

Building Strength Through Shelter

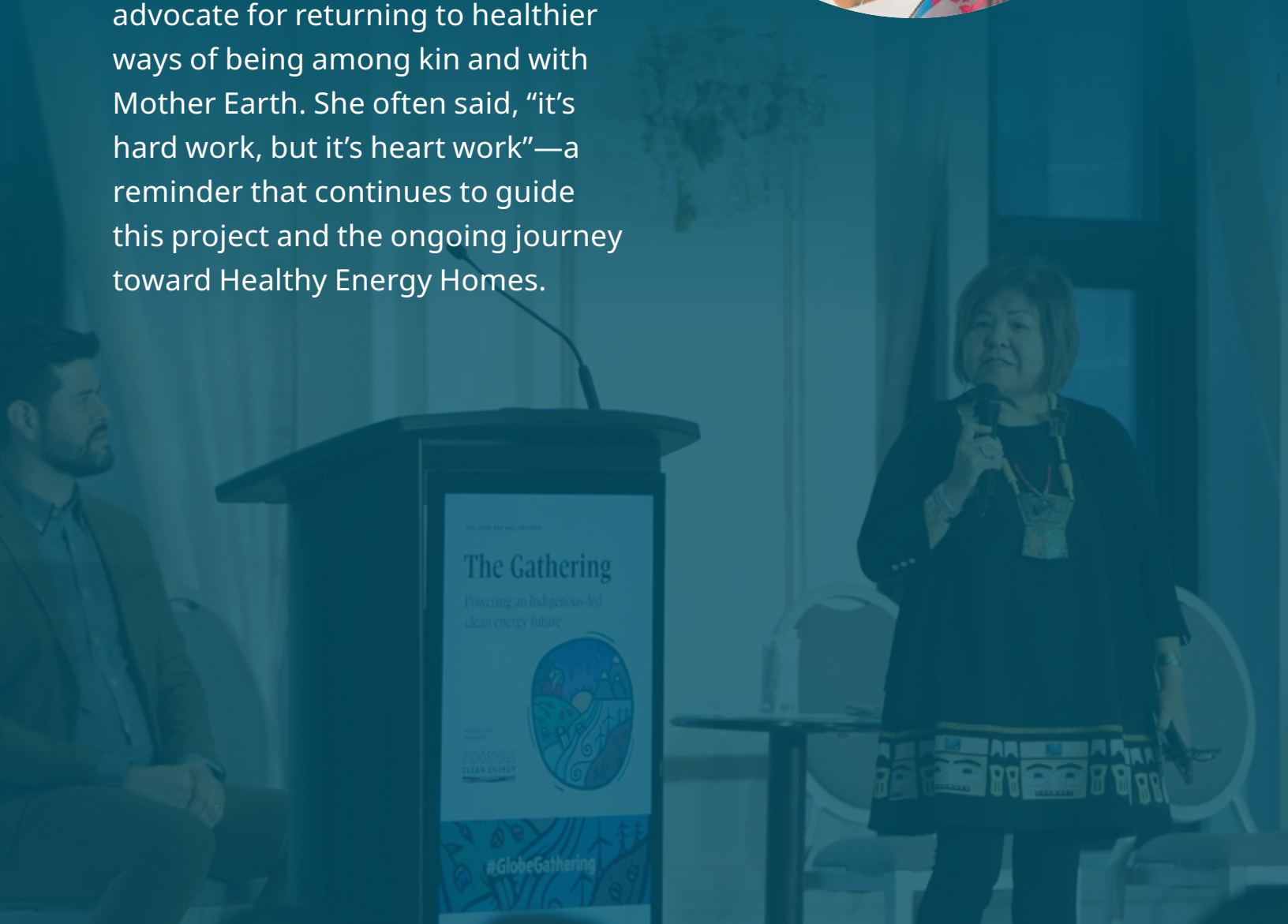
Policy prescriptions for
Indigenous Healthy Energy Homes

December 2025



We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Leona Humchitt for her significant contributions to this project during her time with us on Earth, and for her continued guidance in spirit. This report is dedicated to her memory with permissions from her family.

