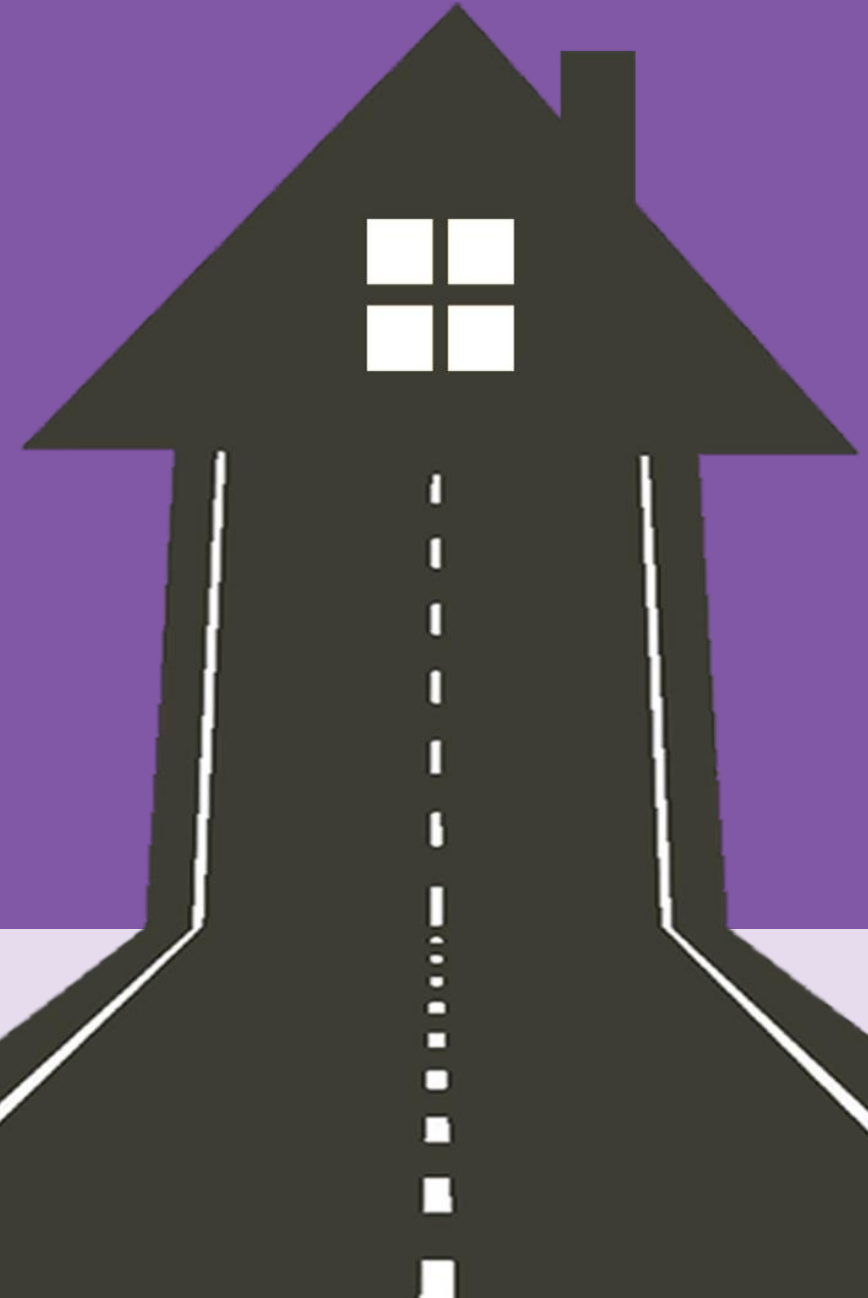


Surfacing Our Strengths:

# PATHWAY TO ACTION

November 15, 2022



**Every six days a woman in Canada is killed by  
her intimate partner**

<https://www.homelesshub.ca/blog/ending-homelessness-women-and-children-affected-intimate-partner-violence%C2%A0>

**Violence** plays a **pivotal role** in experiences of **homelessness** for **women**, especially for **Indigenous women** due to ongoing **impacts of colonialism**.

