



# **Driftpile Cree Nation**

2025 Alberta Provincial  
Estimations and Service Needs

Community Report



*Drifffalle Cree Nation*

Prepared By:  
Rural Development Network  
(780)-964-2736  
11443 - 143 Street, NW  
Edmonton, AB



RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
NETWORK



## We Thank You.

This report and the information within were made possible through the efforts of many dedicated individuals and groups. First and foremost, we would like to thank the members on Driftpile Cree Nation for sharing their experiences and insights about housing and service needs in the community. We appreciate your time, effort, and knowledge! Additionally, we want to thank the front-line staff from participating departments and any volunteers for their support, dedication, and commitment to this project.

This project is funded in part by the  
Government of Canada's Reaching Home:  
Canada's Homelessness Strategy

Canada 

## About this Report

In 2025, the Rural Development Network (RDN) partnered with 19 organizations representing 64 communities across Alberta to conduct the fourth iteration of a province-wide Housing and Service Needs Estimation.

This report outlines Driftpile Cree Nation's results within the provincial estimation, highlighting the number of residents who are housing insecure and their experiences with housing insecurity. This report is complemented by the [Alberta Provincial Report](#), which highlights the combined results of all 64 communities across the province.

This report is intended to support decision-making across organizations, funders, and government around housing insecurity by providing reliable and up-to-date data on housing and service needs on Driftpile Cree Nation. It can also be used in the community for program planning and advocacy purposes related to housing insecurity, housing stock, and service needs.

Contact [info@ruraldevelopment.ca](mailto:info@ruraldevelopment.ca) for more information on Housing and Service Needs Estimations.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>About this Report</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Definitions: What Does “Homelessness” Mean?</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>5</b>
• Limitations	8
<b>Results and Analysis</b>	<b>10</b>
• Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey Respondent Population Overview	10
• Objective Housing Situation	11
• Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness on Driftpile Cree Nation	12
• Living Situation	14
• Education, Employment, and Income Sources	16
• Community Supports	18
• “What Would You Like to See More of in Your Community?”	21
<b>Opportunities Moving Forward</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>25</b>

# Definitions: What Does “Homelessness” Mean?

## Homelessness

According to the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2012), homelessness is the situation of an individual, family, or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means, and ability to acquire it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, domestic violence, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household’s financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural, or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination.

Further, Indigenous homelessness, more recently termed “houselessness,” considers the traumas imposed on Indigenous Peoples through colonialism. Indigenous houselessness is not only defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews, including: “individuals, families, and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages, and identifies” (Thistle, 2017).

Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant and stressful. The national definition of homelessness notes that individuals who become homeless experience a range of physical living situations, including:

**Unsheltered:** Absolutely homeless, living on the streets or in places not intended for human habitation (e.g. living on sidewalks, squares, parks, vehicles, garages, etc.).

**Emergency Sheltered:** People who are staying in overnight shelters due to homelessness as well as those staying in shelters due to family violence.

**Provisionally Accommodated:** People with an accommodation that is temporary or that lacks security for tenure (e.g. couch-surfing, living in transitional housing, living in abandoned buildings, living in places unfit for human habitation, people who are housed seasonally, people in domestic violence situations, etc.).

**At Risk of Homelessness:** People who are not yet homeless but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards (e.g. people who are one rent payment missed from eviction, people whose housing may be condemned for health, by-law, or safety violations, etc.).

(Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2012).

**In this report, we will use “housing insecure.”** The term will be used to encompass the entire spectrum of homelessness, including unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated, and at risk of homelessness, as well as those experiencing Indigenous houselessness.



# Introduction



Housing insecurity is a continued and increasing concern in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities across Alberta and the entire country. When it comes to housing insecurity, the urban experience tends to dominate the conversation, mainly due to the visibility of unsheltered individuals experiencing housing insecurity in urban centres. The issue of housing insecurity in rural and remote areas is far less understood and acknowledged because of its hidden nature. Recent data suggests that rural homelessness is prevalent at rates equivalent to or greater than urban per capita rates (Schiff et al., 2022).

