

Mobilizing on the Right to Housing for Women & Gender- Diverse People in Canada: A Community Organizer's Guide





Land Acknowledgement

The Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network and the National Indigenous Women's Housing Network acknowledge and recognize that Canada is a settler colonial state on Turtle Island, which for generations has been governed and inhabited by Indigenous Peoples practicing traditional ways of doing, knowing, and being. Our work acknowledges that the current homelessness crisis, disproportionately impacting Indigenous Peoples, is a direct result of colonial and patriarchal policies that have dispossessed Indigenous Peoples of their lands and homes, and commodified land and housing as profitable assets leading to the concentration of wealth with a privileged few.



The Women's National Housing & Homelessness Network

The Women's National Housing & Homelessness Network is one of Canada's leading national organizations working to **eliminate homelessness and housing insecurity for women, girls, and gender-diverse peoples across Canada** through research, policy advocacy, community engagement, human rights work, and strategic litigation.

WNHHN is composed of collective of diverse women and gender-diverse people, including those with lived expertise, and has over 1000 members.



The National Indigenous Women's Housing Network

The National Indigenous Women's Housing Network is a movement of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples who are dedicated to **improving the living situations of Indigenous women and girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse persons across Turtle Island** and ending incidents of becoming unsheltered. All members have the lived experience of needing adequate shelter and a place to call home.

The Right to Housing In Canada

- **Recognize a socio-economic right** as a fundamental human right
- **Commit to the progressive realization of the right to housing** based on international human rights law
- **Address systemic issues** rather than violations of individual rights
- **Require a rights-based strategy** with goals, timelines, monitoring and accountability
- Provide for **submissions, hearings, findings and systemic remedies for a socio-economic right**

National Housing Strategy Act: Housing Policy Declaration

It is declared to be the housing policy of the Government of Canada to

(a) recognize that **the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right** affirmed in international law;

(b) recognize that housing is **essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person** and to building sustainable and inclusive communities;

(c) support improved housing outcomes for the people of Canada; and

(d) further the **progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.**

*“The right to housing should not be interpreted in a narrow or restrictive sense which equates it with, for example, the shelter provided by merely having a roof over one’s head or views shelter exclusively as a commodity. Rather it should be seen as the **right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity.**”*



- UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

ROADMAP TO CLAIMING OUR RIGHT TO HOUSING UNDER THE NHSA

1.

PREPARING THE CLAIM

WNHHN and NIWHN co-develop and launch two historic Human Rights Claims with community advocates from across the country

WE ARE HERE

2.

REVIEW AND REFERRAL

The Federal Housing Advocate reviews and refers the Claims to the National Housing Council

3.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

The National Housing Council establishes a Review Panel and holds public hearings

4.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Review Panel submits a report of the outcomes of the hearings (with recommendations) to the Minister

5.

MINISTER'S RESPONSE

The Minister of Housing must issue a response within 120 days in the House of Commons and the Senate

National Housing Council Establishes a New Review Panel

Homelessness among women and gender-diverse people in Canada has been recognized as a national human rights crisis.

