



## **Press Statement**

### **AFN Jurisdictional Overreach on Housing Threatens Urban Indigenous Self-Determination**

**January 7<sup>th</sup> 2020** (Ottawa, ON) – Indigenous homelessness in Canadian cities is a crisis requiring immediate and effective action from all levels of government. In addressing this crisis, actors must respect the right of urban Indigenous communities to self-determination, and to administer programs through their chosen representative organizations.

At the December 2019 Special Chiefs Assembly, The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) announced that it would assume a mandate to provide homeless services for Indigenous populations living off-reserve. This extension of the AFN's mandate beyond their band council government membership threatens to create jurisdictional challenges for the services they propose to provide.

Urban indigenous communities are a diverse mix of status and non-status First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples, not exclusively First Nations. The proposed services are not accountable to those urban Indigenous communities, but to the AFN band council membership. This extension of the AFN's mandate into urban Indigenous communities threatens the ability of those communities to provide equal, accessible housing services to their people, and to direct services where the community decides they are needed. Services will not meet the needs of communities if they are directed by others, no matter how well-intentioned they might be.

The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) inquiry calls for justice highlighted that "programs must be no-barrier, and must apply regardless of Status or location". The AFN represents band council governments with status in Canada, but the majority of urban Indigenous people are not band members or status holders. If these services are not delivered through local urban Indigenous organizations, they threaten to exacerbate inequalities and barriers faced by non-status, urban, metis, and southern Inuit Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Urban Indigenous communities are open to partnerships and supporting housing initiatives, but these must be coordinated with and accountable to those communities. Services must be culturally appropriate and respectful of the rights of self-determination for urban Indigenous communities, in line with the rights enumerated under United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Persons (UNDRIP), and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and MMIWG inquiry reports.

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The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is the national voice representing the interests of Métis, status and non-status Indians, and Southern Inuit Indigenous People living off-reserve. Today, over 70% of Indigenous people live off-reserve.