# The Lab Backbone & Leadership Teams



Funded by



Surfacing Our Strengths:  
PATHWAY TO ACTION



# Peer Researcher Team



Hilary Marks



Mandy (Amanda) MacKearney



Laural



Melissa Barnhard  
Naw-Hea'Mowha



Malinda

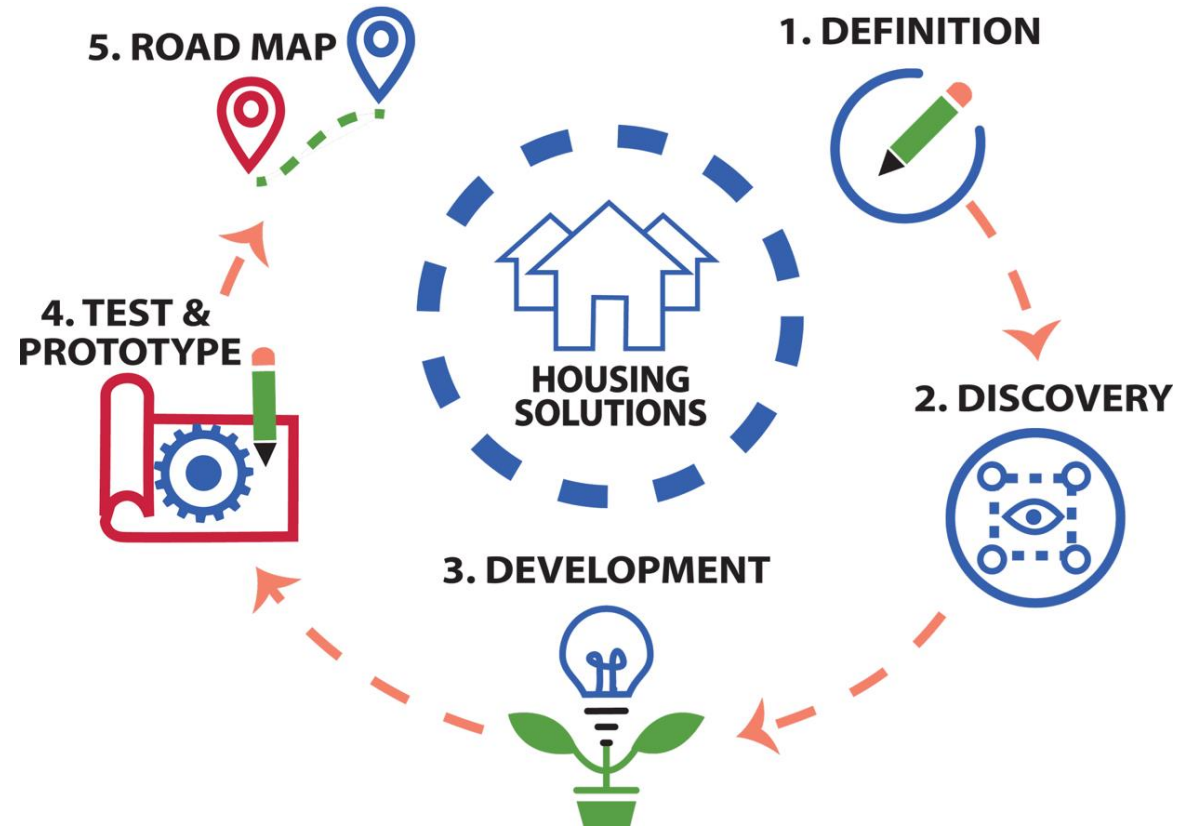
# Who are Women+?

## All women, including people with diverse gender identities

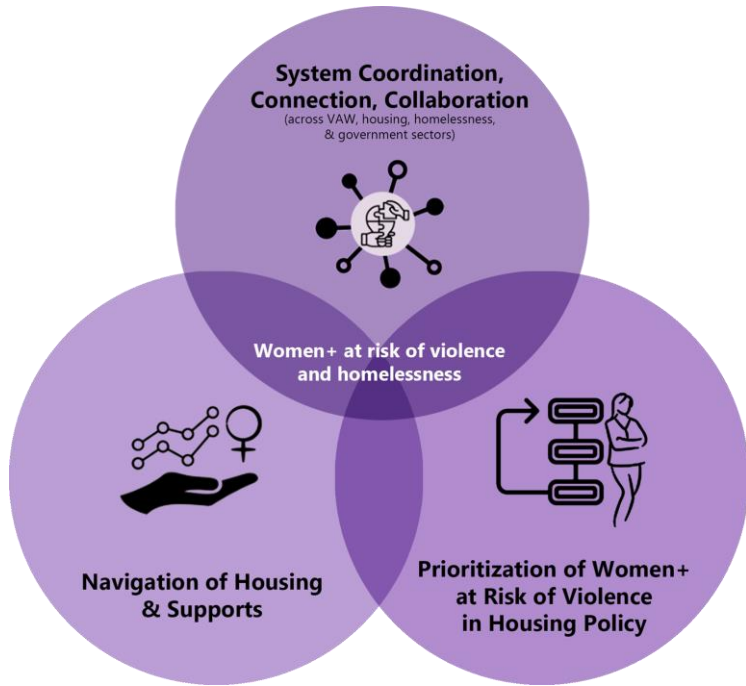
Definition developed for the Surfacing Our Strengths NHS Solutions Lab

