

The Giiwe Project

Evaluation Report



Final evaluation report for M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre,
the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and the Local Poverty Reduction Fund

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To the land for providing shelter for everyone. To the history, spirituality, culture and stewardship of the land by the Indigenous people of the region where Giiwe took place, the Saugeen Ojibway Nation and the Three Fires Confederacy, namely the Odawa, Potawatomi, and Ojibway nations. To the front-line workers who strive for justice, safety and housing for all. To M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre for guiding the Giiwe Project, offering programming, and engaging in so many initiatives that seek to restore relationships of respect and peace.

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About M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre

M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre offers eleven programs tailored for Indigenous peoples living off-reserve and hosts a wide variety of events that are open to the public. Additionally, M'Wikwedong works to “break down the cultural and systemic service barriers between local Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal populations” by advocating for their program users and engaging in collaborative initiatives (M'Wikwedong Native Cultural Resource Centre, n.d.).

M'Wikwedong is based in Owen Sound, Ontario, on the traditional territory of Saugeen Ojibway Nation, a collective of two First Nations: Saugeen First Nation and Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation.

<https://mwikwedong.com/>

About the Centre for Environmental Health Equity

The Centre for Environmental Health Equity (CEHE) is dedicated to support community efforts by undertaking research on environmental conditions that jeopardize or promote people's health and their abilities to realize their fullest potential. This Centre is directed by Dr. Jeffrey Masuda and Dr. Elijah Bisung.

CEHE is based at Queen's University on the territory of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee in Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

<https://cehe.ca/>

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In 2018, M'Wikwedong led the implementation of Giiwe, a new inter-agency collaboration in Grey County, ON.

Giiwe aimed to reduce Indigenous homelessness by:

- 1) Fostering increased coordination among local organizations
- 2) Strengthening organizational capacity to respond Indigenous-specific needs

WHY WAS GIIWE NEEDED?

- Staff reported discomfort in undertaking collaborative work between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations
- Limited collaboration among social service agencies hinders Indigenous people's access to the supports needed to secure and maintain housing
- Best practices for ending Indigenous homelessness stress the need for Indigenous leadership in the area of homelessness and housing

HOW DID GIIWE WORK?

- Local organizations participated in eight monthly inter-agency meetings named 'Giiwe Circles'
- Indigenous leaders shared traditional knowledge and lived experiences of homelessness
- Giiwe Circles ensured all attendees had a voice to:
 - 1) Discuss collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies
 - 2) Co-create ideas for reducing homelessness
 - 3) Undertake collaborative case-management

THIS IS WHAT GIIWE ACHIEVED

IMPROVED INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION ON INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS



Successfully established and sustained the only Indigenous-led inter-agency collaboration in Grey Bruce

11

Involved 11 core organizations and occasional guests



Facilitated referral process by providing a trusted go-to-person in each organization

Established formal inter-agency agreements to better serve Indigenous peoples

ENHANCED CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO INDIGENOUS-SPECIFIC NEEDS

- Increased knowledge of Indigenous history and current contexts
- Raised awareness of programming available to support Indigenous home-seekers
- Contributed to implementing Indigenous-specific procedures for service delivery
- Built momentum among participants to advocate within their own organizations for improved services for Indigenous peoples

Giiwe

EXECUTIVE EVALUATION SUMMARY

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

The Centre for Environmental Health Equity evaluated Giiwe through a developmental evaluation approach. The evaluation was designed to support M'Wikwedong's decision-making over project design and facilitation. Carlos Sanchez-Pimienta, MSc., was responsible for in-person evaluation activities, and Dr. Jeffrey Masuda oversaw the evaluation. The developmental evaluation of Giiwe generated qualitative knowledge about:

- 1) The priorities of inter-sectoral collaboration on Indigenous homelessness reduction
- 2) The degree of perceived competency and comfort in addressing Indigenous-specific housing needs

The evaluation combined ongoing and pre/post activities. Ongoing activities included the attendance of an evaluator at all Giiwe Circles, minute-making, and monthly feedback to M'Wikwedong. Pre/post activities included a total of 13 interviews and 2 sharing circles with Giiwe participants.

WHY DID GIWE WORK?

Participants characterized Giiwe as an innovative process for addressing Indigenous-specific issues in Grey County. When asked what made Giiwe innovative, participants highlighted:

- 1) M'Wikwedong's leadership in orienting the project
- 2) The use of Indigenous approaches for project facilitation, such as smudging, sharing traditional knowledge, working in a circle, and using unstructured time to strengthen bonds and trust among participants
- 3) The creation of an intimate learning process that focused on building trusting relationships first

WHO MADE GIWE POSSIBLE?



Southwest Ontario
Aboriginal Health
Access Centre

Métis Nation
of Ontario



YMCA of
Owen Sound Grey Bruce

the centre for
Environmental Health Equity

Grey County
Colour It Your Way



canadian partnership for
children's
health & environment



United Way
Bruce Grey
Change starts here.



Grey-Bruce Community
Legal Clinic



THE WOMEN'S
CENTRE
GREY AND BRUCE INC.



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Grey Bruce
Mental Health and Addiction Services

'Giiwe' is an Anishinaabemowin word that can be translated as "s/he goes home"

SELECTED EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) *Continue Giiwe, sustain Indigenous leadership, and involve relevant organizations***
Findings demonstrate that Giiwe is a unique opportunity to mobilize initiatives that respond to Indigenous-specific issues in Grey County

FOR THE SECOND PHASE OF GIIWE

2) *Determine a preferred scope and breadth for Giiwe*

Participants affirmed that Giiwe was successful because it was Indigenous-led. M'Wikwedong should identify the preferred scope and breadth of Giiwe's next phase. That said, Giiwe participants suggested:

- a) Seeking the involvement of other relevant organizations
- b) Expanding the focus of Giiwe to address additional Indigenous-specific issues

3) *Allocate funds for project development*

This will enable Giiwe to hire skilled workers to undertake any required technical tasks, such as proposal-writing or consultancy

4) *Prepare an adequate evaluation design*

Should Giiwe's focus shift from relationship building and education to more instrumental initiatives to reduce homelessness (e.g. supportive housing, hiring housing emergency workers), a new evaluation design will be required

FOR GIIWE PARTNERS

5) *Hire Indigenous staff*

Indigenous participants made a call for non-Indigenous agencies to recruit more Indigenous peoples and to enable these workers and managers to advocate for further organizational change

6) *Establish or revise Indigenous-specific policies*

The evaluator observed that the agencies that incorporated or adapted internal Indigenous-specific policies reported greater benefits from their participation in Giiwe

7) *Find equitable partnership workloads on reconciliation work*

To reach equity in the distribution of reconciliation work, non-Indigenous organizations should consider allocating greater economic, human and organizational resources to Indigenous-specific work

Organization of this Report

This evaluation report is organized in nine sections:

Section 1 – Project Description, details the rationale for implementing Giiwe and outlines pursued project outcomes. A narrative description of project components and activities is presented, along with the logic model that was used to orient Giiwe.

Section 2 – Evaluation Methodology, describes the developmental approach adopted by this evaluation. The research questions that guided this evaluation are presented, as well as the methods used to gather and analyze data. Finally, this section discusses ethical considerations and limitations of the evaluation.

Section 3 – Intake Findings: Priorities for Inter-Agency Collaboration, presents findings of intake evaluation activities performed during the first three months of the project. Intake evaluation activities focused on identifying participants' priorities for intersectoral collaboration on Indigenous homelessness reduction and capacity to respond to Indigenous-specific housing needs and preferences.

Section 4 – Developmental Evaluation Outcomes, reports how the preliminary design of the Giiwe Project was modified according to intake and ongoing evaluation activities. Changes to project design include postponing a project component and the inclusion of unexpected additional activities to meet proposed project outcomes.