We want to honour her constant efforts and immense impacts in advancing climate action; Leona will be remembered as a strong advocate for returning to healthier ways of being among kin and with Mother Earth. She often said, “it’s hard work, but it’s heart work”—a reminder that continues to guide this project and the ongoing journey toward Healthy Energy Homes.



Who we are

This report is the result of years of collaboration between the Canadian Climate Institute and Indigenous Clean Energy. It was supported by Shared Value Solutions as well as many knowledge holders, practitioners and advocates who have long carried the struggle for safe housing. We raise our hands to those who came before us and who work on the ground to bring change. As authors, we endeavoured to guide this work in a good way by listening deeply, amplifying stories, and weaving together the knowledge of communities, policy makers, and technical experts. Each partner brought different strengths and positionalities, united by a shared commitment to Indigenous sovereignty, sound climate policy, and community wellness.



The Canadian Climate Institute

is a fully remote, climate change policy research organization with staff, board members, expert panelists, and advisors located across the country. The Climate Institute is committed to Indigenous reconciliation and a respect for Indigenous sovereignty. Through the Indigenous Research stream, the Institute advances sound climate policies that are consistent with self-determination by centering Indigenous-led research in partnership with Indigenous led-organizations to amplify their expertise and knowledge.

Indigenous Clean Energy (ICE)

is a national non-profit, Indigenous-led organization that focuses on advancing Indigenous leadership and collective action in the clean energy transition through capacity building and project development support for clean energy and efficiency projects. ICE's work takes place on the traditional and ancestral lands of Indigenous Nations across Turtle Island, where energy development has historically been tied to colonial systems that disrupted Indigenous governance, economies, and ways of life. The organization's efforts are rooted in respect for Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and the inherent rights of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. ICE positions itself as a collaborator who walks alongside communities, supporting their visions and amplifying their capacity to lead clean energy transitions in ways that reflect their cultures, values, and worldviews.

Shared Value Solutions (SVS)

is a settler-owned environmental and community development consulting firm with team members serving First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Nations from coast to coast to coast. The head office is based in Guelph, Ont. on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron and within the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Their office also sits within the lands of the Between the Lakes Treaty #3 (1792) and the Nanfan Treaty (1701) and is close to the Haldimand Tract. They are located within the Grand River Watershed which is shared with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Six Nations of the Grand River, and the Saugeen Ojibway Nation. The firm specializes in conducting community-driven research with and for Indigenous communities across Canada, providing expertise in social research, regulatory processes and negotiations, environmental science, geographic information systems, planning, and more. SVS works actively to support First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities in advancing their rights and interests.



Authors

There are aspects of the authors' backgrounds that strengthen this report, as well as gaps that may limit their insights. We acknowledge that systemic injustices and inequities stemming from historical colonization and ongoing discrimination have positioned certain people and communities at greater risk of physical, social, and economic impacts from climate change and climate policy. This includes Black, Indigenous, and people of colour, lower-income people, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, people with disabilities, and others. These groups and their experiences are often not adequately represented in climate policy development and implementation.

Maria Shallard, *Canadian Climate Institute*

Maria Shallard is of mixed settler/Pune'luxutth ancestry. She holds undergraduate and master's degrees with a focus on Indigenous and environmental research and is the Director of the Indigenous Research team at the Canadian Climate Institute. Growing up in a family-run construction business, she gained first-hand experience of housing challenges and was also motivated by her personal experience as a renter to create change that leads to healthier homes.

Carlyn Allary, *Canadian Climate Institute*

Carlyn Allary is a Research Associate on the Indigenous Research team at the Canadian Climate Institute and a member of the Red River Métis, part of the Manitoba Métis Federation. She holds a bachelor's degree and is pursuing a master's degree, both from settler universities. Carlyn acknowledges the unique lens and experience she brings as a Métis woman, which shapes how she approaches her work.