In 2023, the Alberta Provincial Housing and Service Needs Estimation identified 2,429 survey respondents as experiencing housing insecurity. An additional 2,354 dependents under 18 and 2,537 adults reported living with housing insecure survey respondents, meaning there were at least 7,320 community members experiencing housing insecurity across the 21 participating communities in rural and remote Alberta (Rural Development Network, 2023). While some housing insecure respondents had experiences of being unsheltered or emergency-sheltered, the majority of housing insecure respondents were provisionally accommodated or at risk of homelessness, further speaking to the issue of visibility, or rather invisibility, of housing insecurity in rural and remote communities.

As rural, remote, and Indigenous communities continue to experience growth amidst a national housing and affordability crisis, it has become more apparent than ever that more evidence is required to support decision-making on housing insecurity, housing stock, and services across the province.

Recognizing this, RDN conducted the 2025 Alberta Provincial Housing and Service Needs Estimation with 19 organizations representing roughly 64 rural, remote, and Indigenous communities across Alberta in an attempt to better understand what housing insecurity looks like in each community and across the rural provincial landscape. Specifically, the purpose of this estimation is to:

1. Provide a comprehensive picture of housing insecurity on Driftpile Cree Nation and across Alberta, including demographic information on who is experiencing housing insecurity and details on service use and gaps.
2. Help inform service providers and municipal, provincial, and federal policies, practices, and funding decisions on housing insecurity, housing stock, and support services.
3. Develop recommendations and next steps for service providers and all levels of government to address housing insecurity on Driftpile Cree Nation and across Alberta.
4. Elevate and incorporate the voices of people experiencing housing insecurity in local, provincial, and federal responses to housing insecurity.

This is the fourth iteration of the Alberta Provincial Housing and Service Needs Estimation. It was also conducted in 2018, 2020, and 2023, with 20, 24, and 21 communities, respectively, though Driftpile Cree Nation has never participated in a previous Provincial Housing and Service Needs Estimation.



# Methodology



The methodology employed in this Housing and Service Needs Estimation comes from the Step-by-Step Guide to Estimating Rural, Remote, and Indigenous Homelessness, published by the Rural Development Network (2022). RDN initially developed the Step-by-Step Guide due to the lack of available, accurate, and current data on rural housing insecurity. A lack of data limits the ability of Indigenous communities like Driftpile Cree Nation to advocate for better resources for their residents.

The guide is unique in that it tackles the issue of housing insecurity and homelessness from a rural perspective. It recognizes the difficulties of conducting standard Point-in-Time (PiT) counts in rural and remote areas and instead uses a service-based population estimation approach, which allows for anyone, including small nonprofits and local front-line agencies, to gather data on gaps in local housing and service needs without adding additional strain to workloads and organizational capacities.

**Please note:** *As with a PiT count, this estimation is an undercount and represents only those individuals identified during the four-week period. The number of people experiencing housing insecurity is greater than presented in this report.*

Following the model proposed in the Step-by-Step Guide, RDN worked with communities and academics across Canada to develop a survey that reflected the contexts of rural and remote communities. The survey was developed following the definitions of homelessness proposed by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and adopted by the federal government. However, the survey itself was advertised as a Housing and Service Needs survey. This is a result of feedback from multiple service providers who are committed to minimizing the stigma associated with homelessness, which could cause distress to their clients. By reframing the language of the survey, service providers were able to encourage all clients to participate, instead of targeting specific individuals.

To further minimize stigma throughout the survey, rather than asking respondents to identify themselves as homeless or housing insecure, they were asked whether they considered their living conditions secure or insecure and to indicate scenarios in a “select all that apply” question that determined their objective housing situation. Based on responses to the latter survey question, along with subsequent data analysis, RDN was able to determine which respondents were housing insecure. As shown in the results below, some individuals who did not consider themselves housing insecure qualify as such based on the national definitions of homelessness.

The same survey was used across all communities participating in the 2025 Alberta Provincial Housing and Service Needs Estimation project, with one exception: each community’s survey was customized to meet their location parameters. Figure 1 showcases Driftpile Cree Nation location parameters.

## Figure 1: Driftpile Cree Nation Location Question on Survey

### Q2. Can you confirm you live on Driftpile Cree Nation?

Yes

No

RDN worked with Driftpile Cree Nation to develop a survey administration process to ensure the greatest participation level possible. For Driftpile Cree Nation, surveys were advertised at service provider locations and online as an open SurveyMonkey link across the community. Surveys were available through these locations and online for a period of four weeks, from October 1 to October 31, 2025.

