

Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

To: Chair and Members, Community and Protective Services Committee Meeting
From: Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development
Subject: Update on Implementation of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan
Date: June 21, 2022

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development, that the following report Update on Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan **BE RECEIVED** for information purposes.

Executive Summary

This report provides an update of the actions taken as part of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan. This report highlights the outcomes achieved to date as well as challenges faced.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

2019-2023 Strategic Plan for the City of London

Municipal Council's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan identifies "Strengthening our Community" and "Creating a Safe London for Women and Girls". The recommendation in this report will support Londoners in accessing the supports they need to be successful in achieving housing stability and will help ensure safety for our community's most vulnerable populations.

Housing Stability for All: The Housing Stability Action Plan for the City of London (2019-2024)

London's Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan, Housing Stability for All: The Housing Stability Action Plan for the City of London (Housing Stability for All Plan), is the approved guiding document for homeless prevention and housing in the City of London and was developed in consultation with Londoners. The Housing Stability for All plan aligns with and supports strategic initiatives and goals, including the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan.

The Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan, 2020

Atlohsa Family Healing Services, in collaboration with the Giwetashkad Advisory Circle has developed The Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan, which was endorsed by The City of London and aligns with the Housing Stability Action Plan, 2019. The Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan represents culturally sensitive perspectives of community members with lived and/or living experience and sets out a vision of home as a place of safety and belonging for all peoples.

Links to Community Recovery

The City of London is committed to working in partnership with the community to identify solutions that will drive a strong, deep and inclusive community recovery for London as we move out of and beyond the global COVID-19 pandemic. This report, and the items within, are linked to urgent housing for vulnerable Londoners, and supports recovery

efforts by investing in long-term housing stability for individuals and families at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- COVID-19 Response Update and Program Funding Wind-down (CPSC: March 1, 2022)
- Single Source Reaching Home Capital Projects (CPSC: December 14, 2021)
- Winter Response – REVISED (CPSC: November 2, 2021)
- Housing Stability for All Plan – Mid-Year Update – Part 1 (CPSC: September 21, 2021)
- City of London Additional Short Term Supports for Unsheltered Individuals (CPSC: June 1, 2021)
- Housing Stability for All Plan 2020 Update and Priorities for 2021 REVISED APENDICES (CPSC: May 11, 2021)
- Proposed Implementation of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan – Part 2 (CPSC: March 30, 2021)
- Sole Source Award for the Implementation of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan (CPSC: March 2, 2021)
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission Recommendations Update on City of London Efforts (SPPC: January 26, 2021)
- Single Source Procurement of Resting Spaces (Single Source #SS20-29) and Programs (Single Source #SS20-37) for Indigenous Individuals Experiencing Homelessness (CPSC: December 15, 2020)
- Municipal Council Approval of the Housing Stability Plan 2019 to 2024 as Required Under the Housing Services Act, 2011 (December 3, 2019)

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan Implementation

The Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Plan supports access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples.

As the sole provider of Indigenous homelessness services in London, Atlohsa Family Healing Services led the development of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan in consultation with stakeholders, including individuals with lived experience of homelessness. The Giwetashkad Advisory Circle, an advisory group that includes key stakeholders, supported the development of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan. 890o

Programs are aimed at reducing homelessness and creating housing stability for Indigenous individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness and will work within London's Coordinated Access System.

The Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan included a framework and goals as follows:

- Strategic Direction 1: Implement an Indigenous Housing First Model
 - Goal: Indigenous peoples at risk of or experiencing homelessness have culture-based services and supports to secure and maintain housing.
- Strategic Direction 2: Build Internal Capacity
 - Goal: The appropriate resources are available to address the needs to Indigenous peoples at risk of or experiencing homelessness
- Strategic Direction 3: Cultivate Community Leadership

- Goal: Culturally safe services are available to support Indigenous people at risk of or experiencing homelessness
- Strategic Direction 4: Advocate for Systems Change
 - Goal: A coordinated and connected system of service provision to meet the needs to Indigenous people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

2.2 Housing Support Programs (Strategic Direction 1)

Housing Support Programs provides households with indigenous led assistance in attaining and maintaining housing. The Atlohsa Rapid Rehousing program supports Indigenous individuals to move from homelessness towards housing stability.

In 2021, 42 households working with Atlohsa were housed with supports.

