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Journal

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Say Hello to OPPI's NEW Website!

If you haven't visited OPPI's website in a while, you should. OPPI has updated its website to better serve members and the public. Our website has a new look. The content is reorganized and is responsive so you can visit on your smartphone, tablet and laptop with ease. To speak to a wider audience, OPPI is introducing easily identifiable and relatable stories through case study examples on the homepage. These case studies illustrate the importance of the work RPPs do and speak to issues that transcend the planning profession. Visit the new ontarioplanners.ca today!

Thanks to OPJ contributors over the years

OPPI would like to thank members for supporting the Ontario Planning Journal, which has served the profession well over the past 30+ years. First started in 1987, the Journal has been the premier publication for Ontario's planning profession and has featured the work and informed opinions of RPPs across



Ontario. This issue will be the last one. In the new year, members and subscribers will receive the first issue of OPPI's new publication, Y Magazine. Y Magazine will feature the discussions RPPs are engaged in and the informed choices and inspired communities that result.

Write for the Planning Exchange blog!

Since 2015, OPPI has offered its Planning Exchange blog, facilitating the exchange of planning knowledge, best practices and dialogue about important issues. It runs on your contributions. OPPI is always looking for great topics to highlight, and members to write. Do you have any experience with the LPAT that you want to share? Are you conducting interesting research and want to profile it? Do you have informed opinions on issues of the day in which planners can play a vital role? Is OPPI missing an emerging topic or theme that members need to know about? If you are interested in contributing, please contact OPPI's Education Manager, Ryan Des Roches at education@ontarioplanners.ca. Submit your post today!



Further information is available on the OPPI website at www.ontarioplanners.ca

Restructuring First Nation housing need through community driven metrics

By Dr. Shelagh McCartney, Chief Elizabeth Atlookan, Courtney Kaupp, Wanda Sugarhead & Ron Missewace

Does supporting a system that has made little progress in the past three decades sound rational? No. However, this is the case for the First Nation housing systems in Canada. Self-determination allows communities, like Eabametoong, to address their specific housing issues, and, through locally developed metrics, to measure the effectiveness of their changes, no longer relying on a uniform solution we all know isn't working.

Eabametoong First Nation, located 350 km northeast of Thunder Bay, has been rebuilding its housing system through a series of projects aimed at improving the planning, design and governance of housing. Faced with urgent housing need—limited building lots, a growing housing waitlist, and short house lifespans—Eabametoong leadership has worked to reframe the conversation around housing from one of minimum standards of acceptability to one about how locally generated housing solutions can contribute to greater community well-being.

In Eabametoong First Nation, core housing need metrics reveal 65 per cent of housing is reported as inadequate and 36 per cent is non-suitable, while across Canada 7 per cent of houses are considered inadequate and 5 per cent non-suitable.¹ A recent report completed by the Auditor General of Canada on the socio-economic gaps on First Nations reserves stated that First Nation people on reserves experience lower socio-economic outcomes than Canadians and that current measures are not adequate or comprehensive enough to assess First Nations well-being.² While the recommendations for improved measures are addressed to the federal government, they have broad implications for other agencies and professionals, including planners, working with First Nation communities. The existing indicators are convenient for top-down approaches to national policy and programming, but they do not recognize the diversity of First Nation communities or the role metrics-creation can have in community self-determination.

As part of the redevelopment of the housing system, Eabametoong, in partnership with Ryerson University's Together Design Lab, completed a housing needs assessment to capture high quality, local data on the state of housing. The assessment provided an opportunity to learn about the lived

experiences and housing preferences of its members in order to better inform community planning. The assessment tool, developed locally, addresses housing from multiple perspectives using community-created metrics, focusing on distinct priorities within the community, moving beyond the standard market-based approach.

Eabametoong First Nation's community-led housing needs assessment expands the metrics used for analysis by shifting to a stronger occupant focus.

Developing partnerships and working with local, bilingual facilitators to survey and host workshops reduced barriers to participation. Local facilitators bridged gaps in cultural understandings through their expert knowledge and connected with people who may not typically participate in community planning.

Workshops provided an opportunity for Ryerson team members to learn about the community in greater depth, while allowing community members to collaborate in visioning alternative futures. Workshops and meetings took place two to three times a day over each trip of four to five days to the community. Workshop participants included elders and groups of elementary school age children. Further outreach was coordinated with local facilitators to involve typically unheard voices, such as those who are housebound, those who are uncomfortable speaking in large

public meetings and those with many responsibilities and not enough time.

The framework of the survey and its outcomes are unique to Eabametoong, but the process provides an example how to work in partnership and support the creation of locally developed and relevant housing indicators. Key elements to address are inclusion, lived experiences, and scale.