Before the survey period began, RDN conducted orientation and training sessions with staff from participating agencies. During the training, emphasis was placed on clarifying survey terms, ensuring respondents' confidentiality and privacy, and securing participants' informed consent. During each training session, resources were provided to staff to improve their understanding of the project and increase comfort in administering the survey. Training and resources also included the various ways to administer the survey in an open, non-intrusive manner, prioritizing the individual's reasons for visiting the agency before offering the survey.

Important to note about the survey: to ensure the trust and anonymity of participants, each respondent was asked to give consent at the beginning of the survey and create a unique identifier. The unique identifier allowed RDN to maintain the integrity of the data without knowing respondent identities. The unique identifier was a combination of letters and numbers from a participant's name and birthdate.

## Figure 2: Unique Identifier Question on Survey

### Q1. Anonymous Unique Identifier (ex. John Smith, born on 15th November 1964)

H	N
---	---

What are the last two letters of your FIRST name?

T	H
---	---

What are the last two letters of your LAST name?

1	5
---	---

What is the DAY you were born?

6	4
---	---

What are the last two numbers of the YEAR you were born?

Driftpile Cree Nation collected 27 survey responses during the four weeks. Of the 27 surveys, seven were excluded. Surveys were deemed unsuitable and excluded for one or more of the following reasons:

1. Survey respondent(s) declined to give consent.
2. Survey respondent(s) declined to provide the unique identifier or provided improper unique identifier information (e.g., characters instead of numbers, etc.).
3. Survey respondent(s) submitted multiple surveys (determined based on unique identifier(s)).
4. Survey respondent(s) indicated they were located outside of community boundaries.
5. Survey respondent(s) did not complete enough questions to determine housing stability (e.g., abandoned the survey).

Based on this, 20 were deemed suitable for further analysis and will be the focus of the results outlined below.

## Limitations

Despite our best attempts to reduce stigma and increase the accessibility of the survey, not all clients who were offered a survey chose to participate. Additionally, staff at participating service providers were informed that participants under 14 years old required guardian consent to participate in the survey. We recognize that this is inherently problematic and exclusionary, as most youth experiencing homelessness would not have a guardian to provide consent. However, to maintain survey ethics, this requirement complies with the Alberta College of Social Workers' Standards of Practice.

Additionally, the data does not represent Driftpile Cree Nation as a whole; rather, it represents only those who accessed services on the Nation during the four-week enumeration period.

As a result, there remains a portion of people experiencing housing insecurity on Driftpile Cree Nation whose voices were not captured in this project. Therefore, while the trends and highlights discussed in this report are informative, it is always important to remember that this report presents a conservative picture of the housing and services needs on Driftpile Cree Nation.



# Results and Analysis

# Housing & Service Needs Estimation Survey

## Respondent Population Overview

### ***Gender and Sexuality***

55% (11) of respondents identified as men and 45% (9) as women.

85% (17) of respondents identified as straight, 5% (1) as bisexual/pansexual, and 5% (1) as lesbian/gay. Additionally, 5% (1) of respondents preferred not to answer.

### ***Age***

5% (1) of respondents were between the ages of 15 and 24, 50% (10) were 25 to 44, and 45% (9) were 45 to 65.

### ***Household Makeup***

33% (5) of respondents noted that they live in a multi-generational home and 67% (10) were in single-parent households.

### ***Time Spent in Care***

50% (10) of respondents indicated they spent time in foster care, a youth group home, or in a youth/young adult agreement.

### ***Indigenous Identity***

100% (20) of respondents self-identified as Indigenous. Of those respondents who self-identified as Indigenous, 95% (19) identified as First Nations and 5% (1) as other Indigenous ancestry.

### ***Veteran Status***

5% (1) of total respondents indicated that they served in the Canadian Armed Forces, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), or emergency services, 100% (1) of whom served in the Canadian Armed Forces.

## Objective Housing Situation

As part of the survey, participants were asked: “Do you consider your housing situation unstable or feel you could easily lose your housing?” Respondents were given the options “yes,” “no,” and “I’m not sure” to guide their responses.

Of the 20 survey respondents, eight self-identified as housing insecure, one indicated “I’m not sure,” while 11 indicated they were housing secure. Using the national definitions of homelessness to guide further analysis, all 20 survey respondents were identified as housing insecure. An additional 15 dependents under 18 and 36 adults were reported as living with housing insecure survey respondents.