Sections 5a, 5b, and 5c – Final Findings, account for the findings of final evaluation activities. Section 5a focuses on how Giiwe **Improved Inter-Agency Collaboration**. Section 5b describes findings regarding **Improved Capacity to Respond to Indigenous Needs**. Section 5c communicates participants' ideas for **Further Developing Giiwe**.

Sections 6a, 6b, and 6c – Project Strengths, Limitations and External Factors, account for the process of the Giiwe Project. Section 6a accounts for **Project Strengths** as perceived by participants. Section 6b details **Project Challenges and Areas for Improvement**. Finally, and Section 6c outlines **External Factors Influencing Giiwe**.

Section 7 – Recommendations, provides a list of suggestions for M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre and other organizations that were involved in the Giiwe Project. Recommendations are organized in the areas of project facilitation, vision of Giiwe, project components, research data, and suggestions for Giiwe participants.

Section 8 – References, lists external documents referenced in this report.

Section 9 – Appendices, presents interview and sharing circle guides, intake ideas for Giiwe Project Development, and notes from a teaching-sharing session with Elder Shirley John on how to create culturally safe social service organizations.

1. Project Description

Indigenous homelessness in Grey County

The first official homelessness enumeration in Grey County in 2018 identified 33 people experiencing homelessness (Gowan, 2018), which was far less than what local service providers had expected. Indeed, point in time homeless counts often face challenges and limitations for assessing homelessness in rural contexts, where hidden homelessness is usually high.

A better indicator of homelessness numbers may be the number of people who accessed emergency housing supports. According to YMCA Housing Services (personal communication, June 2017 and January 2019), the primary deliverer of emergency housing supports in the local context, 324 individuals accessed emergency shelter services in 2016, among which 18 (5.8%) self-identified as Indigenous. In 2017, the number of individuals who received this type of supports increased to 482, with 48 (9.9%) self-identifying as Indigenous. The most recent data, accounting for 2018, shows that 29 individuals who accessed emergency shelter supports identified as Indigenous.

What is Giiwe?

Giiwe is an Indigenous-led partnership among social service agencies and other relevant organizations in Grey County. Giiwe aims to reduce Indigenous homelessness by fostering more interconnected housing related supports that are equipped to respond to Indigenous-specific housing needs and preferences. This initiative is led by M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre. The name of this project, 'Giiwe,' is a word in Anishinaabemowin, the Ojibway language, that can be translated into "s/he goes home" (The Ojibwe People's Dictionary, 2015).

Giiwe is based in Grey County, a mostly rural region of Southwestern Ontario, Canada, situated on traditional Saugeen Ojibway Nation territory, near to the Saugeen First Nation and Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation reservations. The biggest city in Grey County is Owen Sound, the local hub for social services. Grey County is often paired with Bruce County (i.e. the "Grey Bruce region") in various policy, program and municipal contexts. However, the pilot phase of Giiwe focused on Grey County only.

What outcomes did Giiwe pursue?

1. Improved inter-agency coordination on Indigenous homelessness reduction guided by the leadership of an Indigenous-led organization
2. Increased competency for participating organizations to respond to Indigenous-specific housing needs and preferences

Why Giiwe decided to focus on the former outcomes?

Giiwe focuses on two reported best practices to end Indigenous homelessness. The first best practice that Giiwe draws on is having Indigenous workers in all organizations who are mandated to support people in obtaining and maintaining housing (Oelke, Thurston, & Turner, 2016). In this regard, M'Wikwedong identified three gaps in Grey County at the time of project inception: few organizations had Indigenous workers; there was limited collaboration between Indigenous-led and non-Indigenous-

led agencies; and existing inter-agency collaborations in Grey Bruce region had limited capacity for responding to Indigenous-specific priorities.

The second best practice that Giiwe focuses on is ensuring that social services can provide culturally safe and inviting services for Indigenous peoples (Oelke et al., 2016). M'Wikwedong identified increasing organizational cultural safety¹ capacity as a local need, which correspond to a reported lack of cultural sensitivity in housing-related programs and policies reported in rural areas of Ontario (Kauppi, O'Grady, Schiff, Martin, & Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, 2017).

What organizations were involved in Giiwe?

Giiwe Project Partners:

- Canadian Mental Health Association of Grey Bruce
- Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment
- Grey Bruce Community Legal Clinic
- Grey Bruce Health Unit
- Grey County Housing
- M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre
- Métis Nation of Ontario
- Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre
- The Women's Centre Grey and Bruce
- United Way of Bruce Grey
- YMCA of Owen Sound Grey Bruce

Guests from the following organizations attended some sessions:

- Bruce Grey Child and Family Services
- County of Bruce
- Ontario's Ministry of Children and Youth Services
- St. Frances Place and Lutheran Church

How did Giiwe work?

In April 2018, Giiwe established a new inter-agency partnership for Indigenous homelessness reduction through the leadership of M'Wikwedong.² A Program Coordinator organized eight monthly meetings called 'Giiwe Circles.' Giiwe Circles started with smudging, followed by a session of traditional knowledge sharing facilitated by Indigenous knowledge-holders. Then, attendees sat in a circle to discuss agenda items, co-create ideas for action, or seek support from other agencies to meet the needs of their Indigenous service users. Giiwe circles included a time to share lunch, foster relationships and

¹ The funding application of the Giiwe Project defined 'culturally safe' within the context of this project as creating spaces and services that are welcoming for everyone, respectful of the self-determination of those who are involved, understanding of the high level of vulnerability that Indigenous users may face, committed to employing high ethical standards, and understanding of the long-term timeframes of healing from intergenerational trauma.

² From here on, M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre will be referred to as 'M'Wikwedong.'

increase bonds among participants. A developmental evaluation provided ongoing feedback for M'Wikwedong to facilitate the adaptation and refinement of Giiwe's project components.

M'Wikwedong obtained funding for the pilot implementation and evaluation of the Giiwe Project through the Local Poverty Reduction Fund – Indigenous Stream, round 2017. Funding allowed M'Wikwedong to contract a part-time project coordinator to organize and implement Giiwe Circles. Funding also covered additional expenses such as honoraria for traditional knowledge-holders, meeting space, catering and a developmental evaluation.

What aspects of inter-agency collaboration were addressed at Giiwe Circles?

- Discussing priorities for inter-agency collaboration on Indigenous homelessness and cultural safety
- Identifying gaps experienced by Indigenous service users and how to fill these gaps
- Supporting Indigenous housing seekers from the perspective of M'Wikwedong
- Establishing collaborative case-management and wrap-around supports for Indigenous peoples
- Creating a directory of social service agencies and Indigenous-specific supports
- Implementing inter-agency agreement between interested organizations and M'Wikwedong
- Identifying the achievements and challenges of Giiwe's pilot phase
- Planning for the continuation of Giiwe upon funding completion

What teachings were shared during Giiwe Circles?

- History of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island
- History of Indigenous peoples within Grey County
- Importance of Land Acknowledgements
- The power of the circle – Giiwe approach
- The interconnectedness of all things, including between colonialism and homelessness
- Indigenous definitions of home and homelessness
- Case studies of lived experience: resiliency after experiencing homelessness
- Principles and best practices for community development with Indigenous communities
- Feather and Bird Teachings – Gift of seeing the world from multiple perspectives, achieving good for the community
- Creating culturally safe spaces and organizations (See Appendix I)

How did Giiwe relate to other inter-agency collaborations in the local region?