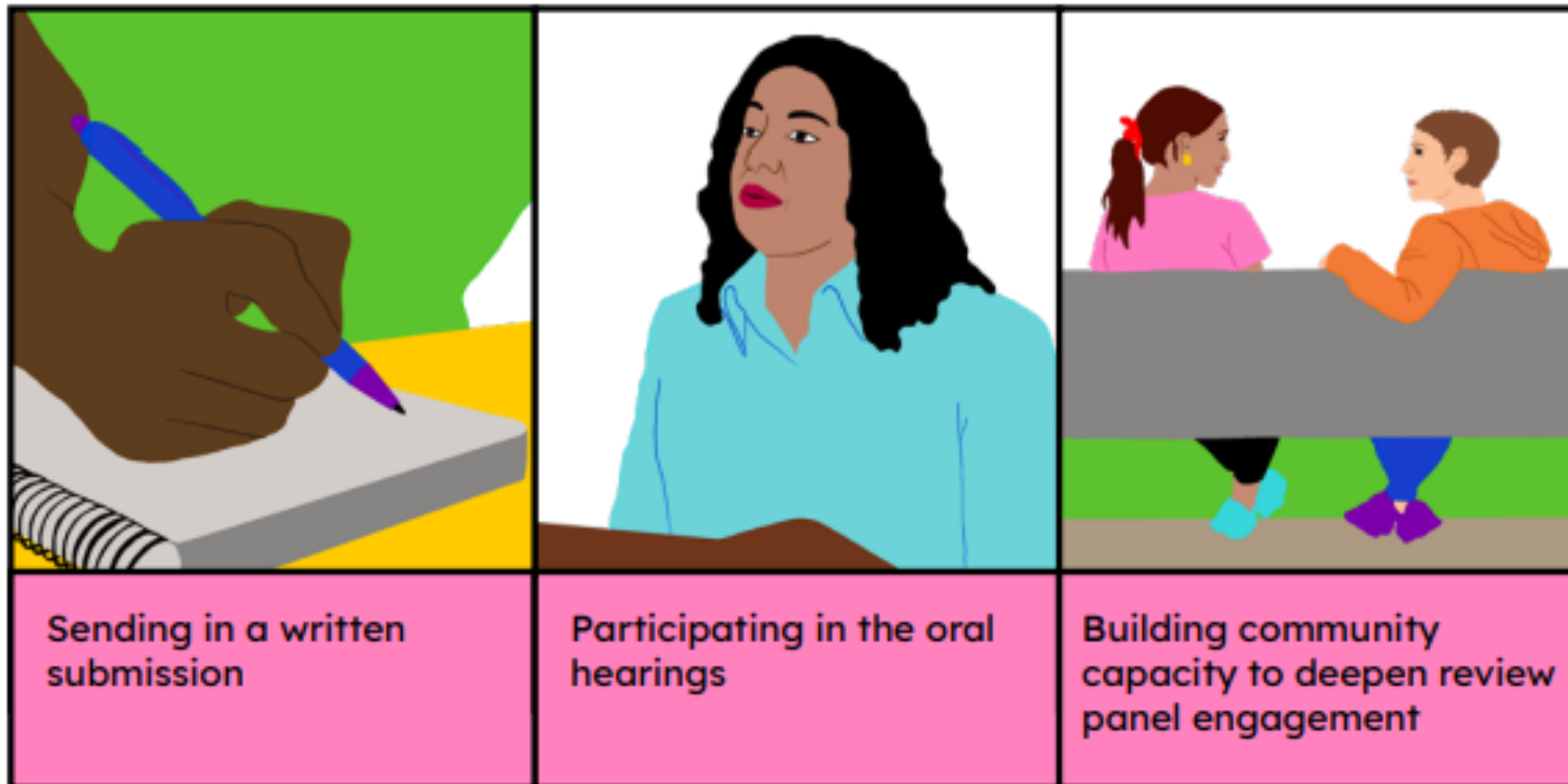
The National Housing Council has announced its intent to proceed with a national human rights inquiry into the Government of Canada's failure to prevent and eliminate homelessness among women and gender-diverse people!

This means that **a 3-person human rights Review Panel will be established in 2024**, and they will be responsible for reviewing the issue and making recommendations to the Government of Canada.



HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE IN A REVIEW PANEL?

You can engage with review panels (i.e., claim your right to housing) by:



The Evidence-Building Process: Importance of Mobilizing Diverse Expertise

LIVED EXPERIENCES

Lived expertise of women and gender-diverse people experiencing homelessness, illuminating how and why homelessness is a gendered experience requiring gendered solutions.

Stories and narratives directly from lived experts, documented in their words and on their terms, are an integral and significant part of the evidence building process.

RESEARCH & STATISTICAL EVIDENCE

Draw on research to demonstrate the points you are trying to make. This research can be from academic journal articles, public reports, Statistics Canada, or any other reputable source.

RELEVANT HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

Outline the relevant dimensions of the right to adequate housing under the ICESCR, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the UNDRIP and other international human rights to which Canada is bound under international law.

JURISDICTION

The NHSA focuses primarily on federal jurisdiction. It can be helpful for the Review Panel if you are able to identify areas of responsibility that fall under the umbrella of the federal government and make recommendations with that in mind.