Tables 1 and 2 show breakdowns of respondents by housing security status and highlight the number of dependents and adults who reported sharing living conditions with housing insecure respondents on Driftpile Cree Nation.

**Table 1: Breakdown of Respondent Housing Status**

	<b># of Individuals</b>
<b>Housing Secure</b>	0
<b>Housing Insecure</b>	20

**Table 3: Breakdown of Dependents & Adults Sharing Insecure Housing Living Conditions**

	<b># of Additional Individuals</b>
<b>Dependents</b>	15
<b>Adults</b>	36

Based on survey results, there were at least 71 community members experiencing housing insecurity on Driftpile Cree Nation.

The top three reasons for housing insecurity on Driftpile Cree Nation, as reported by survey respondents, were:

1. Health challenges<sup>1</sup>
2. Addiction/substance use issues
3. Conflict & violence<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Illness/medical condition,” “Mental health concerns,” “Mental disability,” and/or “Physical disability”

<sup>2</sup> “I am experiencing domestic/family violence or abuse,” “I am experiencing family conflict/rejection,” “I am experiencing conflict with my spouse/partner”

# Exploring the Spectrum of Homelessness on Driftpile Cree Nation

Recognizing that the national definition of homelessness is complex, encompassing various housing situations across a continuum, it is important to better understand what housing insecurity looks like on Driftpile Cree Nation. This understanding can be achieved by exploring the experiences of the 20 housing insecure respondents.

To accurately place respondents along the spectrum of homelessness, a series of measures were used to understand their situations. These measures included their self-identified housing security response, calculated housing security, current housing situation, and the amenities they lack in their current situation.

Early in the survey, respondents were asked to outline their current housing situation and were able to choose all situations that applied to them from a variety of statements. Statements included, but were not limited to, “I slept in a vehicle,” “I slept in a hotel overnight because I had nowhere else to go,” “I live in supported or transitional housing,” and “I live in housing that needs major repairs.”

Respondents were able to select more than one statement. To accurately represent what housing insecurity might look like for respondents over a month, all responses have been included.

When reading this table, an important consideration is that people experiencing housing insecurity often fluctuate in and out of their situation. Someone who was unsheltered one night may have been emergency sheltered or provisionally accommodated the next. As a result, we have highlighted every incident of insecurity respondents experienced in the past month to understand the complexities of housing insecurity on Driftpile Cree Nation. This means that more incidents of housing insecurity are reported in the table below than the number of housing insecure respondents.

**Table 3: Respondents by Housing Situation on the Homelessness Spectrum**

<b>Place on the Homelessness Spectrum</b>	<b># of Incidents</b>
Unsheltered	7
Emergency Sheltered	3
Provisionally Accommodated	43
At Risk of Homelessness	27

The above table illustrates respondents' diverse experiences with housing insecurity on Driftpile Cree Nation, emphasizing that homelessness presents itself in more ways than simply sleeping outside.

Respondents identified as **at risk** reported:

- Difficulty paying their rent or mortgage,
- Spending more than 30% of their monthly income on housing,
- Living in overcrowded accommodations with not enough bedrooms for the number of people staying in the unit,
- Staying in a home needing major repairs (e.g., heating or plumbing problems, mould, leaky roof, etc.), and/or
- Staying in a home with unsafe conditions (e.g., exposed wiring, no railing or banisters, physical hazards, etc.).

Respondents who indicated they experienced being **provisionally accommodated** noted:

- Staying in a hotel overnight because they had nowhere to go,
- Living in accommodations provided by their employer,
- Living in a home that is owned/rented out by a First Nations or Métis Settlement,
- Staying in an RV/trailer,
- Staying in a medical/detox facility,
- Staying in a jail/prison/remand centre,
- Staying with friends/family because they had nowhere else to go,
- Staying with a stranger because they had nowhere else to go, and/or
- Staying in a home where they experienced violence because they had nowhere else to go.