Giiwe's Project Coordinator attended other inter-agency meetings to explore potential cross-linkages with the Giiwe Project and to communicate project intent and achievements. Such meetings included:

- Healthy Communities Breakfast Meeting
- Consultation meeting for Grey County's Affordable Housing plan
- Land management planning meeting organized by Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force
- Meeting of Indigenous-led agencies organized by the Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre
- RentSafe Equity-focused Intersectoral Practice Retreat

1.1 Giiwe Project Logic Model

GOAL To foster more coordinated housing-related services in Grey County that respond to Indigenous-specific housing needs and preferences	TARGET Housing-related services and organizations	PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY Services and organizations must be mandated to address the needs of people living in Grey County and have a role in supporting people to obtain or maintain housing
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INPUTS <i>Economic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding from the Local Poverty Reduction Fund <i>Space</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting space <i>Hospitality</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lunch catering <i>Human</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> M'Wikwedong's Executive Director M'Wikwedong's Cultural Resource Coordinator Giiwe Program Coordinator Giiwe Project Partners Evaluation team <i>Knowledge-sharing</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kiinoo Mudwin (we learn together training) Teachings of Indigenous knowledge holders Traditional medicines and sacred objects 	ACTIVITIES <i>Organizing Giiwe Circles</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Booking meeting space Obtaining facilitators for cultural safety training Convening participants Seeking the integration of new relevant partners Providing lunch <i>Giiwe Circles</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussing inter-agency collaboration on Indigenous homelessness Enabling space for collaborative case-management and relationship-building Providing cultural safety training <i>Developmental Evaluation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback on preliminary Giiwe Circle agendas Sharing preliminary evaluation findings <i>Networking</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore potential cross-linkages with Giiwe at external events 	OUTPUTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Giiwe Circles # Organizations involved in Giiwe # New organizations involved in Giiwe Rate of attendance to Giiwe Activities # Knowledge holders involved Reports and minutes on Giiwe Activities 	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased Indigenous leadership Improved collaboration on Indigenous homelessness Increased understanding of Indigenous-specific housing needs <i>Indicators</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception that M'Wikwedong is leading intersectoral collaboration on Indigenous homelessness Increased knowledge and awareness of Indigenous history and culture MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilization of ideas to improve inter-agency collaboration Increased competency in responding to Indigenous-specific needs <i>Indicators</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of formal inter-agency agreements or MOU's Adaptation of services or facilities to better serve Indigenous peoples Plans for continuing Giiwe after funding completion LONG-TERM OUTCOMES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased effectiveness of collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies Decrease in Indigenous homelessness
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EXTERNAL FACTORS Availability of participating organizations to attend Giiwe events. Previous training on responding to Indigenous-specific needs and preferences.
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2. Evaluation Methodology

M'Wikwedong chose the Centre for Environmental Health Equity (CEHE) as the evaluator for the Giiwe Project based on their previous working relationship and because of CEHE's depth of understanding of the local context of housing and homeless.³ CEHE opted for a developmental approach to evaluating the Giiwe Project. 'Developmental evaluation' is a type of evaluation in which the evaluation becomes part of the project, working in close relationship with those who design and implement the intervention. Evaluators facilitate discussions on how to evaluate ongoing project outputs, provide near-to-real-time feedback on project components, and support data-based decision making about project development (Patton, 2011).

Developmental evaluation is appropriate for new projects, such as Giiwe, because it enables tailoring and modifying initial program components. This developmental evaluation aimed to support the consolidation of Giiwe as an Indigenous-led pilot partnership model that strives to create momentum on Indigenous homelessness reduction and facilitate the mainstreaming of Indigenous-led collaboration at the intersection of housing and other determinants of health. The sustained use of developmental evaluation can support M'Wikwedong in developing a fully conceptualized project model that can be adapted to other contexts and evaluated through experimental research designs.

Evaluation Relationship

Building and sustaining a trusting relationship between evaluators and M'Wikwedong was key for the success of the evaluation. Prior to the implementation of the Giiwe project, M'Wikwedong provided support to a CEHE master's student in advising the development of a thesis project that took place in Owen Sound, the county seat of Grey County. Carlos Sanchez-Pimienta, MSc., was responsible for in-person evaluation activities, and Dr. Jeffrey Masuda supervised the evaluation.

Research Questions

The following research questions oriented Giiwe's developmental evaluation:

- What are Giiwe Partners' priorities in fostering improved inter-agency collaboration on Indigenous homelessness reduction?
- What are Giiwe Partners' priorities in increasing capacity to respond to Indigenous-specific housing needs and preferences?
- What are the contributions of the Giiwe Project to strengthening individual and organizational competency to address Indigenous specific housing needs from Giiwe Partners' perspective?
- To what extent has Giiwe facilitated improved inter-agency collaboration and Indigenous leadership on Indigenous homelessness reduction?
- What are Giiwe Partners' ideas for further tailoring Giiwe Project components in a way that better accomplishes desired project outcomes?

³ CEHE's expertise in housing-related action research includes supporting the development of the Ontario-wide [RentSafe](#) project, and the [Equity-focused Inter-sectoral Practice \(EqulP\)](#) Project based in Owen Sound.

Research Approach and Methods

Evaluation activities started at the project's intake phase by gathering qualitative knowledge about 1) priorities for inter-sectoral collaboration on Indigenous homelessness reduction, and 2) the degree of perceived competency, comfort, and capacity to address Indigenous specific housing needs. Intake evaluation findings were used to inform M'Wikwedong about perceived project priorities and supported M'Wikwedong's decision-making about agenda design and project facilitation.

For this purpose, the evaluator conducted six semi-structured interviews with key informants during the first three months of the project. The evaluator selected key informants among those workers that participated in Giiwe Circles, striving to capture the broadest range of perspectives according to organization type. The evaluator conducted the interviews in person at the facilities of each agency or in a public place. The intake interview guide is available on Appendix II. The interviews ranged from 20 to 80 minutes in duration and used a semi-structured format that allowed flexibility to explore unexpected topics. The evaluator also documented a sharing circle with attendees of the second Giiwe Circle to gather their input on preferred Giiwe priorities (see Appendix III for sharing circle questions). The evaluator analyzed verbatim interview transcripts and sharing circle notes, establishing six core themes that were subsequently presented to M'Wikwedong and the rest of Giiwe Partners during the third Giiwe Circle (see section 4).

The evaluator was integrated into the Giiwe Project by attending every Giiwe Circle to monitor project development, write minutes, and provide ongoing feedback for project development. The evaluator provided feedback to M'Wikwedong in the form of email communications to the Project Coordinator or in-person oral feedback at M'Wikwedong's Giiwe planning sessions. Planning sessions were vital for ensuring the Indigenous-led character of the Giiwe Project. These meetings included the participation of Giiwe's Project Coordinator, M'Wikwedong's Executive Director, M'Wikwedong's Cultural Resource Coordinator, and the evaluator.

In the final two months of the Giiwe project, the evaluation focused on: 1) identifying the perceived reach and limitations of the local intersectoral collaboration on Indigenous homelessness reduction; 2) identifying the extent of Giiwe's influence on individual and organizational competency in addressing Indigenous specific housing needs; and 3) identifying priorities for a possible next phase of Giiwe.

The evaluator conducted final evaluation activities during months 11-12 of the project. Final evaluation activities were comprised of six semi-structured interviews with key informants chosen from Giiwe Partners (see interview guide on Appendix IV), one semi-structured interview with Giiwe's Project Coordinator, and a sharing circle with all attendees of Giiwe Circle number 8 (see interview guide on Appendix V). This final report was presented to M'Wikwedong in month 12 of the project.

Ethical considerations

- Emotional support to participants was made available through M'Wikwedong's Cultural Resource Coordinator.
- Final evaluation data will be anonymized and secured in a password protected and encrypted computer at M'Wikwedong. CEHE will keep a copy of all raw data and analysis files for five years. After five years, CEHE will destroy all data.

