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HOMELESSNESS, ADDICTION, AND MENTAL HEALTH, REVISITED

**NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO MUNICIPAL
ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE 2023**

**MERCEDES LABELLE, APRIL 28, 2023, THUNDER BAY
PREPARED BY HOLLY PARSONS**

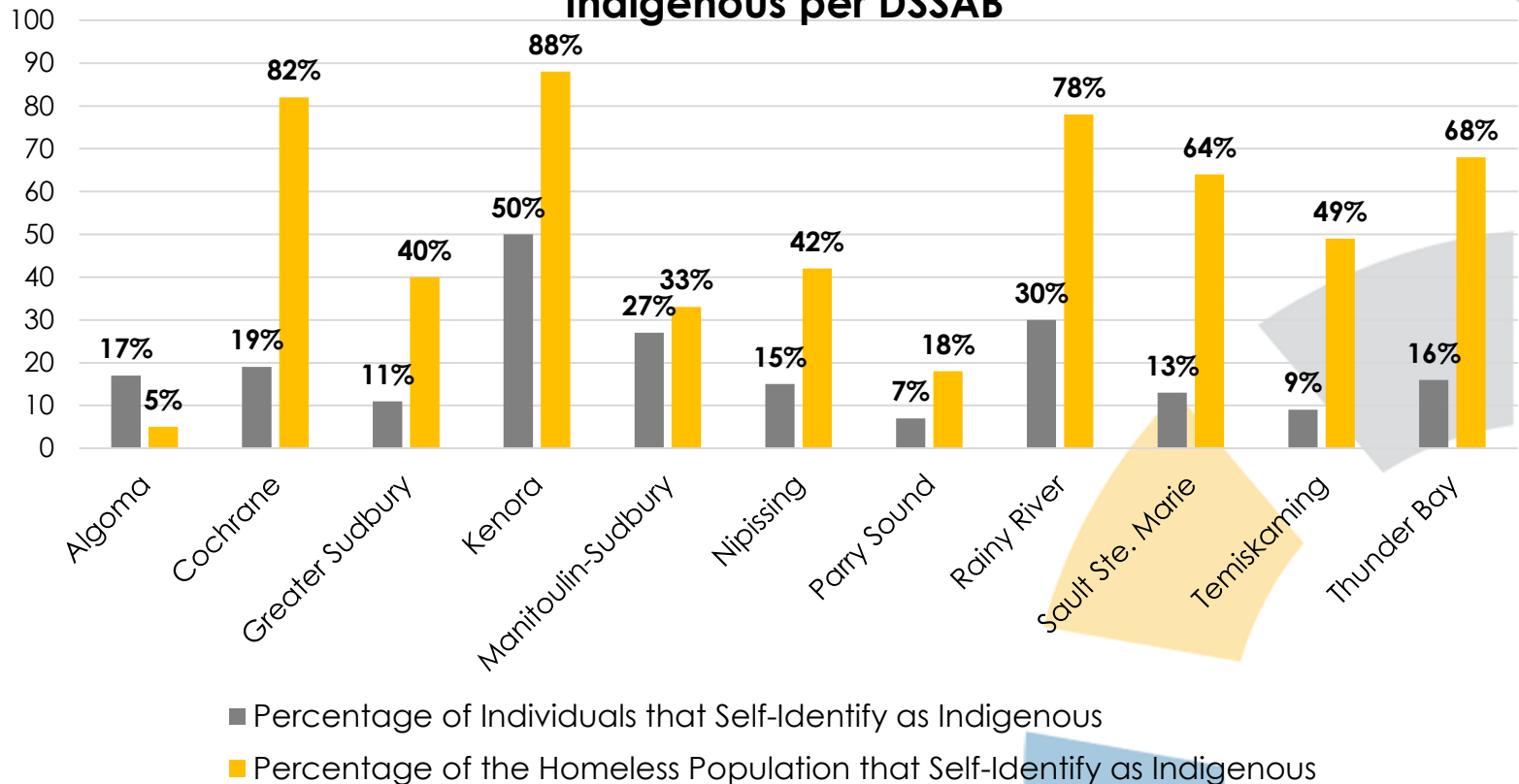
- ...a **think tank** that conducts **independent** policy work, to provide **evidence-based solutions** to sustain and grow the regions of Northern Ontario.
- The Northern Analyst Collective (NAC), a project of Northern Policy Institute, allows members to **“time share” a professional policy analyst**

Homelessness, Addiction, and Mental Health

- In 2022, a baseline was established, and recommendations provided, regarding the state of homelessness, mental health, and addictions in Northern Ontario
- The 2023 follow-up paper explores the following three strategies:
 1. Support culturally safe and supportive housing for Indigenous peoples
 2. Establish a northern “centre of excellence” for addiction and mental health
 3. Define a northern “service hub” community based on migration trend studies and Our Health Count studies

1. Support Culturally Safe and Supportive Housing for Indigenous Peoples

Percentage of individuals who self-identify as Indigenous per census district versus the percentage of the homeless population that self-identify as Indigenous per DSSAB



Culturally Appropriate Homes (CAH)

- **CAH can reduce homelessness by having a positive impact on:**
 - Equity
 - Economic security
 - Wellbeing and health
 - Continuation of cultural traditions
 - Disaster resilience
- **CAH design features for Indigenous peoples include:**
 - A healing room
 - Backyard area for ceremonies
 - Access to land for land-learning with children
 - A garden
 - Craft and teaching rooms