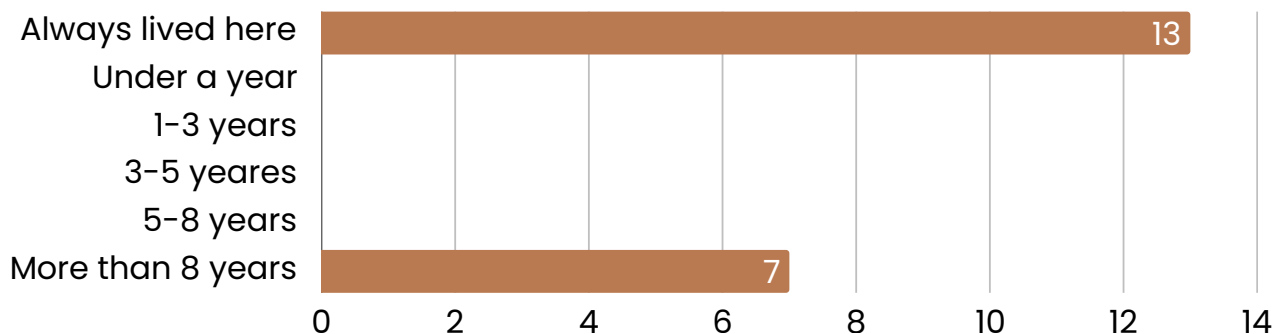
Respondents who had experiences of being **emergency sheltered or unsheltered** reported:

- Staying in an emergency shelter,
- Staying in domestic violence/women's shelters, and/or
- Staying in makeshift shelters such as a vehicle, tent, or shack.

## Living Situation

65% (13) of housing insecure respondents have always lived on Driftpile Cree Nation, as seen in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Breakdown of Housing Insecure Respondents' Length of Time Lived on Driftpile Cree Nation**



Respondents were also asked: *“What are the main reasons you came to this community? If you have always lived here, why have you chosen to stay in this community?”*

The top three reasons housing insecure respondents came to the area are:

- Family-related reasons (to be closer to family, to follow family, etc.)
- Housing-related reasons (to access affordable and appropriate housing, etc.)
- The connection to culture, community, and traditions

In comparison, the top three reasons housing insecure respondents stayed in the area are:

- Family-related reasons (to be closer to family, to follow family, etc.)
- The connection to culture, community, and traditions
- Housing-related reasons (to access affordable and appropriate housing, etc.)

### **Housing Situation and Missing Amenities**

To better understand respondents' current living situations, they were asked to indicate if they rent or own their home (or if neither was true for them). 16% (3) of housing insecure respondents indicated that they owned their homes, 21% (4) indicated that they rented their homes, 53% (10) noted that they neither owned nor rented, and 11% (2) preferred not to answer.

18 unique housing insecure respondents, whether they rented, owned, or were in a different situation entirely, indicated that they lacked specific amenities in their current housing situation, many of which are considered necessary for a secure living situation. At the time of the survey, 61% (11) of these respondents did not have access to safe drinking water.

**Table 4: Breakdown of Housing Insecure Respondents' Missing Amenities**

<b>Missing Amenities</b>	<b># (%) of Respondents</b>
Safe drinking water	11 (61%)
Fire protection (smoke alarms, fire extinguishers)	7 (39%)
Indoor plumbing/bathing facilities	6 (33%)
Electricity	6 (33%)
Refrigeration	5 (28%)
Cooking facilities	4 (22%)
Sufficient and affordable heating	6 (3%)

This breakdown highlights respondents who lacked basic amenities and is one way respondents' objective housing situation is calculated. Some respondents self-identified as housing secure but lacked amenities required for their housing to be considered stable according to the Canadian definitions of homelessness, including indoor plumbing/bathing facilities, sufficient and affordable heating, electricity, access to safe drinking water, and fire protection.

# Education, Employment, and Income

## Education

Housing insecure respondents indicated various education levels when responding to the question, “What is the highest level of education you’ve completed?”

On Driftpile Cree Nation:

- 5% (1) of respondents had completed some grade school
- 45% (9) completed some high school
- 20% (4) completed high school or received their GED
- 10% (2) had an apprenticeship, trades certificate, or diploma
- 10% (2) had some post-secondary (college, university)

Additionally, 10% (2) respondents preferred not to answer.