Evaluation limitations and scope

Giiwe's focus on relationship building and education and the preliminary nature of the intervention meant that it was not appropriate to collect quantitative data as frequently reported by other homelessness reduction initiatives, including referral rates or housing successes. Rather, the developmental evaluation designed for this project focused on qualitative data that was suitable for assessing the 'intervention context:' both the local social context in Grey County where there remains discomfort around the ongoing legacies of colonialism on service provision and housing, as well as the context of Giiwe Circles themselves, where the ability to assess and support relationship building was the foremost priority of the evaluation. Thus, the developmental evaluation sought to provide M'Wikwedong with data that informed the ongoing decision-making over the facilitation and adaptation of the Giiwe Project.

3. Intake Findings: Priorities for Inter-Agency Collaboration

This section presents findings of intake evaluation activities performed during the first three months of the project. Intake evaluation focused on identifying priorities for intersectoral collaboration on Indigenous homelessness reduction and the capacity to respond to Indigenous-specific housing needs and preferences. Findings combine data gathered from semi-structured interviews and a sharing circle with Giiwe Project Partners. A preliminary analysis of these evaluation activities was shared at the third Giiwe Circle to support for project development. See Section 6 for an account of how these findings were used for project development and Appendix VI for a summary of ideas proposed at this stage.

3.1 Priorities for inter-agency work on Indigenous homelessness reduction

Participants expressed a desire to improve collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies to better respond to Indigenous homelessness. Therefore, Giiwe was regarded as a long-awaited platform. Staff from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies shared their concerns and difficulties in collaborating with each other and suggested ways for moving forward. Some workers stressed that the workload needs to be redistributed from a small number of workers' responsibilities to a shared mandate among a network of organizations that can provide safe services.

Perceived discomfort in relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies

Participants acknowledged perceiving discomfort when attempting to do referrals or engage in collaborative work between Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies. On the one hand, a worker of an Indigenous-led agency found that the services offered by their organization were dismissed or tokenized when collaborating with larger and more consolidated non-Indigenous agencies. This participant perceived non-Indigenous agencies as making little effort in reaching out to Indigenous agencies. On the other hand, some workers of non-Indigenous agencies perceived a lack of responsiveness when contacting Indigenous-led organizations or declared a lack of knowledge as to who to refer or what services were offered by these organizations.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, some participants highlighted success stories. Some workers affirmed they had already developed some 'very successful' relationships with Indigenous communities, organizations and social service staff. Indeed, both workers of Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies confirmed a desire for change, for working together to redress the ongoing impacts of colonization.

Desire to foster improved collaboration among Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations

Participants agreed that Grey County needed more collaboration among Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations to better meet the needs of Indigenous peoples, in particular for those struggling to maintain housing and would benefit from a stronger network of social services and supports. That said, some participants stressed that improved inter-agency collaboration on Indigenous issues required the leadership of an Indigenous agency. In this regard, the Giiwe Project appeared to provide a long-needed Indigenous-led platform for advancing reconciliation work on Indigenous homelessness.

Participants asserted that establishing an Indigenous-led inter-agency collaboration was a first step toward improving collaboration among Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies. Participants highlighted the following activities as potential steps that Giiwe could pursue to improve inter-agency collaboration on Indigenous homelessness reduction:

- Having non-Indigenous agencies sitting around the table to listen and learn from the expertise of Indigenous workers and organizations.
- Identifying common ground for collaboration, as participating organizations come from different perspectives and mandates.
- Increasing awareness of what services and supports are available in the community, particularly of Indigenous-specific services and supports.
- Developing good face-to-face relationships to know who to call within each agency, what services they provide, and what outcomes to expect once the service has been provided.
- Maintaining continuous work, training together, staying connected, and updating others about changes in the services and supports that each agency provides.

There was a sense that improving relationships would be a slow process, but that working on a collaborative project together could be a good first step in moving agencies in the same direction.

Ensuring that safe referrals can be done between all organizations and staff members

While participants agreed that bringing a representative from each agency to the Giiwe Circles was beneficial, some participants argued that additional steps were necessary for improving collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies. For instance, participants stated that collaboration would be improved if Giiwe could build further capacity of all agency employees in understanding and responding to Indigenous-specific contexts, needs and preferences.

Additionally, some Indigenous workers asserted that most of the workload derived from supporting vulnerable Indigenous service users was concentrated on Indigenous-led agencies and a few other staff of non-Indigenous agencies. A participant indicated that they relied only on their personal and professional relationships with other ‘safe’ workers to meet the needs of Indigenous users, rather than trusting that all agencies would safely deliver the services they are mandated to provide. When there was no connection with a ‘safe’ worker, participants reported their need to invest significant time in negotiating with other organizations to obtain the required services or supports due to insufficient understanding of Indigenous-specific contexts. Some participants posited that meeting the needs of the most vulnerable Indigenous service users needed to shift from a few people’s responsibilities, to consolidating a network of services that comply with their mandates to provide safe services for all.

3.2 Competency in responding to Indigenous needs

Participants agreed that there was a need to increase knowledge about Indigenous contexts and priorities to provide more understanding and safer services. There was a need for improved safety in staff, programming, and collaborative case-management. Participants highlighted that commitment from top organizational levels was needed to ensure that changes happened more quickly and extended throughout the organizations.

Desire to increase understanding about Indigenous peoples

Participants expressed a desire to learn, to be educated and to develop a greater understanding about Indigenous peoples’ context and history, including knowledge from a lived-experience perspective. Some workers or non-Indigenous agencies reported they noticed an increasing number of Indigenous service users going to their organizations and wanted to know how to better serve them. Other workers

wanted to decrease the attrition of Indigenous peoples using their services and foster more welcoming environments. Some of the topics that participants prioritized were:

- Indigenous-specific challenges in obtaining and maintaining housing
- History and context of Saugeen Ojibway Nation and other Indigenous peoples living in the local region
- Basic information about Indigenous cultural practices, teachings and ceremonies
- Métis awareness training

Participants also affirmed their desire to increase knowledge on how to improve collaboration with Indigenous organizations and communities. Some workers of non-Indigenous agencies desired insight into the circumstances that may prevent the participation of Indigenous-led organizations in existing inter-agency collaborations, and what might be changed so that Indigenous organizations could participate in these discussions.

Desire to increase safety in staff, programming, and collaborative case-management

Participants expressed a desire to obtain tools for increasing safety in service provision as well as being more welcoming for Indigenous service users. An Indigenous worker declared having heard problematic commentary of non-Indigenous workers even at a cultural competency training. From the perspective of this worker, there is a need for continuous mandatory cultural competency training for all workers to ensure that discriminatory attitudes toward Indigenous peoples are monitored and addressed.

In addition to training for all workers, some participants affirmed that services and programs themselves need to be designed and delivered through an intergenerational trauma-informed approach. Front line workers stated that the most vulnerable people are often those who do not comply with program guidelines and lose access to the services they need. Participants mentioned other ways in which organizations could work harder to make a safer experience for Indigenous peoples. For instance, by incorporating Indigenous-specific programming and hiring Indigenous staff.

Finally, participants recognized that a single organization cannot meet all the needs of service users. Staff from Indigenous-led agencies emphasized the previous successes they have had when doing collaborative case-management between staff of different organizations and called for this work to be continued and expanded.

Need for commitment from top organizational levels

Participants recognized that there are many well-intentioned workers at non-Indigenous agencies who strive to do their best in supporting Indigenous service users. Participants also indicated that strong leadership and support from managers and directors was essential for improving safety for Indigenous peoples. When organizations are supportive, there are resources and time allocated to identify the needs of Indigenous clients and design appropriate organizational responses.

4. Developmental Evaluation Outcomes

The evaluation of Giiwe supported ongoing project adaptation to better meet pursued goals. The following table summarizes the main shifts in project design and their influence on project outcomes.

