



# ENDING HOMELESSNESS TOGETHER

DECEMBER 1 - 3, 2025

*Igniting the Flame, Fanning our Spirit*

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# EVENT REPORT



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## GATHERING OVERVIEW

Ending Homelessness Together, *Igniting the Flame, Fanning our Spirit* took place at **Canad Inns Destination Centre Polo Park, December 1st - 3rd, 2025**. Over three days, End Homelessness Winnipeg brought together individuals with lived experience of homelessness, sector professionals, government representatives, landlords, and businesses to explore solutions and collaborate on ending homelessness in our community.

Breakout sessions were designed around the Medicine Wheel teachings, exploring the heart, mind, body, and spirit, and reflecting the importance of harmony in addressing homelessness. The Medicine Wheel is a powerful symbol in Indigenous culture, representing teachings, values, and beliefs through its four quadrants. The Gathering sought to find balanced solutions to homelessness through this lens. Session themes included: (MMIWG2S+) Red Dress Alert; housing and supports for Indigenous aging; mobile healthcare, wellness, and overdose prevention; youth homelessness; unhoused veterans; Indigenous cultural & spiritual teachings; community driven housing; supporting unhoused Newcomers, veterans and/or 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals; and professional development including Reaching Home, HR and funding workshops. For full program information scan the QR code on page 9.

Film producer and community leader **Lisa Meeches** once again joined us as our Ending Homelessness Together Master of Ceremonies with Keynote Speakers including local educator and community activist **Mitch Bourbonniere**, Olympic medalist and Mental Health Advocate **Clara Hughes**, **Melody Barr** City of Houston Assistant Director Public Services & Economic Development, Fiddler and Storyteller with lived experience of homelessness **Blain Constant**; and disability advocates **Frances Sinclair-Kaspick** and **Christian Swan**.





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## BY THE NUMBERS

- »» • **8** Grandparents council members
- »» • **481** Participants
- »» • **312** Full day passes
- »» • **54** Day 1 passes
- »» • **58** Day 2 passes
- »» • **57** Day 3 passes
- »» • **6** Keynote speakers
- »» • **51** Local presenters / panelists
- »» • **14** Out of town presenters
- »» • **5** Event coordinators
- »» • **4** Performers
- »» • **35** Volunteers
- »» • **21** Artisans
- »» • **2** Navigators
- »» • **24** Breakout sessions
- »» • **1** Grandmothers' and Grandfathers' Tea and Bannock plenary session
- »» • **2** Grandmothers' and Grandfathers' Teachings breakout sessions
- »» • **6** Resource tables
- »» • **2** Mobile healthcare vans





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## GRANDMOTHERS' & GRANDFATHERS' COUNCIL

We are especially grateful to the Grandmothers' and Grandfathers' Council, **Wanbdi Wakita, Helen Robinson-Settee, Ivy Chaske, Dr. Mary Wilson, Florence Paynter, and Philip Paynter** for guiding the programming and ceremonies, bringing the spirit to the gathering, and ensuring our planning was conducted in a good way.

The Grandmothers' and Grandfathers' expanded their involvement in the programming of this year's gathering. This addition was very well received by all participants. Through the council's Tea & Bannock Session, their two guided breakout sessions, and the spiritual support they provided through to delegates, the council was a key factor in the success and growth of this year's Ending Homelessness Together gathering.



For more information about the Grandmothers' and Grandfathers' Council including their bios see QR code on page 9.



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## HONOURING THE LIFE OF UNKAN WANBDI WAKITA

We honour the life of Unkan Wanbdi Wakita, respected leader and member of the Grandmothers' and Grandfathers' Council for End Homelessness Winnipeg. He began his journey to Tate Makoci, the Spirit World, on December 15, 2025.

When he received his name, which means Looking Eagle, Wanbdi was told to look over the people and, when he saw they needed help, to go and help them. He accepted this responsibility wholeheartedly and carried the spirit of the eagle throughout his life, leading with vision, calm strength, and wisdom grounded in deep responsibility to community. Through his leadership on the Grandmothers' and Grandfathers' Council, Wanbdi helped guide our work with clarity, intention, and care, demonstrating this commitment through his actions right to the last of his days with us.

His influence was especially felt in shaping the Ending Homelessness Together gathering, where he ensured Indigenous voices, truth, and lived experience were not only present, but centred and honoured. Wanbdi reminded us that leadership is not about authority, but about listening, accountability, and walking alongside others with humility.

He gave of himself fully to community, offering guidance, patience, and care right to the last of his days with us. His life reflects service rooted in love, responsibility, and relational teaching.