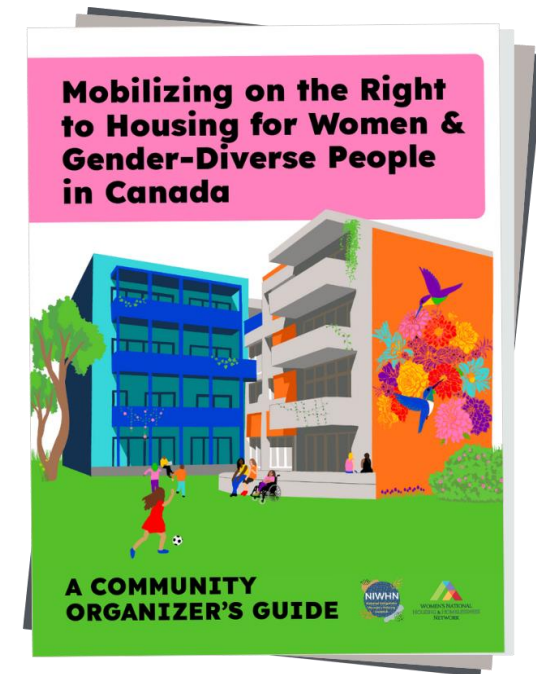
RECOMMENDATIONS

The Review Panel will benefit from your clear, concise recommendations for policy change that would tangibly improve housing for women and gender-diverse people. Don't forget to include these!

Mobilizing the Right to Housing

We want to prepare ourselves and our communities to participate in this historic process, so we wrote this Toolkit! The purpose of this Toolkit is to:

- ➔ Support lived experts and their allies to participate in the upcoming Review Panel
- ➔ Provide practical tools and templates to enable Review Panel participation
- ➔ Provide tools and diverse frameworks and mechanisms to enable community organizing on the right to housing
- ➔ Democratize knowledge about the right to housing in Canada and how to claim it



NIWHN's Approach to Review Panel Engagement

- The National Indigenous Women's Housing Network (NIWHN) will be organizing and providing support to mobilize Indigenous-led Engagement with the Review Panel. This means contacting Indigenous groups and organizations to invite them to discuss how to utilize the Toolkit.



NIWHN's Approach to Review Panel Engagement

- Respect for Indigenous traditions using Indigenous protocols.
- Meeting with Indigenous Peoples one-on-one.
- Providing safe spaces for community members to discuss possible sensitive issues.
- Providing resources directly to individuals to ensure they are supported throughout the process.



Using the Toolkit to Engage Your Community

ENGAGING COLLABORATIVELY

Walking alongside other community members to engage in a human rights process can be invigorating!

Human rights community organizing is fundamentally a relationship-building process. It involves talking to your family and friends, your neighbors, your co-workers, your local political representatives and your online networks to build a community or an alliance of individuals who collectively recognize the violation of rights happening in their community and decide to do something about it.

As a right holder interested in mobilizing the right to housing a great first step is to identify collaborators (groups or individuals) who would be interested in working alongside you.



Who can benefit from the Toolkit?

The toolkit is meant to guide anyone interested in participating in the Human Rights Review Panel.

Whether you'd like to,

- participate as an individual; and/or
- mobilize a group of community members to make a submission; and/or
- make a submission on behalf of a group.

the Toolkit has all the information you'll need!



Toolkit Overview

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02

2. Background – Our Work So Far

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3. Understanding the Right to Housing in Canada

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5. Community Engagement and Evidence Gathering

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6. Crafting Your Submission

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7. Advocacy and Media Strategy

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8. Conclusion & Next Steps

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SECTION 1

SECTION 2



Downloadable
Template



Support from
WNHNN & NIWHN



External
Resource

Become a Community Champion

The **Community Champion Program** is an opportunity for those with lived experience of homelessness or housing insecurity to participate in the evidence-building process through doing outreach in their community.



Who can become a Community Champion?

Prioritize diversity in selection across:

- Rural, remote, and urban regions;
- Intersectional representation, including Indigenous, racialized, two-spirit, and gender-diverse individuals;
- Women, Two-Spirit, gender-diverse people with lived or living experience of homelessness or housing precarity;

Commitments:

- Receive training from NIWHN and NIWHN
- Demonstrate respect for stories and experiences of those with lived and living experience of homelessness or housing precarity.