## Employment

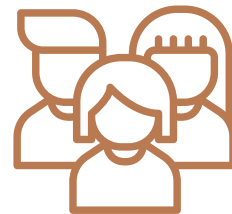
10% (2) of housing insecure respondents were employed at the time of the survey and 5% (1) preferred not to answer. Of employed housing insecure respondents: 100% (2) were full-time (e.g., more than 30hrs/week)

## Unemployment Amongst Housing Insecure Respondents

**85% (17)** of housing insecure respondents were unemployed at the time of the survey. Based on additional analysis, we know that:

**65%** identified as men, **35%** as women

**82%** were straight, **6%** were lesbian/gay, **6%** were bisexual/pansexual, and **6%** preferred not to answer



### Age Breakdown

- **6%** were between 15-24, **53%** were between 25-44, **41%** were between 45-64 years old

### Income

Housing insecure respondents were also asked to disclose their approximate household income for the previous year. Responses varied widely, as seen in Table 5.

**Table 5: Housing Insecure Respondents Approximate Household Income in the Last 12 Months**

<b>Total Household Income in the Last 12 Months</b>	<b># (%) of Respondents</b>
Less than \$22,000	12 (60%)
Between \$22,001 and \$55,000	2 (10%)
Between \$55,001 and \$88,000	0 (0%)
Between \$88,001 and \$132,000 <sup>3</sup>	1 (5%)
More than \$132,001	1 (5%)
Prefer not to answer	4 (20%)

<sup>3</sup> It is important to remember the spectrum of homelessness when considering income rates amongst housing insecure respondents. Someone who is experiencing domestic or family violence, for example, is considered housing insecure no matter their annual household income. Similarly, respondents without access to safe drinking water are considered housing insecure no matter their annual household income. Additionally, it is important to remember that people cycle through the spectrum of homelessness regularly and just because some reported an annual household income of \$88,001 or higher in 2024, for example, does not mean they were not experiencing housing insecurity in 2025 - this could have occurred as a result of job loss, a death in the family, increasing interest and utility rates, or any number of reasons.

## Community Supports

To better understand service needs and gaps on Driftpile Cree Nation, respondents were asked: “Which support services do you access and where do you most often access them?”

Housing insecure respondents primarily accessed services on Driftpile Cree Nation for:

- Health and wellness services (75%)
- Financial services (63%)
- Family/parenting services and supports (56%)

In comparison, those accessing services outside of Driftpile Cree Nation did so primarily for:

- Basic needs (75%)
- Shelter services (58%)
- Legal services (50%)

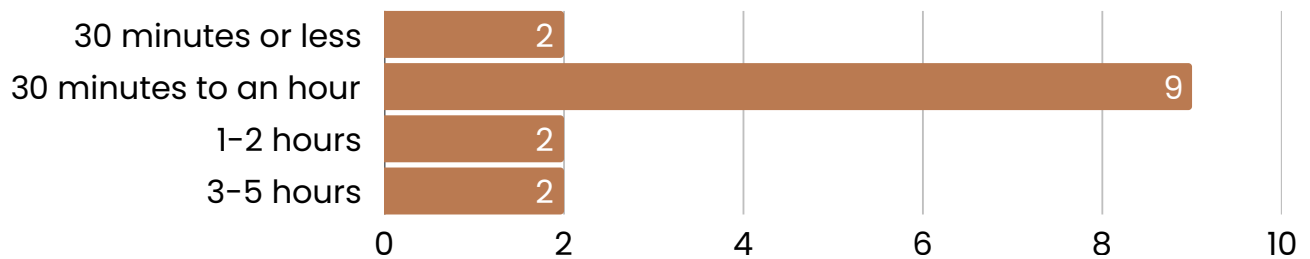
**Table 6: Reasons Housing Insecure Respondents Accessed Support Services**

<b>Services Accessed</b>	<b># (%) of Respondents who Primarily Accessed Services in the community</b>	<b># (%) of Respondents Primarily Accessed Services Outside of the community</b>
Basic needs (Food bank, clothing donations, public washrooms, etc.)	7 (44%)	9 (75%)
Shelter (Emergency shelter, domestic violence shelter, transitional housing, affordable housing, etc.)	6 (38%)	7 (58%)
Financial (Rental assistance, non-market housing, financial life skills training/education, etc.)	10 (63%)	3 (25%)
Crisis financial support (Eviction notices, utility shutoffs, damage deposits, etc.)	7 (44%)	4 (33%)
Family/Parenting (Child care, parental resources, relationship issues, child developmental assessment tools/referrals, etc.)	9 (56%)	3 (25%)

