suppressed value should not be interpreted as zero.

Suitability/Housing suitability

A technical measure of whether a dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of the household, according to the National Occupancy Standard.

Suitability measures can help identify potential overcrowding, but they may not fully reflect Indigenous family and kinship structures, cultural preferences, caregiving responsibilities, chosen living arrangements, or the use of rooms and shared spaces.

Systemic barrier

A law, policy, practice, institutional structure, funding arrangement, or social condition that creates or maintains unequal access or outcomes for a group of people.

T

Tenure

An arrangement and ownership structure under which someone has the right to live in a house or apartment. The most frequent forms of tenure are tenancy, in which rent is paid by the occupant to a landlord, and owner-occupancy, where the occupant owns the home they live in.

Traditional and ancestral territories

The lands and waters with which Indigenous Nations have longstanding legal, political, cultural, spiritual, and stewardship relationships that predate colonial governments and continue today.

Terminology varies among Nations. Territorial information provided within IHNAT should be treated as a starting point for learning and relationship-building, not as a definitive legal description of Indigenous title, boundaries, governance, or jurisdiction.

Transitional Housing

Temporary or time-limited housing provided for a minimum of 30 days. Time limits and expectations vary by program. Transitional housing may include on-site or community-based services.

U



Unacceptable housing

A technical term describing housing that does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability, or affordability standards.

A household can live in unacceptable housing without being classified as in core housing need if it could obtain acceptable local housing for less than 30% of its before-tax income.

The term does not mean the household or residents are unacceptable. It describes the dwelling's performance against specific statistical standards.

Unceded territory

Land was never surrendered through a treaty or another lawful agreement. Most of British Columbia is unceded First Nations land.

Unsubsidized rental housing

Rental housing where the tenant's rent is not directly reduced through a government or housing-program subsidy.

A household living in unsubsidized rental housing may still receive income support or another benefit not identified as a housing subsidy. Unsubsidized housing is not necessarily affordable.

Unsheltered homelessness

A form of homelessness in which a person stays in a place not intended or suitable for permanent human habitation. This can include streets, parks, encampments, vehicles, abandoned buildings, transit spaces, or other outdoor or makeshift locations. Within many Point in Time Counts in BC, couch-surfing is also considered "unsheltered homelessness."

Urban, rural, and northern Indigenous housing

Housing for Indigenous people living in urban, rural, northern, and other communities, particularly outside reserve-based housing systems.

The term recognizes that Indigenous people living away from reserve lands continue to hold identities, rights, family connections, community relationships, and relationships to their Nations and territories.

Urban, rural, and northern Indigenous housing includes a continuum of solutions such as affordable rental housing, supportive housing, homelessness prevention, transitional housing, rent assistance, homeownership, and culturally grounded services.

V

Vacancy rate

The percentage of rental units in a defined market that are vacant and available for rent at the time of a survey. A low vacancy rate generally indicates that renters have fewer available options and may face greater competition and rising rents. A higher vacancy rate may indicate more availability but does not mean that housing is affordable, accessible, in good condition, culturally appropriate, or free from discrimination.



W

Wraparound supports

Coordinated, person-, family-, or community-centred supports intended to respond to multiple, interconnected needs.

Wraparound supports may include housing assistance, healthcare, mental wellness, cultural connection, safety planning, income supports, food, childcare, transportation, education, employment, legal services, harm reduction, and connections with family, Elders, or community.

For Indigenous people, wraparound supports should be culturally safe, Indigenous-led where possible, flexible, relational, and based on the priorities of the person, family, or community receiving support.

Y

Youth Agreement

A voluntary agreement under British Columbia's child and family services system that may provide financial, housing, education, and support services to an eligible young person who cannot safely live with their family and meets the program's requirements.

Eligibility, services, and duration are determined by provincial policy. A Youth Agreement does not necessarily provide permanent housing or support beyond the period of eligibility.



Key References Informing the Glossary

The definitions and interpretations in this glossary are informed by the following key sources. Some definitions have been adapted from official statistical or program terminology, while others draw on Indigenous scholarship, Indigenous-led frameworks, and AHMA's approaches to housing, cultural safety, data governance, and housing need. Inclusion in this list does not mean that glossary definitions are direct quotations from these sources.

Indigenous and AHMA frameworks

Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA). (n.d.). Indigenous Cultural Safety Framework.

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