Kayla Fayant, *Indigenous Clean Energy*

Kayla Fayant is a Métis woman living on and working from her home community, Fishing Lake Métis Settlement in Alberta. She is a Program Manager on the Bringing It Home team at ICE. Her time spent working and living in her home community has motivated her to create systemic change that leads to healthier living in her community and others.

Chad Bonnetrouge, *Indigenous Clean Energy*

Chad Bonnetrouge is Dene from the Deh Gáh Got'jè First Nation on Treaty 11 Territory and is currently residing on the territory of Six Nations of the Grand River. He is the Energy Efficiency Program Coordinator at ICE. As an Indigenous youth from the north, he has extensive knowledge and lived experience with Indigenous housing and the impacts of climate change, and he strives to accelerate Indigenous participation in clean energy and energy efficiency.

Joanne Shantz, *Shared Value Solutions*

Joanne Shantz is of predominantly Irish and English settler ancestry and currently resides on the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. She is a Senior Researcher at SVS and has had the privilege of working alongside Indigenous Nations and organizations across Canada on projects related to health and well-being, energy, climate change, and housing.


Olivia Shotyk, *Shared Value Solutions*

Olivia Shotyk is of settler ancestry and currently lives on the treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the traditional territory of the Attiwonderonk and Haudenosaunee. She holds a master's degree in landscape architecture, focused on Indigenous placemaking and design practices. Olivia is an Intermediate Researcher at SVS and has worked with Indigenous communities across Canada on projects related to community planning, socioeconomics, and climate change.

Jeremy Shute, *Shared Value Solutions*

Jeremy Shute is of mixed Irish, Scottish and English ancestry and lives on the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. He is a founding partner of SVS and is a Senior Land Use Planner. He has worked at the interface of community planning, housing, and climate change with Indigenous nations across Canada.





This home in Attawapiskat First Nation, Ont., pictured on April 20, 2016, was deemed not fit for human habitation. (Nathan Denette/The Canadian Press)

Executive summary

Access to safe, healthy, and energy-efficient housing remains a critical challenge for many Indigenous communities across Canada. This report establishes the concept of Healthy Energy Homes and demonstrates the co-benefits of an approach to housing that would improve health for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people while simultaneously contributing to Canada's net zero objectives and supporting climate resilience.

Despite growing recognition of the links between Indigenous health, energy, and housing, existing government solutions fail to support integrated approaches, leaving policies and funding approaches fragmented, siloed, and often disconnected from local realities. What's more, the long-term health costs and greenhouse gas emissions associated with inadequate housing are not fully valued or considered in decision-making. Additionally, many communities face capacity constraints in developing housing that is safe, healthy, energy efficient, and climate resilient.

As reflected in most Indigenous worldviews, everything is interconnected. Meaningful progress demands co-ordinated, wholistic action that bridges health, housing, climate and energy policy across federal, provincial, and territorial levels in full partnership with Indigenous rights holders.

The term wholistic is used throughout the report in place of holistic, to reflect Indigenous concepts of knowing and being that reflect mind, body, heart and spirit (Absolon 2010; Miles et al 2023).



A group of people are sitting in a circle on wooden benches inside a pit house. The room has a high, vaulted wooden ceiling and log walls. Some people are wearing traditional Indigenous clothing, including a beaded bag and a beanie. The atmosphere appears to be a community gathering or a sharing circle.

This report explores Healthy Energy Homes as an approach to Indigenous housing that is grounded in that idea of interconnectedness.

The research is informed by an extensive literature review, a Healthy Energy Homes Virtual Gathering, and semi-structured interviews with experts and practitioners in sectors including housing, health, energy, and governance. Our approach centred on storytelling and focused on Indigenous-authored literature as much as possible.

Innovative finance models can empower Indigenous rights holders to access the resources required to develop Healthy Energy Homes, while supporting intergovernmental efforts to advance Canada's commitments to reconciliation, climate action, and critical infrastructure development. Examples of this approach include the First Nations Market Housing Fund, which builds community capacity to expand home ownership on reserve.

Central to this type of financial approach is a shift from one-time project funding toward long-term, flexible, and self-determined financial partnerships.