Supportive Community Housing

- Offer a range of on-site clinical and non-clinical supports
- Improves social supports, independence, self-esteem, health, and overall quality of life
- Alleviates pressure on public health and social services
- Costs between **\$15 to \$115** a day for high-support program per resident vs. between **\$330 to \$681** per day for a psychiatric hospital bed and between **\$200 to \$800** per emergency room visit

Case Studies

1. Sioux Lookout Supportive Housing Program
 - KDSB, OAHS, First Step Women's Shelter, Nishnawbe-Gamik Friendship Centre, and OPP
 - **Reduced OPP calls for service by 34.8%**
2. Kenora Supportive Housing Program
 - KDSB, OAHS, CMHA, and NeChee Friendship Centre
3. Suswin "Nest" Village, North Bay
 - North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre and OAHS



Recommendations

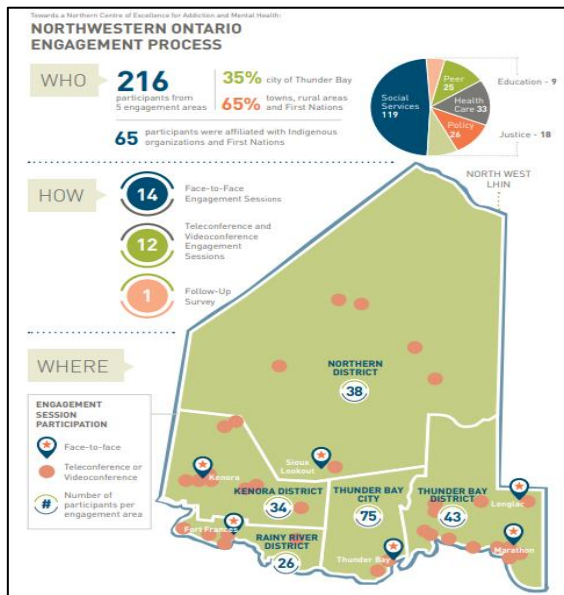
- **Culturally safe and supportive housing recommendations**
 - Identify strategic partners and local champions
 - Partners should seek and implement ‘best practices’ from existing supportive housing programs
 - The provincial government should allocate long-term funding for new and existing supportive housing program in the North

2. Establish a Northern “Centre of Excellence” for Addiction and Mental Health

Northern Centre of Excellence for Addiction and Mental Health, **2018**

Centre of Excellence for Addiction and Mental Health, **2020**

Mental Health and Addictions Research and Training Institute, **2022**



Roadmap to wellness: a plan to build Ontario's mental health and addictions system

Learn about Ontario's new plan for the mental health and addictions system.

On this page

1. Letters
2. Introduction
3. A plan to build Ontario's mental health and addictions system
4. Pillar one – improving quality: enhancing services across Ontario
5. Pillar two – expanding existing services: investing in priority areas
6. Pillar three – implementing innovative solutions: filling gaps in care
7. Pillar four – improving access: a new provincial program and approach to navigation
8. Measuring success
9. Anticipated timeline for Ontario's mental health and addictions strategy
10. Feedback

Mental Health and Addictions – Our Vision:

A province where all Ontarians have access to high-quality, easily accessible mental health and addictions support throughout their lifetime, where and when they need it.



The Mental Health and Addictions Research and Training Institute

- **Location:** Algoma District
- **Community partners:** Algoma University, Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM U), Sault Area Hospital, Sault College, Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig (SKG)
- **Focus:**
 - Treatment and prevention
 - Developing education programs to train generations of workers
 - Leading in building evidence-informed, comprehensive, social determinants of health-based system of prevention, treatment and healing
 - Deliver on its vision of “Minoeyawin”

Recommendations

- **Mental health and addictions “centre of excellence” recommendations**
 - Support additional “spokes” of the Mental Health and Addictions Research and Training Institute
 - Support mental health and addictions research in Northern Ontario via the Research and Training Institute
 - Engage with post-secondary institutions in Northern Ontario

3. Define northern “service hub” communities based on migration trend studies and Our Health Counts studies

- Wide range of health and social services
- Well defined catchment areas
- **Two challenges:**
 1. In-migration of Northerners from rural and remote communities
 2. Undercount of urban Indigenous peoples

Migration Trends Studies

- Adapt methodologies from other migration trends studies to fit needs
- Research questions could include:
 - From which community are people coming from to access services?
 - What specific services are people accessing?
 - Why did people choose to come to this community?
 - What other communities have people travelled to for access to services?
 - How often are people required to travel to access services?

Our Health Counts Studies

- **The problem:** Census data perpetually undercounts 'hard-to-reach' populations and populations made marginal

Our Health Counts: Urban Indigenous population estimates

City	Canadian Census Estimate	OHC Estimate	Undercount Factor
Kenora	3,155	8,448 - 12,892	2.6 - 4
London	8,410	17,108 - 22,155	3 - 4
Ottawa	1,145	3,361	-
Thunder Bay	13,490	42,359	3.1
Toronto	19,270	45,000 - 73,000	2 - 5

Source: Our Health Counts, 2021.

Recommendations

- **Northern Service Hub recommendations**
 - Ontario Health Teams should conduct migration trend studies and Our Health Count studies
 - Based on these studies, funding should be allocated based on catchment population size.
 - The Ministry of Health should fund data collection initiatives
 - Resources should be allocated to understanding discrepancies between OHC and Census population estimates

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1 (807) 343-8956 | info@northernpolicy.ca

www.northernpolicy.ca



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