2.3 Wiigiwaaminaan Indigenous Winter Response 2021-2022 (Strategic Direction 1)

The Indigenous led temporary winter shelter, Wiigiwaaminaan (Anishinaabe for *the house that we collectively look after*) ran from December 10, 2021 to March 31, 2022. This program included 29 spaces for Indigenous identifying participants, with the focus on cultural reconnection and traditional cultural healing. Wiigiwaaminaan was led by Atlohsa Family Healing Services in collaboration with the City's Housing Stability Services and St. Joseph's Health Care London. The location at St. Joseph's Health Care was secured following a suspected arson at the original proposed site, the River Road Golf Course.

Atlohsa operationalized Wiigiwaaminaan, a culturally safe and trauma-informed indigenous led space for Londoners who identify as Indigenous and who were also experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The site erected a Teepee, where a community fire was maintained by traditional Fire Keepers throughout most of the project. Additional cultural ceremonies were conducted, and traditional medicines and meals were prepared and offered on site. These activities helped to promote healing for individuals experiencing the effects of multi-generational Indigenous homelessness. From the safety of Wiigiwaaminaan several individuals were able to secure permanent housing and many more were able to move forward with the work necessary to secure future housing placements.

- 20 units were spread-out across the site with the remaining 8 beds being hosted inside Parkwood's J building including a family residential suite
- Hosted ongoing fire in the Teepee including 2 for community ceremonies
- 13 individuals moved to housing (7 permanent housing, 1 transitional housing, 4 reconnected with family and 1 reconnected to community)
- One individual was accepted into long term care at Parkwood Hospital
- Others were supported with improved health outcomes and worked towards housing stability.
- 3 Identification clinics were held on site with a total of 19 people applying for identification.
- 38 individuals were supported with Rent Geared to Income (RGI) applications and completion of taxes.
- 7 individuals began or sustained employment, training, or education programs.

A regular Community Fire event was held inside the Wiigiwaaminaan teepee, where service providers in the homeless serving sector were invited in to learn more about the space, Indigenous culture and interact with Knowledge Keepers. Housing Stability Services leadership team were also invited and able to attend a Community Fire, listen to stories, eat traditional food and see the space, deepening knowledge and connection to the community.

2.4 Indigenous Housing Hub (Strategic Direction 1)

The Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan details the development of an Indigenous Housing Hub.

The City of London has agreed to provide \$1,000,000 of Reaching Home Capital funding to launch the development of the Indigenous Housing Hub through Atlohosa Family Healing Services. This funding is provided to secure land or build a new facility for this project.

The Housing Hub will consist of two components:

1. Resting Space: The Resting Space will offer in-the-moment, overnight support for up to 10 community members.
2. Supportive Housing: Supportive Housing will offer space for a longer, temporary stay, of up to one-year for up to 30 community members.

The Housing Hub will be accessible to Indigenous community members who identify as all genders experiencing homelessness within the City of London. Indigenous community members who are not of Indigenous ancestry are welcome to access the resting spaces or long stay spaces. However, due to the disproportionate number of Indigenous people who are experiencing homelessness and the limited number of Indigenous-led services and supports, 50% of the beds will be reserved for Indigenous people.

Temporary stay space will offer room for community members to access while they work on securing housing. Stays in these spaces can range from 1 month up to a maximum of 1 year. Longer stay eligibility will be dependent on actively participating in a housing focused program including actively looking for securing housing on a daily basis. Supportive Housing eligibility will be dependent on participating in the indigenous led housing focused program including actively looking for securing housing on a daily basis.

The Housing Hub will also work from an indigenous led trauma-informed approach, recognizing the historical and ongoing trauma faced by London's Indigenous community members, and taking steps to support participants in healing from past traumatic experiences on their journey toward permanent housing.

Furthermore, the Housing Hub will be operated from an Indigenous cultural framework, utilizing an Indigenous definition of homelessness and an Indigenous worldview. To date, this approach has assisted Atlohosa Family Healing Services in dissipating challenging behaviours and fostering a sense of mutual respect between staff and participants who face stigma, discrimination, and isolation. The Housing Hub will also offer traditional medicines to all participants, access to smudging and traditional healing foods with meals, and provide access to cultural teachings.

2.5 Build Internal Capacity (Strategic Direction 2)

Atlohosa has worked towards building the internal capacity within the organization, in the past year they have increased their staffing as follows:

Amount of Giwetashkad staff: 14 permanent full-time staff – 85% Indigenous led.

