

Media Release

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Two New Housing First Teams to Help End Homelessness in Edmonton

Edmonton – Homeward Trust Edmonton welcomed two new Housing First teams to our community, delivered by Native Counselling Services of Alberta and The Mustard Seed. “The addition of these two Housing First teams expands our community’s collective efforts,” says Susan McGee, CEO of Homeward Trust Edmonton. “It aligns with *A Place to Call Home: Edmonton’s Updated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* and the work we as a community are doing to reach the Updated Plan’s three goals.”

Wednesday morning’s celebration began with a pipe ceremony to recognize the connections to community, culture and traditional practices, which can be an important part of the healing journey for Indigenous peoples. “Increasing the availability of Housing First programs delivered by Indigenous agencies is part of recognizing and addressing the effects of colonialism, trauma, and discrimination of Indigenous peoples,” says Susan McGee. “Native Counselling Services of Alberta brings to the table decades of assisting Indigenous individuals and families in our community, and we are grateful our partnership with NCSA grows to include this work.”

“NCSA has a long-standing partnership with Homeward Trust through our transitional housing program at Cunningham Place,” says Allen Benson, CEO of Native Counselling Services of Alberta. “We are pleased to expand on this partnership with the launch of our Indigenous Housing First program. We look forward to continuing our work with Homeward Trust and other partners like the Mustard Seed to end homelessness in Edmonton.”

The Mustard Seed joins Homeward Trust’s partner Housing First agencies to deliver Intensive Case Management. “Intensive Case Management has made a positive and lasting impact on the lives of individuals and families experiencing homelessness,” adds Susan McGee. “We look forward to The Mustard Seed being part of our coordinated system to help those needing intensive supports to end their experience of homelessness.”

“The Mustard Seed is pleased to partner with Homeward Trust and its Housing First initiative,” says Dean Kurpjuweit, Executive Director of The Mustard Seed. “It is with the support of a Housing First team that we are able to better provide our community participants with long-term, sustainable housing solutions. Together in this partnership, we move one step closer towards our shared goal of ending homelessness in Edmonton.”

Housing First is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that involves moving people who experience homelessness into independent and permanent housing as quickly as possible with no preconditions, and then connecting them with the supports and resources that they need to maintain their housing.

Homeward Trust is the community based organization that provides leadership and resources toward ending homelessness in Edmonton. We fulfill our mandate by leading initiatives and programs, engaging community stakeholders and partners, conducting research, creating awareness, and funding housing and support projects.

Indigenous peoples are vastly overrepresented among the homeless population in Edmonton. [The 2016 Edmonton Point-in-Time Homeless Count](#) found that 48% of those experiencing homelessness identified as Indigenous. NCSA will operate the second Housing First Team delivered by an Indigenous agency in our community. Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society is the first.

The 2016 Homeless Count also found that 59% of those surveyed were experiencing chronic homelessness. [Edmonton's Updated Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness](#) addresses chronic homelessness in its first goal and outlines the targets and actions to end chronic and episodic homelessness.

Funding for the Indigenous Housing First Team comes from the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy. Funding for the Intensive Case Management Housing First Team comes from the Government of Alberta.

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