This report recommends that governments work collaboratively with Indigenous rights holders to co-develop housing policies that reflect cultural, regional, and community-specific realities centered on wholistic wellness. Progress will require better measurement of housing, health, and climate impacts and benefits, along with more responsive programs and supports that strengthen community capacity.

Project Stewards with Indigenous Clean Energy's Bringing It Home program gather in a sharing circle in a pit house in Osoyoos, B.C., in the summer of 2025. (Cara Garneau/Indigenous Clean Energy)



Healthy Energy Homes are homes that are energy efficient, climate resilient, and support the well-being of inhabitants. The term conveys a different concept of housing that is centered on the human and community dimensions of housing, energy efficiency, cultural values, and greenhouse gas reduction. In effect, Healthy Energy Homes is the approach we suggest to ensure energy efficiency for deep retrofits and new builds: an approach that supports health outcomes, overall well-being, and emissions reductions.

The Tiny home subdivision located in Tyendinaga, Ont. is pictured during the summer of 2025. (Cara Garneau/ICE)



Together, these solutions point to a clear path forward. Improved co-ordination across governments and innovative, flexible financing can unlock far greater results from the funding currently being spent. While closing First Nations, Inuit, and Métis housing gaps demands investment, co-designed programs and policies ensure that funding goes further and delivers lasting benefits for Indigenous Peoples.

The moment is urgent and the opportunity is clear. With the establishment of Build Canada Homes, a \$13 billion federal agency to accelerate affordable housing construction, governments have a chance to improve Indigenous infrastructure. Healthy Energy Homes are not only a housing solution—they are a foundation for community health, climate resilience, and reconciliation. Indigenous communities are already leading the way; what is needed now is enabling, co-ordinated policy action.

Policy recommendations summary

A more detailed version of these policy recommendations can be found on page 56 of this report.

- 1. Co-ordinate and integrate government action:** Federal, provincial and territorial governments and their agencies should create explicit coordination mechanisms—such as interdepartmental working groups—with Indigenous governments to integrate policy frameworks, reduce duplication, streamline access to resources, and re-allocate existing funding to support shared goals and benefits.
- 2. Co-develop policies and programs with Indigenous leadership:** Federal, provincial and territorial governments and their agencies must co-design policies and programs with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis leadership to ensure cultural relevance and regional adaptability. Co-development strengthens trust, enables tailored solutions, and reflects the principle of self-determination.
- 3. Commit to long-term investment agreements:** Federal, provincial, and territorial governments should commit to multi-year funding agreements with Indigenous rights holders. Stable commitments enable long-term planning, the construction of new Healthy Energy Homes, upgrades and retrofits to existing housing, and investment in health measures such as indoor air quality monitoring.
- 4. Provide flexible funding options:** Federal, provincial and territorial governments and their agencies should offer a range of funding models that allow Indigenous communities to select the approach most suited to their goals and capacity—whether traditional funding, blended finance, outcome-based agreements, or community-led mechanisms.



- 5. Measure the wholistic benefits and impacts of housing:** Federal, provincial and territorial governments and their agencies should ensure that reporting requirements for housing projects capture social, cultural, environmental, and economic impacts—not just project outputs. This approach supports evidence-based decision-making, ensures future funding is better aligned with real outcomes, and reflects the lived experience of communities.
- 6. Ensure funding programs are accessible and capacity-responsive:** Federal, provincial and territorial governments and their agencies should ensure funding programs are straightforward and accessible. Application and reporting processes should be simplified, and support training, skill building, and job creation to ensure communities can fully benefit from the opportunities available.

By implementing these policy recommendations, Canadian governments have an opportunity to support Indigenous communities in creating Healthy Energy Homes that are energy efficient, climate resilient, and support the well-being of occupants. Success requires a shift toward meaningful partnerships: long-term, flexible, and co-developed approaches that recognize Indigenous leadership as central to achieving housing, health, and climate outcomes.

Inukjuak, Que., an Inuit community in Nunavik on the eastern shore of Hudson Bay, is pictured in the fall of 2024. (Lina Forero/ICE)