- Housing outreach – 4 full time
- Rapid Rehousing – 2 full time
- Housing First – 2 full time
- Rental Supplement - 1 full time
- Crisis Walk-in Support - 1 full time
- Supportive Housing - 1 full time
- Training and Education- 1 full time
- Leadership and management - 2 full time

Winter response – 50% Indigenous led
7 full time
3 part time
11 relief staff

2.6 Indigenous Homelessness Training (Strategic Direction 3)

While the City of London has, to date, largely supported individuals experiencing absolute homelessness, the Giiwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan operates using a focused definition of Indigenous Homelessness:

“Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally, or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships (Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness, 2012).”

Atlohsa has created Giiwitaabiwag team to lead training events offered to community partners in the homeless serving sector and housing stability services on indigenous homelessness. This included the 12 dimensions of indigenous homelessness. At this time, Atlohsa has completed module 1 and is planning to implement module 2 training in the near future.

The following detailed update is from Atlohsa Family Healing Services, Knowledge Exchange Coordinator, Alana Pawley:

*“Report Update on Giiwitaabiwag Capacity Building Initiative
Created May 19, 2022 for Period January 1 2021 – December 30 2021*

In alignment with Atlohsa’s Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan 2020-2023, Atlohsa has unveiled the Giiwitaabiwag Capacity Building Initiative to cultivate skills to provide culturally safe homelessness services to Indigenous peoples in our region. With generous funding from the London Community Foundation, Atlohsa has employed 1 full-time, contract position: Knowledge Exchange Coordinator to lead the initiative since January 2021.

An educational needs assessment was conducted from March-August 2021 with the goal of highlighting key knowledge gaps in Indigenous cultural safety amongst service providers. The following stakeholders were engaged:

- 25 Indigenous peoples with lived experience of homelessness (individual interviews)
- 100 front line/leadership staff from homelessness serving agencies (10 focus groups)
- 2 Indigenous Knowledge Keepers (individual interviews)

Two final reports were produced which made recommendations for capacity building and curriculum on Indigenous Cultural Safety in Homelessness Services.

Module 1: Indigenous Homelessness, is available and reviews history of Indigenous homelessness in Canada, explores Indigenous concepts of home & belonging, and explores Jesse Thistle’s 12 Dimensions of Indigenous Homelessness. Module 2 is

forthcoming in Spring 2022 and will focus on practical skills for Culturally Safe and Trauma-Informed Care with Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness. Further training modules may introduce use of culturally-safe homelessness intake forms and assessment tools.

- *30 sessions completed of Module 1: Indigenous Homelessness*
- *273 Participants trained in Module 1: Indigenous Homelessness Completed to date*
- *12 unique agencies have completed training, including Coordinated Access team, Coordinated Informed Response/By-Law team and Housing Access Centre team within the Housing Stability Services department. Life Stabilization Caseworkers who work directly with unhoused participants have also received this training.*

The Giiwitaabiwag Capacity Building Initiative has also hosted 15 professional development opportunities to build the capacity of Indigenous staff to support Indigenous participants, with participant numbers ranging from 10-38 individuals at each session.

Using an Indigenous Education Model, the capacity building initiative has also offered cultural teachings and land-based learning by hosting regular guest speakers and monthly Community Fires.

- *4 Community Fires hosted, with total of 97 service providers and participants in attendance*
- *2 Guest Speaking Events from Indigenous Elders, with total of 570 individuals attended*

As Atlohsa draws towards the end of the LCF-Funded Capacity Building Project in January 2023, Atlohsa has recently moved towards a fee-for service training model to sustain the training program. Further robust investment is needed to continue to pursue the Third Strategic Direction of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Plan.”

2.7 Municipal Calls to Action

The following are the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action that were directed specifically to municipalities, followed by information about actions taken by the City of London in response.

Supporting the Giwetashkad plan aligns with the commitments and Calls to Action set out in the Honouring the Truth, reconciling for the Future Summary of the Final Report, of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report and are consistent with the City of London’s continued commitment to work to support truth and reconciliation. As an Organization, the City of London has taken additional actions, not identified through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in which work is being done to build and strengthen relations with the urban Indigenous community, the surrounding First Nations communities and people in and around London. Principles that have guided this work include the following:

- Indigenous led
- Focused on education and learning
- Commitment to Reconciliation
- Offering culturally appropriate services
- Intersectional approach that acknowledges the ways in which people’s lives are shaped by their multiple and overlapping identities and social locations, which, together, can produce a unique and distinct experience for that individual or group.

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

There are currently no immediate financial impacts.

Conclusion

The City of London will continue to undertake all necessary work to support the implementation of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan while continuing to take steps to fully implement previous Council directions associated with the Plan.

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