Health and wellness (Addictions, mental health, physical health care, spiritual or cultural well-being, etc.)	12 (75%)	1 (8%)
Legal (Separation/divorce/custody, wills/estates, employment/labour standards, landlord/tenant issues, immigration issues, criminal/misdemeanour, etc.)	5 (31%)	6 (50%)

Of the services housing insecure respondents accessed outside of Driftpile Cree Nation, most travelled between 30 minutes to one hour to access them, as seen in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4: Distance Travelled by Housing Insecure Respondents for Services Outside of the Community**



To access these services, 24% (4) housing insecure respondents travelled by car or truck, 12% (2) took public transportation, 47% (8) relied on a family member or friend, 6% (1) took a taxi or ride-share service, 29% (5) had a service provider arrange a ride for them, and 6% (1) either caught a ride with a stranger or hitchhiked there. Additionally, 6% (1) of respondents indicated “other;” stating they biked to access services.

It is important to consider that respondents who are unable to access supports and services are more likely to continue experiencing housing insecurity than those who can access the necessary supports and services to stabilize their housing situation.

**Shelter Use**

Two unique housing insecure respondents reported staying in a shelter in the past year. Among them:

- 67% (2) stayed in an emergency shelter.
- 33% (1) stayed in an extreme weather space or shelter.

20% (4) housing insecure respondents reported needing emergency shelter services at some point in the 12 months before completing the survey, but did not access them. Several reasons were provided for this, as outlined in Table 7. The main reason these respondents did not access shelter services when needed was because of a lack of transportation to access the shelter.

**Table 7: Reasons Housing Insecure Respondents Did Not Access Shelter Services When Needed**

<b>Reason for Not Accessing Shelter Services</b>	<b># (%) of Respondents</b>
Lack of transportation	4 (100%)
No shelters in my area	3 (75%)
I didn't meet the intake criteria to access the shelter	2 (50%)
I didn't feel safe	2 (50%)
The right kind of shelter wasn't available (for example, I needed a women's or family shelter where I could stay with my kid(s) and couldn't access one)	1 (25%)
The shelter was full	1 (25%)
I exceeded my stay at a shelter	1 (25%)
Alcohol/substance use is not permitted on-site	1 (25%)
The shelter was unclean	0 (0%)
The shelter did not welcome me because of my gender identity	0 (0%)
Lack of disability accommodations	0 (0%)
No pets allowed	0 (0%)
The shelter was too far away from my family and/or friends	0 (0%)

## “What Would You Like to See More of in Your Community?”

To gain more insight into respondents' perceptions of service provision on Driftpile Cree Nation, they were asked: *“Does your community provide enough...accessible and affordable housing; access to food; addictions and mental health supports; employment services; free/accessible recreation/social opportunities; public transportation services; social services?”*

**Table 8: Respondents Perceptions of Driftpile Cree Nation’s Provision of Services**

<b>Does the Community Provide Enough:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
Accessible, affordable housing	4 (20%)	10 (50%)	6 (30%)
Access to food (grocery stores, markets, food banks, etc.)	7 (37%)	11 (58%)	1 (5%)
Addictions and mental health supports (counselling, treatment, post-treatment support, etc.)	12 (63%)	4 (21%)	3 (16%)
Employment services (resume writing, job searching, etc.)	8 (42%)	7 (37%)	4 (21%)
Free/accessible recreation/social opportunities	12 (60%)	6 (30%)	2 (10%)
Public transportation services	11 (61%)	5 (28%)	2 (11%)
Social services (libraries, emergency services, outreach programs, etc.)	7 (39%)	5 (28%)	6 (33%)

In Table 8, there is a significant discrepancy in respondents who, at the time of the survey, believed there was enough accessible and affordable housing on Driftpile Cree Nation (20%) versus those who believed more housing was needed (50%) or were not sure if more housing was needed (30%).



**Opportunities Moving  
Forward**

Before diving into any opportunities moving forward, it is important to acknowledge that RDN is a non-Indigenous, non-profit organization and staff working on the Alberta Provincial Housing and Service Needs Estimation project are settlers on these lands. RDN respects the Driftpile Cree Nation's right to self-determination and staff acknowledge that the opportunities identified below are Driftpile's Cree Nations' to review and act (or not act) on as they see fit, for the benefit of their members. Further, it is important to recognize that Driftpile Cree Nation is governed by the Indian Act, meaning that the Government of Canada owes a duty to take reasonable measures to ensure access to adequate and safe housing on reserve, leading to better social and health outcomes for members.