# Surfacing Our Strength Housing Solution Lab (2020-2022)

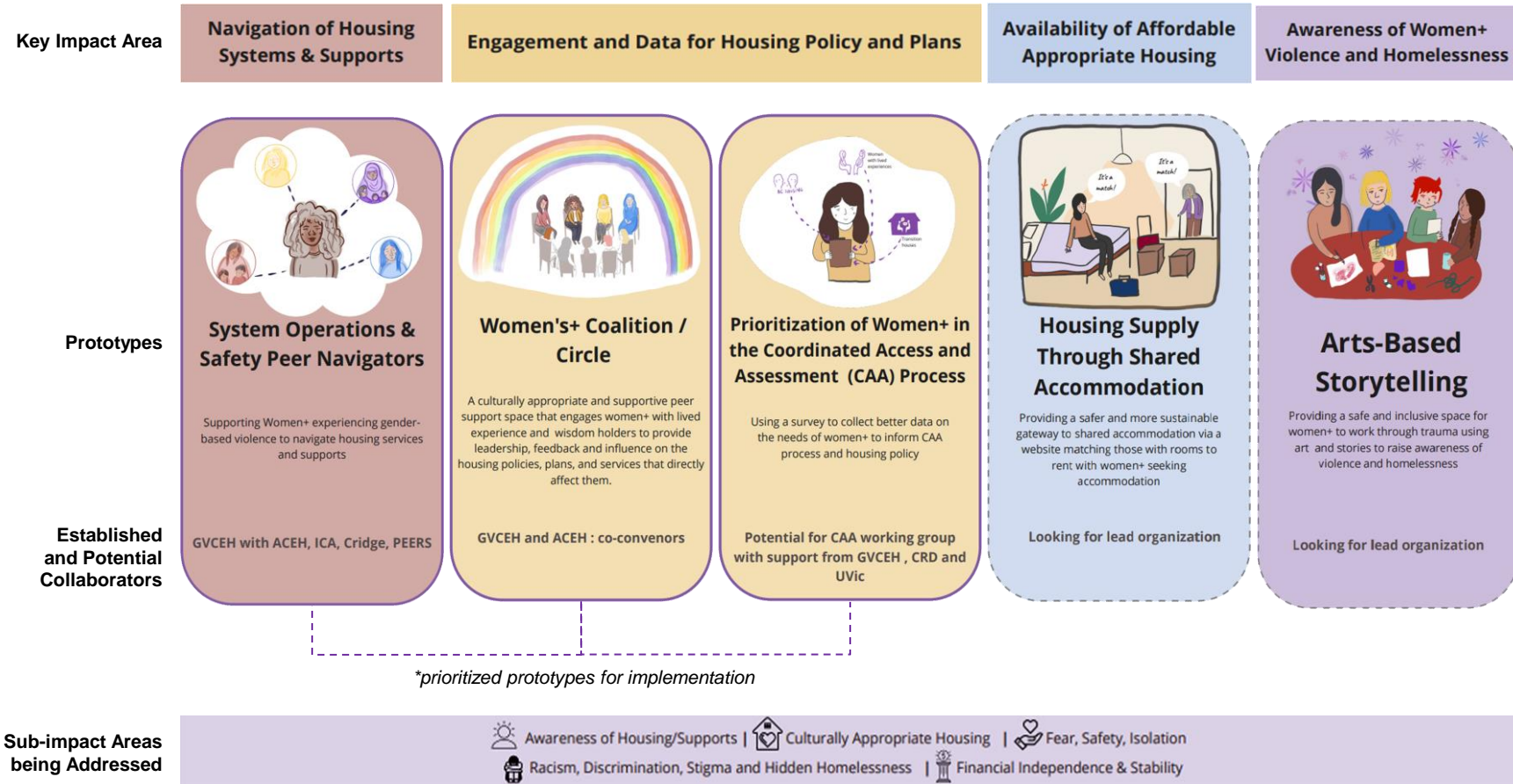
How might we co-develop **equitable, safe and culturally supportive** responses to the housing needs of women+ who have been/are at risk of experiencing violence and homelessness in Greater Victoria?