Proposed Giiwe Design	Developmental Evaluation Findings	Adaptation of Giiwe Design	Achieved Outputs / Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem-focused approach to address issues that contributed to Indigenous homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of discomfort when collaborating between Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies • Strong emotional responses during first three sessions of Giiwe circles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocating more time to open-ended discussions about relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased confidence in approaching workers of other organizations • Improved trust among workers of Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on person-to-person relationship building by providing time and space to share lunch at Giiwe Circles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants welcomed time for inter-personal relationship building, but also asked to find a way to improve organizational relationships to address potential staff rotation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M'Wikwedong's Executive Director proposed establishing inter-agency agreements between M'Wikwedong and other organizations. A draft agreement template was provided for each interested organization to adapt and send back to M'Wikwedong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved collaboration was fostered at an organizational level. Inter-agency agreements are being developed and implemented
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-site teaching sharing at each Giiwe Circle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants expressed a desire to build capacity with other members of their organization, beyond Giiwe Circles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M'Wikwedong hosted an open day-long retreat, which included a teaching sharing session on improving cultural safety in social service organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest attendees benefited from Giiwe's capacity building for better responding to Indigenous-specific needs and preferences • Some participants reported having invited or planning to invite M'Wikwedong's staff to provide internal training sessions at their organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a video-making component within the initial design of Giiwe. This video intended to build further capacity for organizations to respond to Indigenous-specific needs, preferences and contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Coordinator reported using all her work hours in organizing and facilitating Giiwe Circles. However, she deemed that focusing on Giiwe Circles would suffice for meeting project outcomes • Evaluator observed by month 7 of the project that the video-making component would provide better results once Giiwe participants perceived greater advancement of meeting project goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video-making component was removed from the pilot phase of Giiwe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giiwe participants expressed during the final evaluation activities a desire to share what they had learned during Giiwe and how they were implementing changes in their own organizations to better serve Indigenous peoples • The video-making component could be pursued during the next iteration of Giiwe

Overall, developmental evaluation was instrumental for supporting an effective implementation of the Giiwe Project.

5a. Final Findings: Improved Inter-Agency Collaboration

This section details participants' perceptions about the changes that Giiwe brought to the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations in Grey County. Findings indicate that Giiwe positioned Indigenous voices at the forefront of an inter-agency collaboration, improved relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, and strengthened collaboration on Indigenous homelessness reduction.

5a.1 Positioned Indigenous voices to the forefront of an inter-agency collaboration

Participants highlighted that M'Wikwedong was exerting a leadership role in establishing and consolidating an inter-agency collaboration on Indigenous homelessness. To participants' knowledge, Giiwe was the first Indigenous-led inter-agency collaboration in the Grey Bruce region. Giiwe was thus seen as an innovative platform for Indigenous peoples and organizations to share their experiences and propose some possibilities to move forward as a community in the reduction of Indigenous homelessness.

"When I think of Indigenous issues and collaboration between Indigenous service providers and non-Indigenous service providers, it has not been a priority. It has been a fear in our community, it has been avoided, it has been scary. And this [Giiwe] has really broken down some of those barriers."

Additionally, participants claimed that Giiwe leveraged non-Indigenous agencies to prioritize Indigenous-specific issues and preferences at an internal organizational level despite the boundaries and burdens of day-to-day work. One participant exemplifies this finding by describing how sharing about the monthly Giiwe Circles within their organization's staff meeting familiarized new workers with the recently implemented Indigenous-specific procedures that this organization had put in place.

"It [Giiwe] just keeps these issues and these barriers that [Indigenous] people face in the forefront of everybody's minds here."

5a.2 Improved relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations

According to participants, Giiwe has improved their relationships and collaboration with Indigenous organizations, in particular with M'Wikwedong. Whereas intake findings identified a perceived divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, the final findings revealed that participants perceived stronger relationships between participating individuals and organizations. As a result of perceiving stronger and closer relationships, interviewees affirmed they felt more comfortable and less anxious when requesting support from or asking questions of Indigenous-led agencies. Moreover, participants affirmed that the process of the Giiwe Circles created bonds among them, which generated a sense of shared accountability in redressing the harm legacies of colonialism on Indigenous peoples.

"As a front-line worker doing advocacy for Indigenous clients on housing, I often felt that I was fighting against the world. And you guys were the world. Now, I feel you are doing the same fight."

Relationships between organizations were often mobilized by the workers who participated in Giiwe after they identified and contacted a 'go-to person' for referrals at each organization. For instance, a worker of a non-Indigenous agency cited an example of how after developing relationships with an

Indigenous staff member at a Giiwe Circle, they were able to obtain additional personal supports for some of their Indigenous clients.

“When you have a particular person, or you have a particular case that you're struggling to assist with, knowing that you can reach out and ask for help from other agencies to help that individual who is experiencing homelessness or whatever their issue might be, I think that really makes a big difference, especially in rural communities.”

5a.3 Strengthened collaboration on Indigenous homelessness reduction

Participants indicated that Giiwe had provided opportunities for increased collaboration to involve organizations at Giiwe Circles and beyond. At Giiwe Circles, some participants requested and obtained urgent supports for Indigenous community members that experienced homelessness.⁴

“So just seeing how we can kind of work together, how even just like bringing up a case and just quickly talking for ten, fifteen minutes how we could just pull these resources and connect was really neat to see. So, I think that did help me see how well we can collaborate when we have that ongoing connection and communication.”

In addition to providing opportunities for meeting immediate homelessness needs at Giiwe Circles, this project provided a platform for improved formal organizational collaboration. For example, some workers developed inter-agency agreements between their organizations and M'Wikwedong. These agreements were intended to increase communication and coordination between organizations, so that service users could be referred to services provided by M'Wikwedong in a more consistent and safe manner.

Workers of other organizations that did not consolidate an inter-agency agreement with M'Wikwedong did find other indicators of improved collaboration. For instance, a worker of a non-Indigenous organization affirmed having noticed increased phone calls and referrals from Indigenous organizations, as well as more Indigenous peoples coming to their program. Moreover, other participants reported being motivated and encouraged by Giiwe to invite staff from Indigenous-led agencies to provide training for all members of their organization, create relationships, and foster awareness of local Indigenous-specific services.

⁴ As an unexpected outcome of this project, the Giiwe Project Coordinator reported having been increasingly approached by front-line workers who requested support in obtaining specific needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. The Project Coordinator reported that in many occasions, she was successful in obtaining such resources from Giiwe partners.

5b. Final Findings: Improved Capacity to Respond to Indigenous Needs

This section accounts for participant's perceptions on how Giiwe improved their capacity to respond to the needs and preferences of Indigenous service users by months 10-11 of the project. Findings indicate that Giiwe increased participant's knowledge on the history and contexts of Indigenous peoples. Participants perceived that increased knowledge on Indigenous contexts and Indigenous-specific supports enhanced their ability to provide safer services. Some workers reported that their organizations are implementing changes to better respond to Indigenous peoples, and others affirmed they are acting as internal advocates to pursue further change.

5b.1 Increased knowledge about Indigenous history and current barriers for Indigenous peoples

Participants reported increased knowledge on Indigenous history, contemporary issues, and local programming and resources tailored for Indigenous peoples. Regarding the historical context piece, participants emphasized the contributions of M'Wikwedong's Cultural Resource Coordinator in sharing teachings on the history of Anishinaabe people in Turtle Island and the history of Indigenous peoples that currently live in Grey County.

"I had a general idea of the impact of colonization of Indigenous people in Canada, but it was really important to hear about this specific area (...) I think it helps us be mindful that it is impacting where we live."

Participants affirmed they developed increased awareness on Indigenous-specific barriers around housing. For instance, a worker cited that the legacies of colonialism could hinder the willingness of some Indigenous peoples when approaching health-care related organizations. Other participant observed having heard local landlords stating they would not rent to Indigenous peoples. Although participants believed they had increased their knowledge-base, they also recognized that building capacity to respond to Indigenous-specific needs is a continuing process and expressed a desire to continue learning.