Inclusion—Housing data collection typically focuses on heads of households, narrowing the diversity of respondents and limiting understanding of housing need. Allowing for survey responses from any, or multiple, members of a household and diversifying the age and gender of respondents can reveal a different set of perspectives leading to more responsive solutions. In Eabametoong, the majority of houses are three and four bedrooms, designed for growing young families but leaving few options for singles, couples or young



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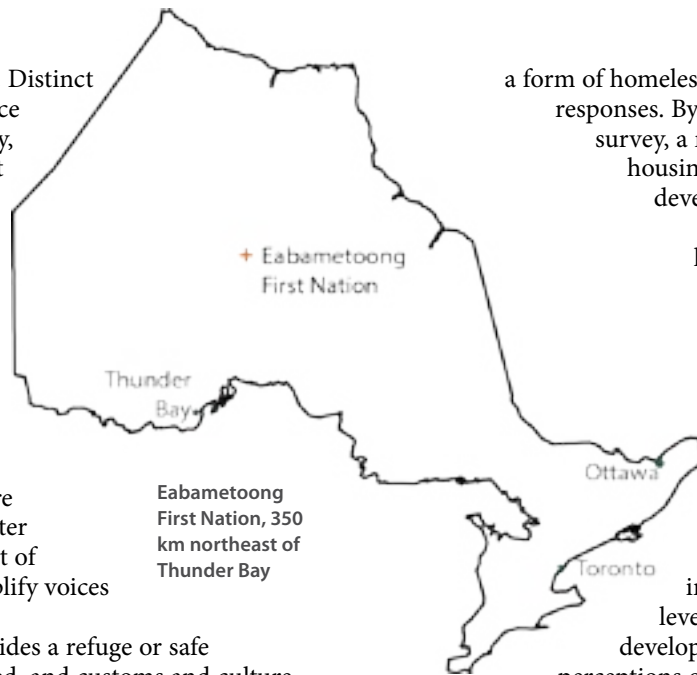
Courtney Kaupp

people looking for their own space. Distinct demographic populations experience identical living situations differently, by understanding specific occupant outcomes a greater understanding of existing situations can be created.

Inclusion also extends to the language and framing of questions. Formal or technical surveying language can create a barrier to meaningful participation. Open ended and follow-up questions provide respondents an opportunity to share their perspectives and provide greater context for responses. A broader set of questions can create a space to amplify voices not usually heard.

Lived Experience—Housing provides a refuge or safe place where relationships are formed, and customs and culture practiced. Core housing need metrics frame need as an issue of physical condition and housing supply, a narrow focus that ignores the history and broader social, and psychological impacts of housing to individual and community well-being.

A priority issue in Eabametoong, is understanding how the housing shortage manifests as different forms of homelessness. Multigenerational family living, family doubling and insecure sleeping arrangements that result from a shortage of housing is



a form of homelessness and requires a range of responses. By shifting to an occupant-focused survey, a more nuanced understanding of housing and its impacts can be developed.

Scale—The assessment examined housing at different scales from an individual housing unit to the community level. Scale-related questions focused on the natural environment, space between houses and community layout. The focus on housing as a single unit creates a disconnection from the immediate environment.

Previous government intervention had cleared and levelled land for neighbourhood development, which influenced the perceptions of the environment surrounding the house and the wider public realm. Through the survey the importance of integrating housing and neighbourhoods with the natural environment was shared by the majority of respondents.

When undertaken through a community-led process, housing need assessments and other similar planning measures are more than a report, they are a record of collective knowledge. Like the process, the final report and recommendations are developed

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Eabametoong, October, 2017

collaboratively. The resulting report is action oriented, building on the strengths and experiences of community members towards the creation of community goals and plans to address housing and housing-related needs. Community-identified metrics allow for newly developed plans to be tested against relevant local priorities, contributing to a process of self-determination.

Supporting a community-led process requires shifting project timeline expectations, dedicating greater time to face-to-face relationship building, training and working in the community. Partnering with a population that has been alienated from planning processes and disconnected from the design of even the most personal spaces presents a difficult challenge to measuring outcomes. After generations of inadequate housing and enforced intervention, immediate participation and trust in planning processes cannot be expected but must be earned.

Planners have the opportunity and expertise to question and enhance standard metrics when carrying out housing needs assessments and similar projects. Collecting data, particularly in marginalized communities where decades of existing reports have detailed deficiencies with little change, must demonstrate a clear objective for further evaluation. Evaluations must lead to action and provide clear ways forward to improve future outcomes.

Together, our goal should be to assist in the development, collection and implementation of community-based metrics—listening and learning with partners and not relying on standards. Self-determination allows communities, like Eabametoong, to plan for and address their specific housing issues, and through locally developed metrics measure the effectiveness of their changes, no longer relying on a uniform solution we all know isn't working.

Dr. Shelagh McCartney (D. Des, MRAIC) is an assistant professor at Ryerson University's School of Urban and Regional Planning. As director of Together Design Lab, McCartney partners with First Nation and other marginalized communities in addressing housing issues. Courtney Kaupp is a research associate with Together Design Lab at Ryerson University and is a graduate of Ryerson University's School of Urban and Regional Planning. Chief Elizabeth Atlookan is serving her third term as Chief of Eabametoong First Nation. Wanda Sugarhead is serving her first term as a Councillor of Eabametoong First Nation and holds the housing portfolio. Ron Misewace is Eabametoong First Nation's Housing Manager and oversees capital projects for the First Nation.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE AUTHORS

Endnotes

- 1 Statistics Canada. 2017. Fort Hope 64, IRI [Census subdivision], Ontario and Canada [Country] (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017.
- 2 Auditor General of Canada. (2018). Report 5 – Socio-economic gaps on First Nations Reserves- Indigenous Services Canada. 2018 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada. Retrieved from http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201805_05_e_43037.html

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