# Looking Across the System



## Priority Areas of Action



## Surfacing Our Strengths: PATHWAY TO ACTION





# Today's Purpose

Advance concrete commitments and actions towards systemic housing solutions for Women+ at risk of violence and homelessness in the Capital Region.



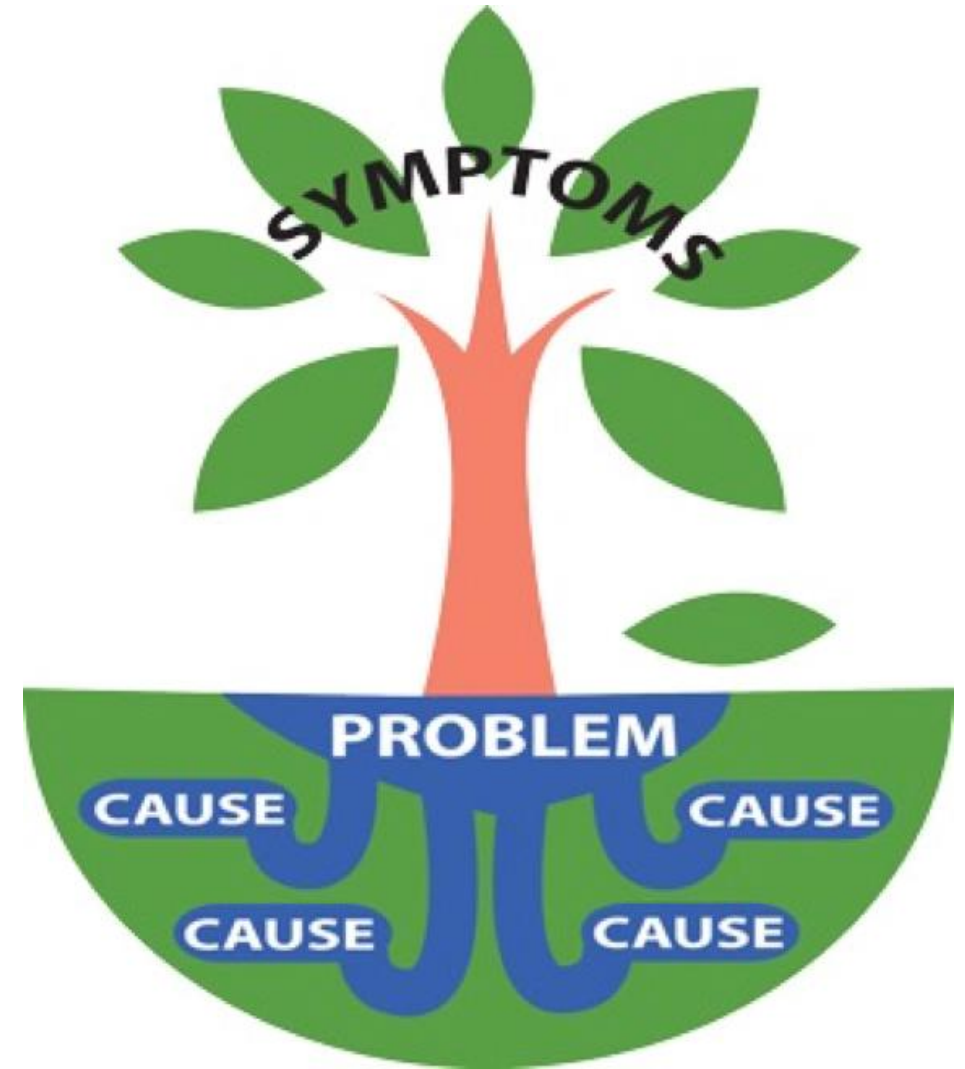
# Community Agreements

- Step up, Step back
- Build and maintain an honest space
- What is said here, stays here
- What is learned here, leaves here
- Offer what you can, ask for what you need
- Enjoy!



# AGENDA

- Introductions
- Keynote Presentations
- Table Discussion #1 - Opportunities
- Priorities to Advance Strategic Actions
- **BREAK 10:30**
- Panel Discussion
- Table Discussion #2—Identifying calls to action
- **LUNCH @ Noon**
- Kay's Story @ 12:25
- Final Discussion and **Closing @ 1PM**



## Introductions (at your table—10 min)

Introduce yourselves at your table:

- What drew you here today?
- Why is action on this topic important to you?



# KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

## **Presentation #1:**

Amy FitzGerald, Executive Director,  
BC Society of Transition Houses

## **Presentation #2:**

Rachel Phillips, Executive Director, Peers  
Victoria Resource Society

&

Leigh Elliott, Operations Manager, Peers  
Victoria Resource Society

# DISCUSSION #1

- From what you have heard so far, what stands out to you as **opportunities or priorities for action** (in the Capital Region)?
- What lessons can be learned from these examples that might inform **ideas and priorities** for action locally?



# PRIORITIES TO ADVANCE STRATEGIC ACTIONS



1. Prioritization of Women+ at Risk of Violence in Housing Policy
2. System Coordination, Connection and Collaboration
3. Navigation of Housing and Supports

# STRATEGIC ACTION #1:

Prioritization of  
Women+ at Risk of  
Violence in Housing  
Policy





# Women+ at risk of violence & homelessness

## More than a priority population

- **Enhanced policy** is **fundamental both federally and provincially** to address this issue. Increased stable, multi-year funding at the **federal & provincial levels** is also needed and needs to be built in the annual budgets
- For any self-identifying woman, being in short-term **housing creates pressure and stress**
- For Women+ going through a **transition**, the **loss is highly impactful**
- The dynamics of loss are complex; and the supports built with any given community are eroded or lost with each displacement

# Why is this a priority?

## FEDERAL POLICY/MANDATES

- **Naming** women and children fleeing violence a **priority population** in the National Housing Strategy (NHS) **has not trickled down to the provincial, regional, or local governments**
- Use of **GBA+ lens** has **not** been **fully implemented** in the policies that are coming out
- Upholding the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people** has been **slow**
- **Missing and murdered Indigenous women** and **Two Spirit people call to action** has been **slow**

## PROVINCIAL POLICY/MANDATES

- ***The issue of housing for women fleeing violence fits everywhere and nowhere***
- There is a **serious need for housing** for Women+ at risk of violence in this region
- Lack of clear mandate has made this issue less of a priority
- Each **ministry** is approved for a **discrete program**; if Women+ at risk of violence **do not fit** into this program, they **fall through the cracks**
- Significant steps in laying out **legislation** and requiring governments to **report on needs of women fleeing violence** have **not been taken**
- Focus has been on homelessness, with **little focus** on transitioning across the spectrum of housing
- Women+ experiencing violence have **not been prioritized** in the Coordinated Access and Assessment (**CAA**) **process**

# Why is this a priority?

## CRD REGIONAL HOUSING AFFORDABILITY STRATEGY

- Strategy prioritizes Indigenous populations but **does not specifically focus** on **Indigenous Women+** or **Women+ fleeing violence**

## CITY OF VICTORIA

- **Housing needs** of Women+ fleeing violence could be much better represented and included in the housing needs assessment

## NON-PROFIT (NP) Capacity

- The NP sector has been meeting the needs of Women+ by **piecing together supports and funding from many sources**
- NP sector is **being asked to step in quickly, mobilize** and are **stretched beyond sustainable capacity**
- Important for **government** to **prioritize NP supports in this area**

# What changes are needed?

## AT ALL LEVELS

- Women+ at risk of violence & homelessness need to be named as a **Priority Population** and **included in legislation**
- **New tenancy policy** around ending tenancy due to violence is needed

## AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL

- Need for **federal leadership** on an **Indigenous-led housing strategy**
- **Changes** to the **National Occupancy Standards** to allow **women and children to stay together**
- Funding and pressure needs to be applied ensuring badly needed long term housing is created

## AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL

- **Collaboration across provincial ministries**, starting in the **early planning stages** (e.g., across the Ministry of Attorney General, Gender Equity Office, Social Development & Poverty Reduction, Health, Ministry of Children and Family Development, and Addictions and Mental Health & Addictions)
- Development of **safe housing and supports for Women+ who are not accepted or are turned away** from women's transition houses

## AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

- **Commitment to end** the **disproportionate representation** of **Indigenous Women+, Two Spirit girls, and Two Spirit people** in the homelessness sector. Focus on needs' assessment and development of culturally appropriate housing and supports

# What is needed to support action?

## AT ALL LEVELS

- **Policy** needs to be **informed by** the lived experience of **Women+ fleeing violence**
- Develop a **mandate - mission statement - commitment** to **reduce experiences** of homelessness and violence for Women+
- **Funder Collaborative** for Women+ at risk of violence & homelessness

## AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL

- **Changes to the National Occupancy Standards** that would allow Women+ fleeing violence with children to be able **to keep their families together**
- **Transparency** in the **distribution** of the **\$250 million** being invested into **housing for Women/Women+**

## AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL

- Shift government **priority beyond supportive housing**
- **Collection of information**, potentially through the CAA process, **from Women+** used **to influence housing policy**
- **Funding** for **safe housing and supports** for Women+, understanding that some Women+ aren't accepted or are turned away from women's transition houses will need safe housing and supports

# What is needed to support action?

## AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

- **Clear access and prioritization** for Women+ at risk of violence and homelessness
- **Indigenous representation** informing the work that is happening in the community to address the challenges they face in finding stable housing
- **Landlord incentives** and participation in eviction prevention

## CITY OF VICTORIA HOUSING

- Provide **better representation and inclusion** of **housing needs** of Women+ fleeing violence in the **Housing Needs Assessment** (done every 5 years)

# STRATEGIC ACTION #2:

System  
Coordination,  
Connection &  
Collaboration



The **homelessness-serving sector** and **violence against women (VAW) sector** currently **operate quite separately...**

“while there is a general recognition of the **link between VAW, housing, and homelessness**, the VAW shelter sector has had **limited involvement** with the housing and homelessness sectors”.

*Women’s Shelters Canada*



As a result...

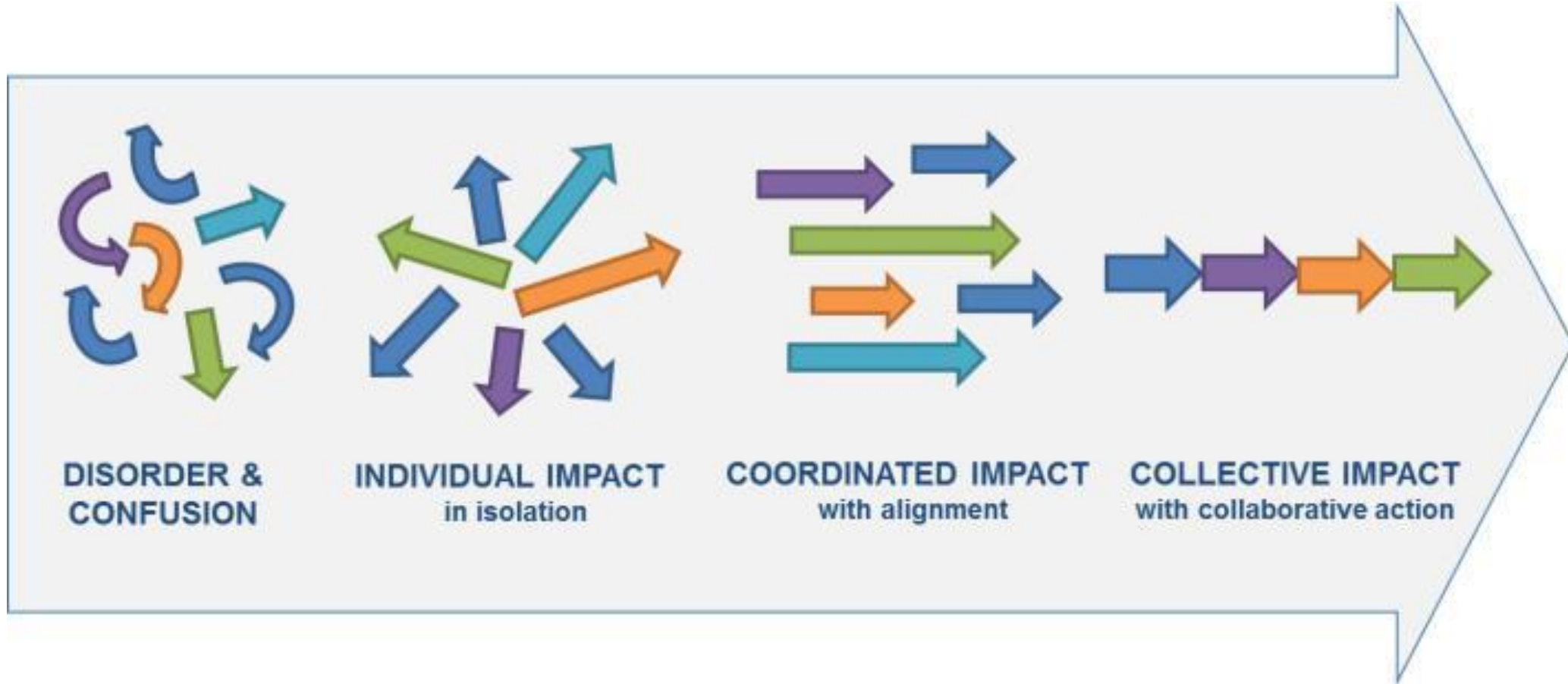
Many **Women+** are “**poorly served** by both, or not served by either – especially Indigenous women and others with multiple marginalizations.”

