

**Adequate housing** as defined by the United Nations is not only about resolving overcrowding issues, it is about having control and culturally relevant housing. In Nunavik, this would require a re-balancing of power from a paternalistic government that currently controls social housing design, issues, and construction.

*"The housing situation is horrible. If you are a woman and you have four kids and a husband who is useless and beats you up all the time, who comes home drunk four nights a week, you have nowhere to go..."*

**Housing is the first resource that women need** in order to be able to raise kids in a healthy environment, to be a good mother."

45yr woman from Kuujuaq



A 2015 report by Saturviit Inuit Women's Association demonstrates the many ways that **women are more adversely affected** by inadequate housing as they are often victims of domestic violence, they have nowhere to go, and they are raising their children.

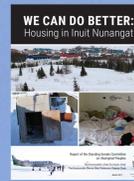
*"I am going to work today, I am a good citizen, I graduated, I can pay bills, I am a responsible person. Why can't you give me a house?"*

23yr woman from Kuujuaq

**53%** of Nunavik families live in **overcrowded homes**

*"The reality is that our children are not adequately housed. Our children sleep in shifts in some households and have no place to do their homework. It's typical to see mattresses lining the floors in many of our homes."*

Quote from Senate report 2017



## HOUSING ISSUES IN NUNAVIK

The **management and governance of housing is complex, with many actors** involved:

- Federal and provincial → Funding and agreements for new housing
- Province → Société d'Habitation Québec - primary body responsible for private and social housing
- Regional → Construction managed by Makivik
- Regional → Kativik Municipal Housing Board (KMHB) administrative role: rent, allocation of new houses, repairs, manages housing programs
- Community-level → KMHB Housing committees manage communities' needs

*"They say that social housing is for people that cannot afford housing, so where is the regular housing?..."*

*People with kids are a priority; that is why people are having kids, to get a house."*

23yr woman from Kuujuaq

Inuit **housing policies** have always been conceived of by outsiders – by settler colonials that had **assimilationist** ideas in the 1960s. Decision-making about funding, policies, and programs today are still not in the hands of Inuit.

**Population** of Nunavik **12,000** in 14 communities

**Crowded living conditions** contribute to injuries, mental health problems, transmission of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, family tensions and **violence**. It is also related to low educational attainment and youth suicide crisis.

*"We're in the final stages of creating an Inuit strategy on housing... We are talking not just about building new houses, but about reimagining the way housing works in Inuit regions"*

Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami



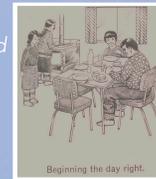
Photo courtesy of ITK

a **house** is a physical structure, but a **home** is the place where belonging to a space and a group merges into a sense of security, identity, and control

*"Crowded places tend to have more chaos in the house... Kids see the violence. I wish they didn't."*

41yr woman from Kangiqsujuaq

**House design** in the North is modeled after **Western-style houses** in the south. Control over all aspects of housing in the North can still be seen as a social and political act by the State.



An image from document "Living in the New Houses" Canada, 1970

Houses were not designed to promote Inuit culture in the 1970s. *"The State had the means to make Inuit conform to rules and regulations put in place to ensure 'proper' use of the housing it provided."*

There is a **shortage of 1030 housing units** in Nunavik

The Inuit housing structure can be seen as an example of settler colonialism.

# A HOUSE TO CALL A HOME:

## Housing, governance, and wellbeing in Nunavik

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Map courtesy of Makivik www.makivik.org

4 Rs in Research Ethics:  
Respect  
Relevance  
Reciprocity  
Responsibility

### Research Context

Ever since the 1960s and 70s, when Inuit were first forced into settlements in Nunavik, there have been housing shortages, overcrowding, and serious health and social consequences. Inuit housing is mostly social housing, and it is managed by a complex multi-level system of control including federal, provincial, and regional players. It is argued that Inuit do not control the decision-making processes for Inuit housing. Moreover, I argue that women's voices are mostly absent from the process. Each community has a Housing Committee that acts as "frontline workers" for housing in Nunavik. Many of them are women, and their perspectives and knowledge could open up new possibilities and contribute meaningfully to discussions and decisions about making Inuit housing right for Inuit.

### Research Question

My doctoral research will involve engaging with Nunavik housing committees members to answer the question: How can the voices of engaged community members, often women, offer new possibilities for the housing process that is steeped in colonial, top-down, unequal power relations? My research objectives are:

- To conduct a critical examination of the existing literature on Inuit housing, governance, funding, policies, and design.
- To conduct interviews and focus groups with members of housing committees in 2-3 Nunavik communities.
- To create a space for a visioning process with committee members to open-up possibilities for imagining housing and shared visions for the future in a way that responds to Inuit concerns and needs, and addresses decolonization of the Inuit-state relationship.

### Methodological and ethical considerations

**INDIGENOUS RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES** will inform my research approach in order to further the process of **decolonization** in relation to:

- decolonizing northern housing processes, policies, and Inuit-state relations
- decolonizing research relationships
- decolonizing the individual, the researcher, (me!)

**CO-PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE** approach through a process of envisioning more culturally-relevant housing governance with Inuit who are already involved at the community-level of housing administration.

**ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS** that will guide my research process:

- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami 2018 *National Inuit Strategy on Research* addresses the needs of Inuit in relation to research, including principles of: **self-determination, partnership, ethical conduct, and capacity building**
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's 2014 Policy for Research with Indigenous People **to create an ethical space for dialogue, reciprocity, respect, community engagement, and collaboration**
- Concordia University Ethics Committee is an ethics process that students have to pass before doing research with people.

### Expected Outcomes

Working with housing committees offers a new bottom-up perspective of the power dynamics inherent in the current Inuit housing process. These perceptions have the potential to offer new possibilities and strategies to create better responses to Inuit housing in Nunavik.

- I expect to hear that the colonial relationships between governments, Inuit organizations and the population of Nunavik is part of the problem perpetuating inadequate housing.
- I expect to find that frontline workers grounded in their experience and the reality of housing in their community will reveal a sense of knowledge, identity, and belonging connected to Inuit values, and a deep understanding of the importance of maintaining harmonious political relationships that can provide new ways of imagining housing governance.
- I expect that value may be placed on the need to contribute more meaningfully to policy-making, perhaps through the new Nunavik Housing Policy proposed.
- I expect that women involved in housing in the communities will have perspectives connected to concepts of self-determination, autonomy, and bottom-up leadership with family-centered goals for building strong communities.

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**Acknowledgements:** This research is supported by Concordia University, Réseau DIALOG, and Habiter le Nord Québécois. I would not have arrived at this stage in my program without the ongoing intellectual support of my supervisors, Daniel Salée, Carole Lévesque, and Caroline Desbiens and the university research partnerships. The PhD in Humanities Program at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Society and Culture at Concordia University has given me the opportunity to design a research project that can form and transform to the needs of the communities I will work with. I am ever grateful for the financial support to conduct research in the North from the following funders:

