

HOSTED BY



**ENDING HOMELESSNESS  
TOGETHER**

**DEC 3-5, 2024**

**WINNIPEG, MANITOBA**

***ACKNOWLEDGING TRUTH  
AND WORKING TOWARDS RECONCILIATION***

**EVENT REPORT**



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*End Homelessness Winnipeg is located on Treaty 1 Territory, the home and traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Nehethowuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, and Anishininewuk Nations, and on the National homeland of the Red River Métis.*



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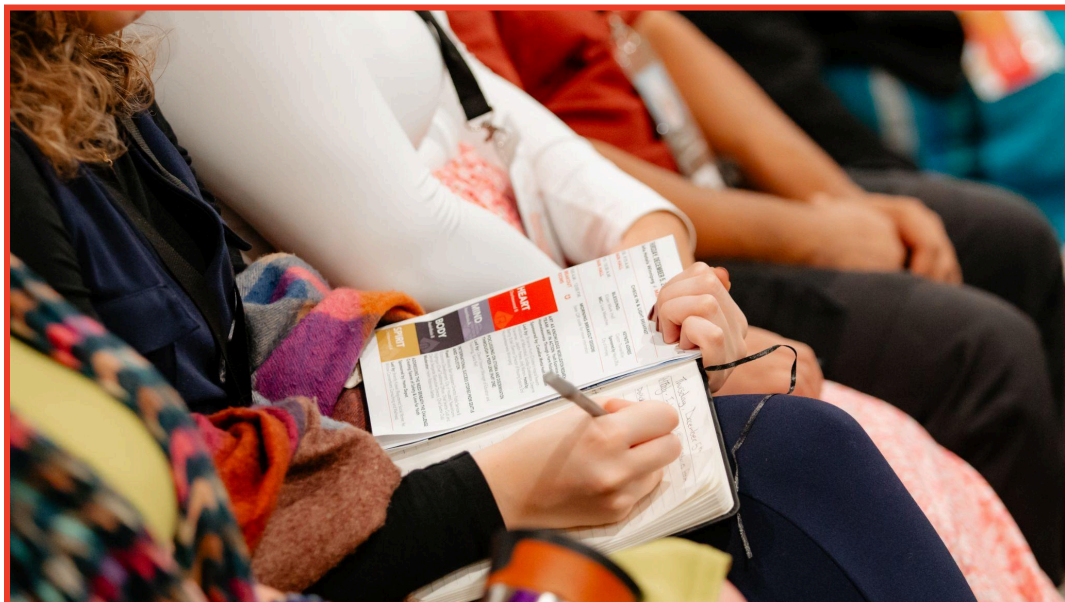
*Acknowledging Truth and Working Towards Reconciliation*

## OVERVIEW

From December 3 to 5, 2024, End Homelessness Winnipeg hosted the inaugural **Ending Homelessness Together** gathering. Over three days, individuals with lived experience of homelessness, sector professionals, government representatives, landlords, and businesses came together to explore solutions and collaborate on ending homelessness in our community.

The breakout sessions were thoughtfully curated and guided by the teachings of the Medicine Wheel, focusing on the interconnected aspects of the **heart, mind, body, and spirit**, and reflecting the importance of harmony in addressing homelessness.

This gathering was made possible by the dedication and contributions of a vast and caring community. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Elders Council for guiding the programming and ceremonies, ensuring we move forward in a good way. We acknowledge the staff at End Homelessness Winnipeg, the Community Advisory Board, the Gathering Committee, and Event Producers for their tireless work behind the scenes. We celebrate those leading the conversations throughout the event—our MC, keynote speakers, music performers, panelists, and moderators—whose efforts and voices drive this important work forward. We also send out a huge thank you to all our sponsors and all those who attended.





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## DAY 1: A Reflective and Inspiring Start

The Ending Homelessness Together gathering kicked off on December 3, 2024, at the WAG-Qaumajuq with a reflective opening ceremony centered on unity, cultural understanding, and reconciliation. Elder Wanbdi Wakita led a Pipe Ceremony, while Elder Martha Peet performed the Lighting of the Qulliq, grounding participants in Indigenous traditions of respect and healing.



Jason Whitford, CEO of End Homelessness Winnipeg welcomed attendees, emphasizing the gathering's role in fostering collaboration and reconciliation. "This gathering is a critical step toward reconciliation... Together, we aim to create lasting solutions that respect Indigenous teachings, strengthen our communities, and provide every person with the dignity of a home".

The ceremony included a moving performance by Métis fiddle player Tayler Fleming followed by a deeply personal performance by Leonard Sumner, who shared his journey of overcoming homelessness. MC Lisa Meeches expertly guided the event, weaving together cultural and ceremonial elements.

Our government leaders' letters in the printed program underscored the need for collective action. Premier Wab Kinew called for Indigenous-led systemic change and Mayor Scott Gillingham reaffirmed Winnipeg's dedication to reconciliation and equitable housing and on behalf of Minister Sean Fraser, Minister Dan Vandal stated, "this conference is more than a gathering—it is a platform for action, innovation, and shared commitment to ensuring that everyone has a safe and affordable place to call home."



Minister Bernadette Smith brought greetings and emphasized the importance of community-driven solutions, and MGEU President Kyle Ross honoured frontline workers. The opening ceremony brought together policymakers, frontline workers, landlords, and community members, all united in a shared commitment to coordinated action for safe, dignified housing for all. The opening ceremony united all attendees in a shared commitment to coordinated action for safe, dignified housing for all.



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## DAY 2: A Call for Action and Reconciliation

The second day of the Ending Homelessness Together gathering, held at the Delta Hotel Winnipeg on December 4, 2024, began with a Pipe and Water Ceremony led by Elders Florence and Phillip Paynter, setting a tone of respect and tradition. This was followed by a powerful keynote from award-winning writer and activist Niigaan Sinclair. Addressing policymakers, frontline workers, and community members, Sinclair urged service providers to meet people where they are, ensuring dignity remains at the core of efforts to end homelessness.

Sinclair reflected on Winnipeg's history of bringing Indigenous people together and stressed that lasting change requires sustained action and recognition of ongoing injustices. His message underscored the deep connection between reconciliation and housing justice.



The day continued with breakout sessions exploring key issues such as the intersection of homelessness and missing persons, the impacts of brain injury and colonial systems, and culturally appropriate housing solutions.

Insights from community leaders, frontline workers, and individuals with lived experience led to actionable strategies. The day concluded with the Bannock & Tea Grandparents Circle, where the Elders Advisory Council shared wisdom and cultural knowledge.

A spirit of collaboration filled the gathering, as attendees united in a shared commitment to coordinated action for safe, dignified housing for all. By the end of the day, it was clear that momentum for systemic change was building, offering hope for a future free of homelessness.



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## DAY 2: Programming

### HOMELESSNESS AND MISSING PERSONS: ADDRESSING THE INTERSECTION OF VULNERABILITY AND DISPLACEMENT WITHIN WINNIPEG'S INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

**Sponsored by:** Me-Dian Credit Union **Led by:** Nicole Martel (Community Engagement/Support Team, Aboriginal Alert)

### THE INTERSECTION OF BRAIN INJURY AND COLONIAL SYSTEMS: AN INTERACTIVE MINI-WORLD CAFÉ TO EXPLORE HOUSING INSECURITY AND HOMELESSNESS WITH A VISION TO IMPROVE POSITIVE OUTCOMES THROUGH RECONCILIATION

**Led by:** Lisa Engel (University of Manitoba, Institute for Work & Health), Janine Bramadat (End Homelessness Winnipeg), Meredith Daun (Social Worker & Counsellor), and Kevin Plett-Hoffman (Community Member & Person with Lived Experience)

### DESIGNING HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SOLUTIONS FOR SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

**Sponsored by:** Home Depot, **Panel:** Cheryl Starr (Cultural Support & Program Coordinator, Spence Neighbourhood Association), Levi A. Foy (Executive Director, Sunshine House), and Shanlee Scott (Executive Director, Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad) **Moderator:** Brandy Kowal (Registered Social Worker, Red Willow Connections Consulting and Wellness)

### THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING THE ROOT OF INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS

**Sponsored by:** Bruce Oake Recovery Centre, **Led by:** Kim Kakakaway (Indigenous Training and Relations Consultant, A Way Home Canada)

### LEARNING AS WE GROW: STRATEGIES TO MANAGE BURNOUT DURING CRISIS

**Sponsored by:** Réseau Compassion Network **Led by:** Levi A. Foy (Executive Director, Sunshine House) and Aaron Mann (Data Management and Program Analyst, Sunshine House)

### DATA SOVEREIGNTY

**Led by:** Dr. Stephanie Sinclair (Data Sovereignty Lead, First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba) and Carla Cochrane (Data Sovereignty Implementation Lead, First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba)

### TRANSFORMING SHELTER SPACES: RETHINKING TEMPORARY HOUSING FOR LASTING IMPACT

**Sponsored by:** F-Blok Architecture **Panel:** Christine Vanagas (Director of Community Wellness, Siloam Mission), Jamil Mahmood (Executive Director, Main Street Project), Frank Parkes (Executive Director, N'Dinawemak-Our Relatives' Place) **Moderator:** Mark Fleming (Chair, Community Advisory Board, End Homelessness Winnipeg)

### BANNOCK & TEA GRANDPARENTS CIRCLE

**Elders Circle:** End Homelessness Together Elders Council Members – Ivy Chaske, Mary Wilson, Helen Robinson-Settee, Wanbdi Wakita, Linda Schatkowsky **Moderator:** Kathy Mallett

### MOVING FORWARD: ACCESSIBLE AND IMPROVED FINANCIAL SUPPORT

**Panel:** Bram Strain (President and CEO, Business Council of Manitoba), Janet Clark (Senior Director, Reaching Home – End Homelessness Winnipeg), Megan Tate (Vice President Community Impact, Winnipeg Foundation) Carolyn Ryan (CEO & Assistant Deputy Minister, Manitoba Housing), Richard Mahe (Senior Planner and Project Manager, City of Winnipeg) **Moderator:** Jason Whitford (Chief Executive Officer, End Homelessness Winnipeg)

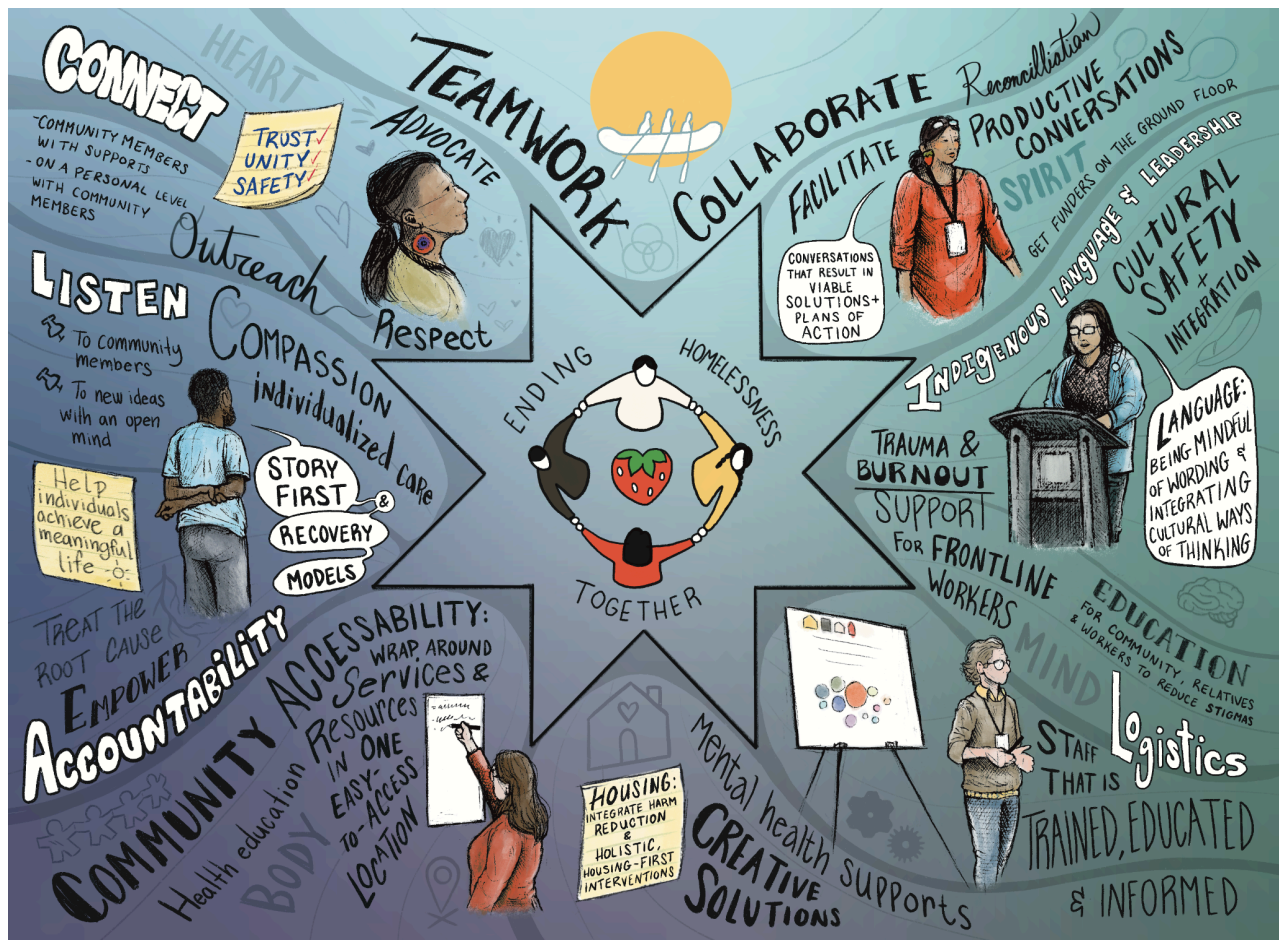


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## DAY 2 & 3: Artist Kale Sheppard- Event Reflection



Artist Kale Sheppard joined Ending Homelessness Winnipeg to reflect and record their thoughts on the Ending Homelessness Together gathering. Above is their creation.

Kale Sheppard is a multidisciplinary visual artist based in Winnipeg, MB. In 2018, Sheppard was commissioned by the Winnipeg Art Gallery to produce a mural, *Mosaic Sea* (2018) that was displayed throughout the construction of Qaumajuq (formerly the Inuit Art Center). Typically focusing on stylized sketches, prints and paintings, Sheppard has contributed to the CBC's "Great Canadian Colouring Book" (2020) and was a featured artist in the CBC Gem documentary *Carved in Stone: Sanannguaqtit* (2020). Using art as a means to connect to their culture while living in the south, their practice is constantly evolving and expanding into new media.



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## DAY 3: A Hopeful Conclusion

The Ending Homelessness Together gathering closed on December 5, 2024, at the Delta Hotel Winnipeg, leaving a lasting impact and a strong sense of direction. The day began with a blessing from Elder Mark Hall, followed by a keynote from Clayton Thomas-Müller, whose call for environmental justice as a pillar of housing security, and environmental racism as a cause of homelessness, resonated deeply. Sponsored by the Mayor of Winnipeg's Office, his message reinforced the urgency of long-term commitment.

The breakout sessions tackled key issues, including youth homelessness, stigma, and international success stories. Experts and lived-experience advocates shared actionable strategies, emphasizing collaboration, innovation, and culturally responsive solutions. Later discussions focused on peer engagement, data-driven approaches, and supporting newcomers in securing permanent housing underscoring a shift from acknowledgment to action.

After Niigaan Sinclair's final reflections, the gathering's Elders Council and CEO Jason Whitford surprised Niigaan with a special Star Blanket Ceremony, honouring him for the work he has done and promised to continue to do in this sector. The ceremony was accompanied by a stirring performance by the Buffalo Red Thunder Drum Group. The closing ceremony encapsulated the gathering's core message: reconciliation, collaboration, and respect must guide our collective efforts.

As attendees departed, the momentum for systemic change was undeniable, renewing hope for a future where every Winnipegger has a safe, dignified home.





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## DAY 3: Programming

### ART AS KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION RESEARCH TEAM: ART IN ACTION: YOUTH EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS THROUGH A HARM REDUCTION LENS

**Sponsored by:** Canadian Mental Health Association

**Led by:** Brianna Hunt (Children's Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba), Sunday Queskekapow, Cheyenne Traverse, Jaydin Peters, Jody Martens

### FOCUSING ON STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION THROUGH A PEER LENS

**Led by:** David Stewart (Manager of Education and Training, Sara Riel)

### INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS STORIES FROM SEATTLE AND HOUSTON

**Panel:** Melody Barr (Assistant Director, Public Services & Economic Development, City of Houston), Nawiishtunmi Nightgun (Chief Traditional Officer, Chief Seattle Club) and Derrick Belgarde (Executive Director, Chief Seattle Club) **Hosted by:** Helen Robinson-Settee

### ADDRESSING THE NEED BENEATH THE CHALLENGE: CREATING SPACES OF SAFETY & LOVE FOR YOUTH

**Sponsored by:** Home Depot **Led by:** Brandy Kowal (Registered Social Worker, Red Willow Connections Consulting and Wellness)

### WHAT IS PEER ENGAGEMENT? WHY DO WE NEED IT?

**Sponsored by:** Johnston Group Inc. **Led by:** Al Wiebe (Peer and Community Engagement Trainer, Of No Fixed Address)

### DATA WALK

**Led by:** End Homelessness Winnipeg

### PANEL: SUPPORTING NEWCOMERS TRANSITION FROM SHELTER TO PERMANENT HOUSING

**Panel:** Mark Stewart (Executive Director, Salvation Army), Eve Sotiriadou (Executive Director, Canadian Muslim Women's Institute), Omar Fahmawi (Access to Justice Project Coordinator, Healthy Muslim Families) **Moderator:** Codi Guenther (Executive Director, New Journey Housing)





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## FEEDBACK

The event was widely regarded as a success, with smooth execution and positive feedback from attendees. A key highlight was the opportunity it provided for local teams who often miss out on out-of-province events. The conference was praised for being affordable and accessible, making it a valuable resource for those working in the sector.

The Elder's Tea and Bannock Grandparents Circle was particularly inspiring. Attendees appreciated the presence of artisans and resource tables, though the End Homelessness Winnipeg team expressed interest in featuring a broader range of communities and artistic disciplines in the future.



Networking opportunities were another strong point, with one attendee noting how meaningful it was to connect with others in the sector. The event's graphic design and communications also received numerous compliments.

As for the keynote speakers, both Clayton Thomas-Müller and Niigaan Sinclair were highlighted as excellent, with Clayton's more political commentary being appreciated in context, and Niigaan's contribution also drawing praise for its impact.



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## BY THE NUMBERS

### PEOPLE

- »» 8 Elders
- »» 344 Participants
- »» 2 Keynote speakers
- »» 39 Local presenters/ panelists
- »» 4 Out of town presenters/ panelists
- »» 6 Event Coordinators
- »» 9 Performers
- »» 26 Volunteers
- »» 9 Artisans

### PROGRAMMING

- »» 11 Breakout sessions
- »» 5 Panel sessions
- »» 1 Grandparents circle
- »» 6 Resource tables

### MARKETING

- »» 200 Posters disseminated city-wide
- Facebook
- 23 posts
  - 1 paid promotion: 21,652 views
  - 22 unpaid promotions: 27, 542 views
  - Total post views: 49,194
  - Total number of people interacting on 1 paid promotion: 7,809
  - Total number of people interacting on 22 posts: 14,738
  - Total Post Reach: 22,547

LinkedIn

- 14, 914 organic impressions

### OTHER

- »» 350 Tomahawk chips consumed
- »» 350 Swag bags for attendees
- »» 60 Winnipeg books by Niigan Sinclair gifted to presenters and performers
- »» 60 Who We Are books by The Honourable Murray Sinclair gifted to presenters and performers
- »» 2 Indigo Arrows door prizes
- »» 2 Starblankets - 1 on the stage and 1 gifted to Niigaan Sinclair to honour his contributions to ending homelessness in Winnipeg



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## EXIT SURVEY

Following the conclusion of Ending Homelessness Together, a survey was distributed to attendees to gather feedback on event highlights, areas for improvement, and suggestions for future events. The responses reflect a combination of inspiration, optimism, and a strong call for action. Many attendees appreciated the event's structure, particularly the integration of the Medicine Wheel and Indigenous perspectives, which provided valuable insights and healing approaches. Keynote speakers and breakout sessions were widely praised, and the event successfully fostered meaningful connections and collaboration across diverse sectors.



While attendees felt energized by the passion and dedication within the community, there was a shared acknowledgment of the need for more tangible housing solutions and ongoing education. The feedback emphasized both the potential for positive change and the challenges that persist in addressing homelessness.

In terms of future programming, participants expressed a desire for deeper engagement and more diverse representation in sessions. Suggestions included incorporating the voices of youth, individuals with lived experience, Elders, veterans, and those currently experiencing homelessness. Proposed topics for future discussions included housing and health, trauma-informed practices, and prevention strategies. Attendees also expressed a desire for actionable conversations, including brainstorming sessions, government collaboration, and advocacy for systemic change.

“This gathering is a critical step toward reconciliation... Together, we aim to create lasting solutions that respect Indigenous teachings, strengthen our communities, and provide every person with the dignity of a home”. - *Jason Whitford, CEO End Homelessness Winnipeg*

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

To see our recap video, click [HERE](#).



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