(Maki, 2017)

# Key Takeaway

Support, resource & stand behind  
**Indigenous led, developed & delivered**  
housing & support services.

# Why is this a priority?



# What changes are needed?

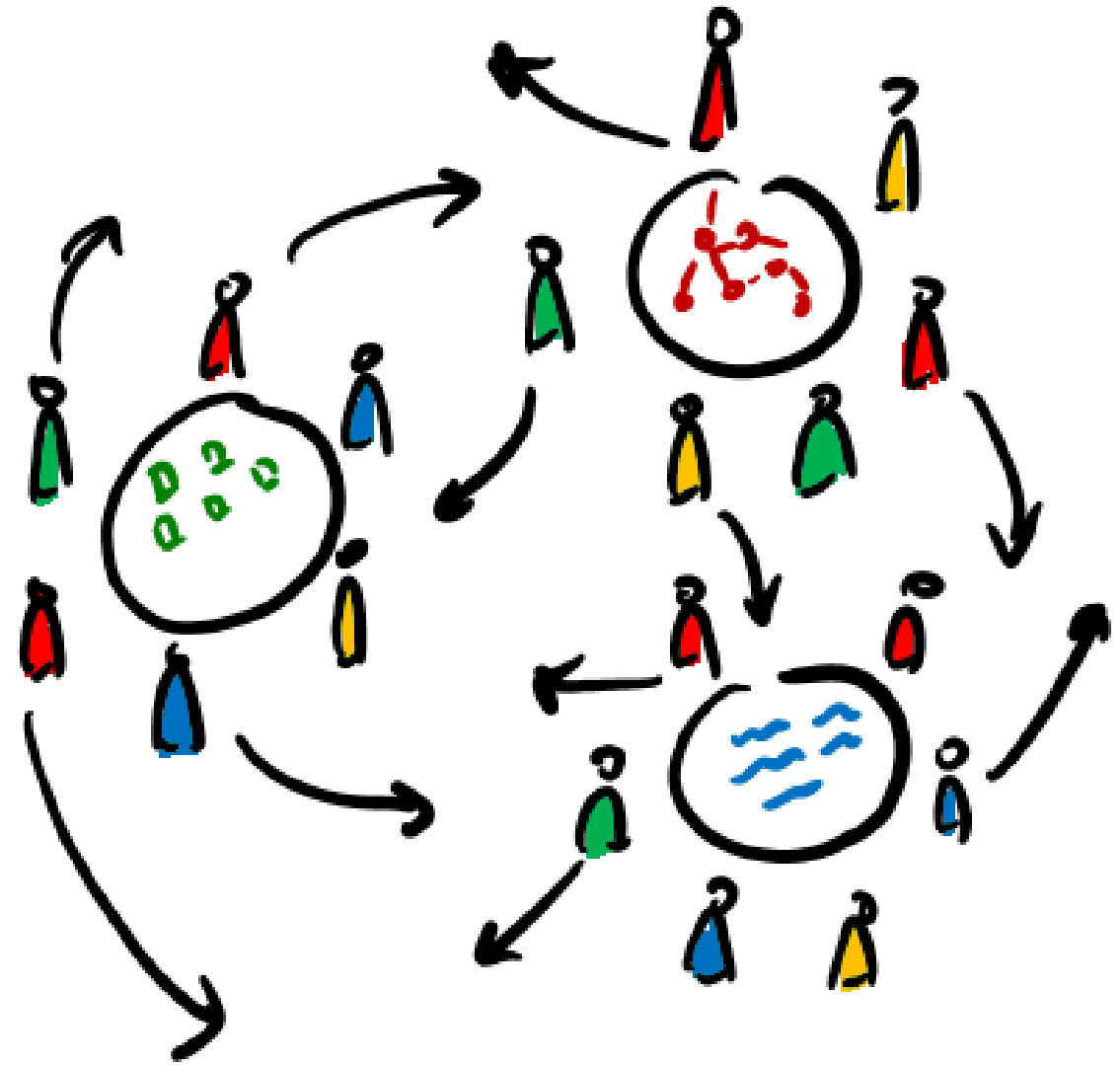
- **Coordination & liaison role** between government agencies, community partners & VAW sector to **reduce duplication & increase impact of available resources**
- Develop shared **accountability framework, metrics & KPIs** across files, at all levels of government in regard to supports for women+ experiencing, or at risk of, violence & homelessness
- **Voices of Women+** with lived & living experiences **centred at all levels of solution/intervention development & decision making**