As a Community Champion, you will:

- **Receive training** on the Toolkit from WNHHN and NIWHN
- **Receive a stipend** when you mobilize 5 community members to make a submission to the review panel
- **Have access to supports and resources** from WNHHN and NIWHN to do outreach.
- **Participate in oral hearings** along with other community members



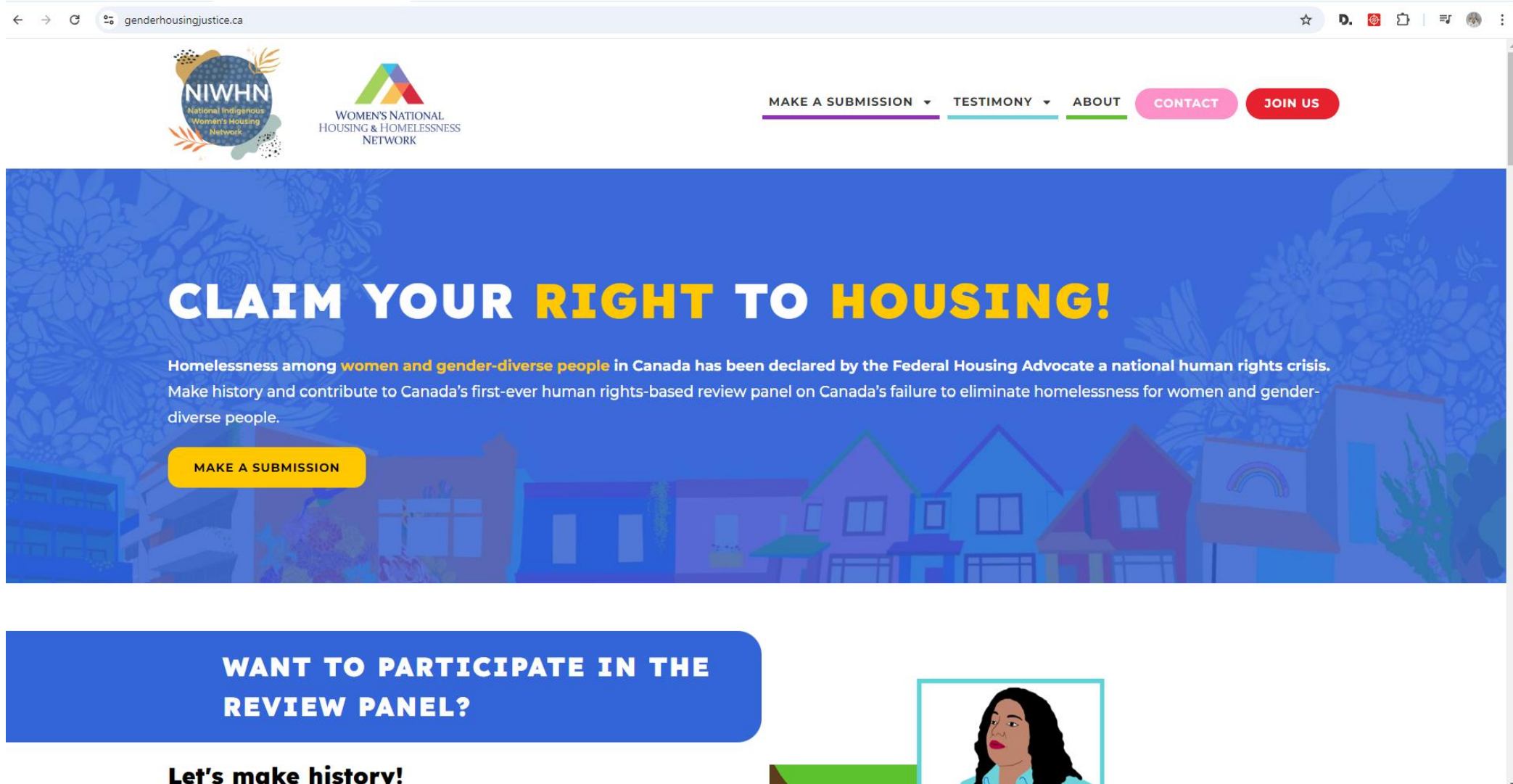
As we launch the toolkit today, we invite you to sign up as **Community Champions!**

Next Steps:

- Register using the Google form
- Sign up to our Human Rights Updates Mailing List

Once you have registered, WNHHN and NIWHN will review your registration and invite you to participate in our toolkit training.

Website Launch!



Thank you!



Questions? Email us at:
info@womenshomelessness.ca

Visit: genderhousingjustice.ca



**Sign up to be a
Community
Champion:**