"I feel a lot more culturally informed, I feel like that is sometimes is just the biggest piece, and knowing how to ask the questions, and then knowing what to do with the information you've been given it's so basic, but sometimes it's just not there"

Knowledge on Indigenous-specific issues was characterized as especially relevant and useful, as some participants did not fully understand the struggles of Indigenous peoples or how to provide appropriate responses to the needs and preferences of Indigenous service users. Participants recognized a need for all non-Indigenous agencies to work towards serving Indigenous peoples in a safer way and to offer voluntary referrals for Indigenous peoples to services delivered by Indigenous-led organizations.

"I do believe that this intimate opportunity to learn about the impact of colonization on Indigenous peoples in our area (...) [It] changes your perspective and the way that you approach people and how you assess risk"

Finally, participants affirmed that Giiwe Circles fostered increased awareness about the services that Indigenous-led agencies provide and Indigenous-related events happening in the community. Knowledge about local Indigenous services and events was perceived as an asset for their work, because

workers felt more equipped to build natural supports around individuals and families when they struggled to remain housed.

“It [Giiwe] has definitely improved my ability to source help for [Indigenous] people who need it.”

5b.2 Increased capacity in responding to the needs and preferences of Indigenous peoples

Participants declared they developed increased capacity for responding to Indigenous-specific needs by increasing their knowledge on Indigenous-specific issues and resources, implementing changes in their own organizations, and acting as advocates to pursue further organizational change.

Participants affirmed that knowing more about Indigenous history and current contexts increased their comfort levels when serving Indigenous people. Workers perceived diminished feelings of anxiety when working with Indigenous peoples who may have experienced traumatic experiences and reported that these changes could potentially make those they served feel more comfortable and safer.

“The main thing that's been achieved is a greater understanding of the barriers that Indigenous people face and that are specific to homelessness, how we can appropriately react to those things, and make sure that people are supported more long-term than just ‘okay, great, you're housed. Moving on to the next.’ Because it's not as simple as that.”

Regarding improved organizational capacity for responding to Indigenous-specific needs, some participants reported that their organizations are making internal changes to ensure that Indigenous-specific needs are appropriately addressed in collaboration with Indigenous-led agencies. Examples of these internal changes include establishing formal inter-agency agreements for collaboration with M'Wikwedong, implementing service procedures that are specific for Indigenous peoples, posting monthly calendars of events held by Indigenous organizations at front counters, and making available supplies such as smudge bowls and sage to their facilities.

Some interviewees reported acting as internal advocates for Indigenous-specific needs in their own organizations. For example, a worker of a non-Indigenous organization reported plans to bring some of their concerns about how to better serve Indigenous peoples to their Board of Directors. Another interviewee planned to propose potential changes in internal policies and cultural safety training for all staff in their organization.

5c. Final Findings: Further Developing Giiwe

This section describes participants views about the potential continuation of Giiwe after project completion. The following ideas were gathered by months 10 and 11 of the project.

Desire for the continuation of Giiwe

All interviewees agreed they wanted to see Giiwe continuing. Sustaining an Indigenous-led group in the Grey Bruce region was characterized as imperative for maintaining momentum on improving the response of organizations to the needs of Indigenous service users.

“Just leave it as it stands would be a disservice, because having that continuation is what we need.”

Participants observed that the local community is in a ‘very beginning place’ in starting to collaborate on Indigenous-specific issues, particularly housing. Interviewees mentioned that Giiwe felt like a first step, and suggested the following ideas for the continuation of Giiwe:

Maintaining the scope of Giiwe

- Identifying all needs that someone requires to maintain housing, what agencies can support with these needs, and gaps that need to be addressed.
- Focusing on prevention. What can be done to support people before they lose their tenancies?
- Using an anti-oppressive and anti-colonial framework to examine and improve organizations, services and inter-agency collaboration.
- Identifying opportunities for collaboration on housing and pulling resources to existing gaps.
- Finishing setting up inter-agency agreements with M’Wikwedong for those organizations who opted-in.

Expanding the scope of Giiwe

- Incorporating high level decision-makers, such as agency directors, managers and politicians.
- Including organizations from both Grey and Bruce counties.
- Broaden the scope of Giiwe to address any Indigenous-specific issue, not only housing.
- Bringing more attention to discussions about system-level priorities and policy change.
- Connecting with Saugeen First Nation and Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation.

Suggested activities

- Making more space for sharing with other agencies regarding what every organization has changed to better serve Indigenous peoples.
- Sharing Giiwe’s achievements with other inter-agency collaborations.
- Incorporating more Indigenous facilitators.
- Using structured conversations to create actionable plans for specific issues.
- Increasing involvement of people with lived experiences of homelessness.
- Hosting meetings in places that are relevant to homelessness.
- Identifying relevant quantitative data indicators.

- Creating a video with testimonials of Giiwe participants to share with others what they have learned at Giiwe, and how they have incorporated changes into their organizations to better meet the needs of Indigenous peoples.

5c.1 Current plans for continuing Giiwe

To ensure the continuation of Giiwe, participants mentioned various forms of support they could provide. These include commitment to maintain participation, looking out for any available grant application opportunities, writing letters of support, providing meeting space, and supplying lunch for meetings.

M'Wikwedong announced that they will seek to obtain funding from regional sources, such as Grey County, Bruce County, United Way of Bruce Grey and Community Foundation Grey Bruce in order to secure the involvement of a Project Coordinator. Once the involvement of a Project Coordinator is secured and there are consolidated plans for expanding Giiwe, M'Wikwedong will apply again for further funding to pursue such plans. At this point, M'Wikwedong plans to consider applying to other regional, provincial and federal sources.

Grey County announced in December 2018 that their organization had \$30,000 to offer towards a proposal from M'Wikwedong for services that assist people at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness.

6a. Project Strengths

Participants highlighted two aspects of Giiwe that they perceived as influential for its successes in improving inter-agency work on Indigenous homelessness reduction. Such aspects are Indigenous leadership and ways of knowing as part of project facilitation, and the creation of an intimate collaboration process that makes space for addressing emotion.

Indigenous leadership and ways of knowing

Participants emphasized that Giiwe's Indigenous leadership was an asset in moving this project forward in the local context. The participation of M'Wikwedong's Executive Director and Cultural Resource Coordinator was often mentioned as a marker of Indigenous leadership throughout the project. There was a sense that no previous inter-agency collaboration had been able to give voice and priority to Indigenous-specific priorities as Giiwe did.

"Indigenous people know what they need and what they want. We can't jump in and assume we know what their needs and wants are, which I think has happened for many, many, many years, which is the problem. So now we're looking at it from another perspective, from their own perspective. And they're saying, 'we need your help agencies, but, from our perspective this is what we can do, this is what we can learn from.'"

A participant from a non-Indigenous led organization stressed how Giiwe was an innovative approach from their perspective, not only because it was Indigenous-led, but because it drew from Indigenous ways of knowing to guide the process of collaboration. For example, sitting in a circle gave everyone a chance to have a voice, smudging reminded participants about their intentions in coming together, and incorporating Indigenous teachings shaped a different lens to examine housing challenges in Grey County.

"This is really innovative what is happening here. This is a real opportunity for our community to address Indigenous concerns and needs in a way that other communities are not, and to address what historically has been a challenge"

The approach that Giiwe employed was described as promising way to address not only Indigenous-specific needs, but the needs and priorities of the groups of people that are most marginalized in local communities. The rationale behind this assessment was that Giiwe's approach supported participants to broaden their worldviews, consider their own biases and assumptions, foster a more client-centered approach, and consider needs that might not have been evident before.

"Yeah, [Giiwe] just makes us more self-aware, [it] helps us check our tendency to want to fix people from our own context and helps us tune into what's happening to that person in front of us. And also tune into our community in a different way. (...) It changes your approach to things, just makes you a little bit more open or less judgemental. It makes you approach challenges with more curiosity rather than with an agenda. So, I think in that way it is easier for us to uncover other situations where people are being marginalized."