This is a profound loss for all who knew him and learned from him. He will be deeply missed and always remembered for his leadership, his generosity of spirit, and the lasting impact of his teachings.

Soar on, great Wanbdi. Your teachings remain with us, guiding the work ahead. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his wife, Pahan PteSanWin, and family and hold



## HIGHLIGHTS

Building on the momentum of its inaugural year in 2024, the Ending Homelessness Together 2025 Gathering demonstrated meaningful growth in participation, programming, and overall attendee experience, as reflected in the following highlights:

- Increased participation compared to the inaugural year (3 days of programming vs 2.5 + 100 more participants).
- Improved accessibility, diversified programming, and increased integration of the Grandmothers' and Grandfathers' Council.
- Highly praised speakers especially Tea and Bannock, Keynotes, and Abilities and Homelessness Panel with Frances Sinclair-Kaspick Christian Swan.
- Expanded number of Lived Experience voices and networking opportunities.
- Launch of a new custom event website (see QR code on page 9).
- An Indigenous Artisan Market open for participants throughout the event.
- Introduction of Navigators with lived experience to support care and de-escalation.
- Community Communications Session to discuss communication strategies with other organizations in the sector, well attended and effective.
- Experiential programming including van tours and the Red Dress Pins for MMIWG2S+ Beading session with Gerri-Lee Pangman.





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## POST EVENT SURVEY

A survey was distributed to participants post event. Feedback highlighted several **key strengths** of the gathering, including:

- Keynote speakers and the diversity of voices in plenary sessions
- Teachings from the Grandmothers' and Grandfathers' Council
- Lived Experience perspectives shared in plenary and breakout sessions
- Strong organization and smooth execution of the event
- Participants feeling supported, welcomed, and well cared for throughout the gathering

As well as **recommendations**:

- Improving registration process
- More sessions with concrete information, training and resources
- More youth-focused content including success stories

**"I can't wait to attend again next year!"** - Participant

**"Thank you! The conference was a big success and very well planned!"**  
- Participant

**"I thought it was a fantastic event and everything went smoothly. Looking forward to next year"** - Participant

**"I thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend for free. This really helped me to gain a wealth of knowledge."** - Participant





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## KEY TAKEAWAYS AND ACTION PLAN

After the Gathering the End Homelessness Winnipeg team, Grandmothers' and Grandfathers' Council, event planners and the Gathering steering committee met to discuss the key takeaways from the gathering, and to share how these take aways are already being action at both End Homelessness Winnipeg at large and in our planning process for future events.

1. **Community Engagement:** Consulting with the sector in Spring 2026 to identify best practices and future learning goals. The consultations planned for Spring 2026 will be an important opportunity to listen deeply and learn from the many voices across the sector. When we gather in a good way, we strengthen our shared path forward.
2. **Lived Experience:** Establishing and consulting with a dedicated Lived Experience group. Establishing a dedicated group to centre lived experience at the gathering is a meaningful and necessary step. Decisions are always stronger when guided by those who walk closest to the teachings and the challenges we aim to address.
3. **Communications:** Utilizing the new sectorwide communications table (established during the 2025 gathering) to strengthen common sector messaging and advocacy throughout the year. With the new communications table in place, this year offers a chance to speak with unity and clarity. When our messages carry a common purpose, they can travel far and lift the whole sector.
4. **Standardized Training:** Establishing a plan for sector workforce training that incorporates the four quadrants of the Medicine Wheel. Building a training plan grounded in the four quadrants of the Medicine Wheel is a powerful approach. This framework honours balance—mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual—and ensures that our workforce grows holistically and culturally .



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## THANK YOU

This gathering was made possible by the dedication and contributions of a vast and caring community. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Staff and Board of End Homelessness Winnipeg, the Reaching Home Community Advisory Board, the Gathering Steering Committee, and the Event Producers for their tireless work behind the scenes. We thank our network of funders and sponsors (see below), whose contributions helped to make this Gathering possible and to enhance its impact. We also acknowledge and celebrate those leading the conversations throughout the event—our keynotes, music performers, panelists, moderators, and speakers—whose efforts and voices drive this important work forward.

**Miigwetch, Ekosi, Wopida, Masi Cho, Migewech, Maarsii, Matna, Merci, and Thank You to all who joined this important conversation and collective effort.**

*Scan the QR code below to visit the website, which features the Grandmothers' and Grandfathers' Council and their biographies, the full 2025 program, and the gathering photographs.*



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