# What is needed to support action?

- Outcomes-based **multi-year core funding** for backbone support & agencies working on solutions for all Women+ experiencing, & at risk of, violence & homelessness
- **Policy directives for** collaboration & shared metrics across different levels of governments & across files within governments; **inclusion of voices of women+** named in policies
- Resources & supports for an **Experiential Women's+ Council**, including **peer support & lived experience leadership roles**

# STRATEGIC ACTION #3:

## Navigation of Housing and Supports



## Why is this a priority?

In the **Greater Victoria region** Women+ fleeing domestic violence don't know where to go next as there is a **lack of coordination across the resource system.**

# A way to support Women+ fleeing violence...

## System Operations & Safety Peer Navigators (SoS-PN)

### How might this work?



On Mondays, Penny begins her day at the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness.



There, she meets Helen, whom she has been working with. Helen has a brain injury and has trouble managing her appointments to get into housing. Penny introduces Helen to The Cridge Brain Injury Services to help memory strategies.



In the afternoon, Penny does outreach in the community. Today, she is checking in on a peer that has been staying at the Sandy Merriman Transition House.



Penny meets with Layla there. She's settling in well and she feels ready to talk to someone about her experiences. Penny connects her to the Indigenous Womens Counseling Services.



On Tuesday mornings, Penny sits in at the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria. Today, she meets Naya, who uses ICA's translations services to communicate her needs, such as finding a transition house, to Penny.



After her meeting, Penny gets a call from Corrie, a peer who is in crisis after an encounter with her stalker.



Penny picks Corrie up and takes her to PEERS. She leaves Corrie with her card so that she can call her later if she needs help navigating the shelter system.



Before the work day ends, Penny goes back to the organization she started at to debrief and decompress with a colleague. They go for a walk to chat about personal and work related issues that have come up in the day.



# What changes are needed?

- Women+ and gender diverse individuals **need assistance** in order to **access emergency supports, shelter, and safety services and resources.**
- **Methods** need to be developed **to navigate the existing system**  
**Peer system navigators**
  - can support efforts to navigate the existing complex system
  - can provide linkages between resources in the homelessness-serving and violence against women (VAW) sectors
  - can identify gaps in services to fill where they can
- The **system**, as it exists today, **needs to be mapped** to allow for navigation

# What is needed to support action?

**Coordination** and **space** across the system to provide places **for the Peer System Navigators to work**

## Funding

- to **pilot** the **System Peer Navigator** work
- to **evaluate** the **System Peer Navigator** work
- to **sustain** **System Peer Navigator** work
- to complete a **Women+ Fleeing Violence Navigator Web Application**
- to **host, update/maintain** the **Women+ Fleeing Violence Navigator Web Application**
- for **IT support** for the **Women+ Fleeing Violence Navigator Web Application**

BREAK



# PANEL DISCUSSION

What are the most critical actions needed?

What are the roles and actions that different sectors need to play?

**Julia O’Quinn**—Equity Programs & Research manager, Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness

**Annette Angell**— Shelter Programs Manager, Victoria Women Transition House

**Dianne Dall’acqua** – Public Health RN, Island Health (Her Way Home)

**Candice MacDonald** – Manager Supportive Housing, Victoria Cool Aid Society

**Sairoz Sekhon** – Director, Women’s Transition Housing & Supports Program, BC Housing— Policy

# Discussion #2

What is the most important thing that needs to happen to have the biggest possible impact on housing for women+ at risk of violence and homelessness?

Prioritization of Women+ at Risk of Violence in Housing Policy



System Coordination, Connection & Collaboration



Navigation of Housing Systems & Supports



Ideas for Critical Action

Summarize One Critical Call to Action

What is the role for different sectors / organizations?

Ideas for Critical Action	Summarize One Critical Call to Action	What is the role for different sectors / organizations?
		Example: Policy Makers, Service Providers, Funders ...

LUNCH



# KAY'S STORY



# Closing Discussion

Round at your table: What stood out for you today?

Individually: What actions are you inspired to take in in the next 24 hours / 24 days / 24 months?

- Capture these on post-its and post on wall template on your way out.



# Thank You!

<https://victoriahomelessness.ca/surfacingourstrengths/>