Intimate and emotional learning

Participants described Giiwe as an intimate experience that felt more impactful than training by webinar or a reading. By sitting in a circle, where everybody has a responsibility and a voice, participants perceived a deeper sense of accountability being developed between people and organizations. Additionally, having met the same people over an extended period of time, participants perceived a deeper connection among them. A strong connection among service providers was characterized as an asset to sustain coordinated work. Some participants reported feeling excited about doing a better job and making their work more inclusive and safer.

“You get to know people that work in other agencies and you have a feeling of shared accountability. It’s not about separate mandates, but about shared responsibility and building community.”

This is not to say that the whole experience of participating in Giiwe was perceived as comfortable. There was a sense that during the first sessions there were defensive attitudes, disclosures of anger, and people deflecting feelings of guilt and shame. However, the consistency of having a Giiwe meeting almost every month allowed the process to evolve in an organic and natural process.

By getting people together and having uncomfortable conversations, Giiwe created a space for emotions to be shared and addressed, which progressively contributed to strengthen relationships. As an example, participants of non-Indigenous agencies described Giiwe as a safe space to be honest about their doubts and to ask for what they needed.

The Giiwe Project made a conscious effort to avoid rushing uncomfortable conversations and instead worked to foster a slow-paced, organic process that focused on creating trusting relationships first. Although this process created a sensation of disorientation and uncertainty at times, taking the time to have uncomfortable conversations was perceived necessary to unpack longstanding legacies of colonialism that influence organizational responses to Indigenous homelessness and how to redress the harm that has been done.

6b. Project Challenges and Areas for Improvement

This section presents the areas for improvement, project challenges, and external factors impacting Giiwe that were identified by evaluation participants. Participants were asked how Giiwe could improve inter-agency collaboration on Indigenous homelessness and capacity to respond to Indigenous-specific needs. Most participants affirmed they would not have made any significant change to Giiwe.

Project facilitation

Some Giiwe Participants admitted confusion during the first Giiwe Circles. These participants admitted that the goals of Giiwe and the rationale behind its slow-paced process became evident for them only after experiencing several sessions.

Stakeholder involvement

Giiwe participants highlighted that involving more people in decision-making positions within their organizations for the next phases of Giiwe would allow for greater change. However, involving more managers, directors, or politicians might require an adaptation of the topics that are discussed on Giiwe Circles so that the perspectives and voices of front-line staff and decision-makers are balanced.

Risk of project termination

Participants asserted that the local community would lose an asset for addressing long-neglected Indigenous-specific needs should the Giiwe Project not continue. There was a sense that Giiwe should continue on a permanent basis to increase the capacity of social service organizations to better respond to Indigenous preferences and needs.

6c. External Factors Influencing Giiwe

Participants identified two factors influencing the sustained involvement of non-Indigenous organizations with the Giiwe Project:

Previous training on Indigenous cultural safety

Participants perceived that each organization that participated in Giiwe had a different trajectory regarding previous training on Indigenous-specific topics and previous work focused on improving their services for Indigenous peoples. There was a sense that organizations that have done previous work to address the needs of Indigenous peoples were more receptive to collaborate with Giiwe's goals during the first Giiwe Circles. Whether an organization has had previous Indigenous-specific capacity building appears to influence an organization's initial desire to be involved with Giiwe.

Staffing conditions of each agency

A participant that ended their participation in the Giiwe Project due to a leave of absence reported that the staffing conditions of their workplace hindered the ability of this organization to send another representative to the Giiwe Circles. Organizations that are short-staffed for meeting their regular mandate might struggle to reach sustained participation in Giiwe.

7. Recommendations

This section presents recommendations grounded on evaluation findings.

1. Findings demonstrate that Giiwe is an unprecedented opportunity to co-create and mobilize initiatives that respond to Indigenous-specific issues in the Grey County region. **It is strongly recommended that Giiwe is continued and that relevant organizations commit to be involved.** The continuation of Giiwe requires at least: 1) sustained Indigenous leadership, and 2) ensuring that there is a dedicated Program Coordinator to move this initiative forward. Should Giiwe continue, a more coordinated network of inter-agency collaboration on Indigenous homelessness will prevail, and greater capacity to respond to Indigenous-specific needs will be fostered among participating organizations.

Should Giiwe continue, the evaluator recommends M'Wikwedong considering the following possibilities:

Project facilitation

2. *Remind attendees about the intent, scope and approach of Giiwe.* Some participants reported being confused about what the Giiwe Project was about during the initial Giiwe Circles. It is recommended that attendees of any Giiwe activity are reminded of the scope of this project, the facilitation approach, and the emotional reactions that the process may generate.
3. *Monitor attendance of each agency in Giiwe and follow-up to address participation barriers.* Giiwe Circle minutes revealed that the participation of some Indigenous-led organizations in Giiwe diminished by the end of the project. It is recommended to follow up with agencies with lower attendance to investigate the causes of diminished engagement and their potential solutions.
4. *Develop and implement a project fidelity tool.* Creating and implementing a project fidelity tool could further support the Giiwe Project Coordinator in ensuring that key responsibilities and tasks of this position are accomplished according to the project's design. Potential items to include in a self-assessment project fidelity tool could include discussion of preliminary agendas for Giiwe events with M'Wikwedong's leadership, following up with agencies that discontinued their participation, laying out expectations about the objectives and process of each Giiwe activity, coordination of evaluation activities with third party evaluator, as well as planning and documentation of networking activities.
5. *Choose a desired positionality of the Project Coordinator.* When considering the positionality of the Project Coordinator, there are advantages of having either an Indigenous or a non-Indigenous facilitator. On the one hand, a non-Indigenous facilitator could act as a role model for non-Indigenous participants to embody respectful and accountable relationships with Indigenous organizations. That said, having a non-Indigenous facilitator required a greater workload for M'Wikwedong's Executive Director and Cultural Resource Coordinator. Should M'Wikwedong desire to reduce Giiwe-related workload, an Indigenous Project Coordinator could be hired. An ideal candidate would be familiarized with M'Wikwedong and Saugeen Ojibway Nation; posses traditional Indigenous knowledge; and be skilled in project planning, facilitation and communication.

Consolidating a vision and capacity for the second phase of Giiwe

6. *Identify an appropriate scope and breadth for the next phase of Giiwe.* This report is intended to inform M'Wikwedong's priorities going forward with Giiwe. However, a decision from

M'Wikwedong regarding the best course of action for the next phase should serve as foundation for future project development.

7. *Enable capacity for the development of additional projects on homelessness reduction.* Future phases of Giiwe might focus on designing and mobilizing ideas for additional projects for Indigenous homelessness reduction, such as affordable rental housing development, intensive case-management, or Indigenous-specific mental health and addictions supports. Should Giiwe pursue this objective, it is recommended that enough funding for project development and grant writing is allocated within a next phase of Giiwe.