With that said, based on the findings outlined in this report, RDN has identified two opportunities to address housing insecurity moving forward. They are:

- Increase awareness of, and access to, services.
- Encourage sustainable housing growth on Driftpile Cree Nation.

### **Increase awareness of, and access to, services.**

75% of housing insecure respondents indicated that they had to access basic needs services outside of Driftpile Cree Nation. Additionally 58% had to access shelter services outside of Driftpile Cree Nation. Further, of the housing insecure respondents who accessed services outside of Driftpile Cree Nation, 60% had to travel between 30 minutes to one hour to access services. While 47% of respondents relied on a family member or friend to access services, 47% of respondents either took a taxi or ride-share service, had a service provider arrange a ride for them, hitchhiked, or biked to access services. It is also important to consider that the top two reasons respondents reported not accessing emergency shelter when they needed it were because of a lack of transportation to the shelter and because there were "no shelters in their area."

Additionally:

- Only 37% of respondents believed there was enough access to food on the Nation, while 58% believed that improved access to food was needed.
- 61% of housing insecure respondents lacked access to safe drinking water.

Given this, efforts should be made to further identify and address service gaps on Driftpile Cree Nation, either by offering new services or by better promoting the availability of current services that community members may not be aware of.

### **Recommendations:**

- Conduct an informal audit of services (also called service mapping) on Driftpile Cree Nation.
- Determine gaps in service delivery on Driftpile Cree Nation and develop an action plan for filling these gaps in services.
- Promote current programs and service offerings that support community members experiencing housing insecurity.

### **Encourage sustainable housing growth on Driftpile Cree Nation.**

It is critical to highlight the need for accessible, affordable, adaptive, and appropriate housing projects to increase housing options on Driftpile Cree Nation. 50% of respondents believed there was not enough accessible and affordable housing on Driftpile Cree Nation compared to 20% who believed there was enough accessible and affordable housing and 30% who were unsure if there was enough housing on Driftpile Cree Nation.

90% of housing insecure respondents indicated that they lack specific amenities in their current housing situation, many of which are considered necessary for a secure living situation. At the time of the survey, 61% of these respondents did not have access to safe drinking water, 33% did not have indoor plumbing/bathing facilities, and 33% did not have electricity.

It is also important to consider that 20% of housing insecure respondents reported needing emergency shelter services at some point in the 12 months before completing the survey, but did not access them.

### **Recommendations:**

- Explore opportunities to access federal funding to conduct a housing needs and demands assessment on Driftpile Cree Nation to better understand housing need.
- Work with all levels of government to develop a model to deliver short- and long-term housing solutions on the Nation (e.g. emergency shelter, transitional housing, and affordable/below-market rate housing). This model should include wraparound supports (including basic needs supports) typically associated with a Housing First Program.
- Conduct community engagement sessions to address any concerns and misconceptions around housing development.

## References

Abedin, Z. (2022). *Step-by-step guide to estimating rural homelessness, 2nd Ed.* Rural Development Network. <https://www.ruraldevelopment.ca/publications/step-by-step-guide-to-estimating-homelessness>

Gaetz, S., Barr, C., Friesen, A., Harris, B., Hill, C., Kovacs-Burns, K., Pauly, B., Pearce, B., Turner, A., & Marsolais, A. (2012). *Canadian Definition of Homelessness*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

Rural Development Network. (2023). 2023 Alberta Housing and Service Needs Estimation Project: Provincial Report. Rural Development Network. [https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/5f98899a0322266a90e2767f/651600d6f444e4a68680543e\\_2023%20Alberta%20Provincial%20Estimation%20Report%20V3.pdf](https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/5f98899a0322266a90e2767f/651600d6f444e4a68680543e_2023%20Alberta%20Provincial%20Estimation%20Report%20V3.pdf)

Schiff, R., Wilkinson, A., Kelford, T., Pelletier, S., & Waegemakers Schiff, J. (2022). Counting the undercounted: Enumerating rural homelessness in Canada. *International Journal on Homelessness*, 3(1), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.5206/ijoh.2022.2.14633>

Thistle, J. (2017). *Indigenous Definition of Homelessness in Canada*. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.



**RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
NETWORK**