Tailoring project design for the second phase of Giiwe

8. *Bring more stakeholders to the Giiwe Circles.* Several participants recommended bringing more relevant organizations to the Giiwe Circles. For instance, should Giiwe continue with a focus on relationship building and education on Indigenous homelessness, the following organizations were suggested as relevant partners: The Police Department and other law enforcement agencies, the Fire Department, Ambulance staff, and the First Response Team. Should Giiwe intend to co-create and mobilize additional projects that require further economic resources, participants recommended involving stakeholders with decision-making capacity, such as managers, directors and politicians.
 - a. Bringing in new stakeholders to the Giiwe Circles will affect group interaction. The work that Giiwe did in its pilot phase created relationships of understanding and mutual support needed for additional inter-agency work. If new people join Giiwe Circles, such relationships might not already be in place. Thus, it is recommended that Giiwe sustains a component for relationship building and Indigenous-specific education should new stakeholders join the Giiwe Circles.
 - b. Engaging other Indigenous communities and organizations. Participants have suggested the possibility of pursuing the engagement of organizations from Saugeen First Nation and Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation. Bringing more Indigenous communities or organizations to the table may evoke conversations about Indigenous leadership within Giiwe. Given that Grey County is based on the traditional territory of the former two First Nations, the engagement of other Indigenous stakeholders could involve negotiations including how to balance or coordinate Indigenous leadership within Giiwe among Indigenous organizations.
9. *Expand the focus of Giiwe so that it can address any Indigenous-specific issue.* Several participants suggested to expand Giiwe's scope from focusing on homelessness-specific issues so that this inter-agency collaboration could address any Indigenous-specific issues.
 - a. It is possible that expanding the scope of Giiwe to address any Indigenous-specific issue might bring in a number of support requests that encumber the capacity of this inter-agency collaboration to develop mid-term and long-term initiatives. To help to mitigate this possibility, it is recommended that M'Wikwedong and Giiwe invest the necessary time to set a clear vision of the purpose of Giiwe's next phase before expanding the scope of the project.
10. *Clarify the relationships between Giiwe and other inter-agency collaborative groups in the Grey Bruce area.* The Giiwe Project Coordinator attended various meetings of other inter-agency

collaborative groups of Grey County. Should collaboration between Giiwe and other inter-agency groups be assigned as a priority for the next phase of Giiwe, it is recommended that the Giiwe's project design include specific targets for this type of collaboration (advocacy, information sharing, incorporation of new stakeholders).

Data, research and evaluation

11. *Identify relevant outcomes, indicators and data for evaluating the next phase of Giiwe.* When a vision for the next phase of Giiwe and its desired outcomes are consolidated, working in collaboration with evaluators will be fundamental for identifying relevant data and indicators.

Recommendations for Giiwe Partners

12. *Hire Indigenous staff.* Indigenous participants called for non-Indigenous agencies to recruit Indigenous peoples and to enable these workers to advocate for further organizational change.
13. *Establish or revise Indigenous-specific policies.* The evaluator observed that agencies that incorporated or adapted Indigenous-specific policies for service delivery, hiring, and community consultation reported greater benefits from their participation in Giiwe.
14. *Find an equitable workload between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations on reconciliation work.* Some workers of Indigenous-led agencies expressed their concerns about the extra work-load derived from reconciliation activities, as some Indigenous agencies struggle to do reconciliation work in addition to regular programming. In a context of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, there is a sense that greater economic, human and organizational resources should be facilitated by settler organizations to reach equity in the work distribution that reconciliation activities entail.

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9. Appendices

Appendix I – Shirley John’s teachings on creating culturally safe spaces

Creating Culturally Safe Spaces

Teachings by Elder and Community Leader Shirley John

Strong White Buffalo Woman, Saugeen First Nation

Note-taking by Carlos Sanchez-Pimienta

December 7th, 2018, Giiwe Retreat

Shirley set the ground for this conversation by encouraging attendees to reflect on who we are, our lineage, and where our ancestors come from. By working on those relationships and examining where we are in relation to the four quadrants of the medicine wheel (a.k.a. the four directions teachings), we can live in a good way and deal with our own pain and mistrust. Moreover, by adopting these healthy relationships and using them to relate with others in our organization, we can better contribute to build a healthy community. Then, Shirley shared some ideas on how to increase cultural safety in our organizations:

Physical space

- Put on a ‘welcome’ sign, not only for Anishinaabe people, but for ALL nations
- Have things hanging: art, pictures, the 7 Grandfather Teachings in both Anishinaabemowin and English, the cross that encompasses all churches, a treaty poster of the local of the shared traditional territories of Saugeen First Nation and Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, jointly known as Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON)
- Supplies that you could have in your workplace: a smudge bowl, sage, tobacco, cedar, bear root. You can provide small kits with medicines for people to grab when they want. Lunch paper bags prevent moisture from damaging the medicines
- Have any type feather and a talking stick for people to use if they want
- Plant a tree of life. This will show all nations an example of how to build a solid foundation. The roots, trunk, branches and leaves show us that we are One and that we are all connected. Use this tree as a reminder to plant seeds of life to all who walk into your building
- You can either buy these things or make them yourselves. Organize a workshop to make them

Staff / Programming

- Build a relationship with the people you serve. The first impression is very important
- Build relationships with the families of those you serve
- Have welcoming staff that build people up
- Understand if someone treats you disrespectfully. Ask to be called back or for that individual to come back later. It’s likely they will apologize when they are calmed
- Work in the terms of the people you serve and their own processes, not in terms of your own process or understanding
- Don’t force people to participate, only if they want
- Make time for giving that extra help that is needed
- Know all service providers in the area, including a directory of First Nations organizations of the area

- Have crafting activities and games
- Provide space for hanging out with water, tea, food, computers with internet
- Have family supports for men, women, and children
- Provide legal advice from an Anishinaabe worker
- Provide opportunities to connect with the land
- Bring in music, it makes you happy
- Provide gift cards to four people to improve participation levels

Organizational

- Revise or create internal policies regarding how we should act to address the needs of Indigenous peoples
- Invite Elders to attend some of your meetings
- Make connections with Saugeen First Nation and Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation. Hire from these communities or from other Indigenous communities. Find that balance.
- Seek balance in your hiring between male and female
- Honour special Indigenous days, Pow Wows, Aboriginal day, birthdays, weddings, make a calendar
- Acknowledge the land we are on

Community

- Honour local people and their achievements
- Hang an Anishinaabe flag at City Hall

All of these can help you to build a solid foundation for cultural safety. Watch it blossom.

Appendix II – Intake Interview Guide

The Giiwe Project Intake Interview Guide

Setting context

- Can you tell me about the work that your agency does in relation to Indigenous service users?
- Does your agency have previous experience/engagement with Indigenous communities or organizations?
- Do you have any knowledge of the Indigenous history and context of this area?
- Referrals question: how do people access your services for the first time?
- Do you have any public data regarding the SES and housing needs of Indigenous peoples that use your services?

Inter-agency collaboration

- To what extent do you think inter-agency collaboration in Grey County is responding to the needs and preferences of Indigenous service users?
- What type of services have you successfully referred Indigenous service users to when they are trying to secure/maintain housing?
- What type of services have you tried to refer Indigenous service users to when they are trying to secure/maintain housing, but have found limited success in doing so?
- What do you know about the efforts and challenges of local Indigenous organizations in supporting Indigenous service users?
- What do you think could be done to improve collaboration on Indigenous homelessness between Indigenous and non-Indigenous led agencies in Grey County?

Capacity to respond to Indigenous-specific needs and preferences

- How equipped do you feel to respond to the specific needs and preferences of Indigenous users?
 - What kind of skills would you like to develop?
 - What kind of knowledge would allow you to feel more equipped?
 - What kind of action do you think could be done so that Indigenous service users have an increased sense of safety when using your services?
- How do you think the discussions and sharing that happens throughout the Giiwe Project could be most successfully shared with other members of your agency?

Tailoring the Giiwe Project

- What small things do you think can be achieved through the Giiwe Project that would make this project successful (in fostering improved inter-agency collaboration and capacity to respond to Indigenous-specific needs)?
- Among all the insights that you have shared with me today, what do you think could be most helpful for other Giiwe project partners to know?

Appendix III – Intake Sharing Circle Questions

- How can Giiwe improve inter-agency collaboration in responding to Indigenous homelessness?
- What are the gaps that you find in appropriately responding to the needs and preferences of Indigenous peoples?

Appendix IV – Final Interview Guide

The Giiwe Project Final Interview Guide

Competency to respond to Indigenous-specific housing needs

- Has Giiwe contributed to strengthening your knowledge of Indigenous history and culture? If so, in what ways? (check both at personal and organizational levels)
- Has Giiwe influenced your level of involvement with Indigenous communities and organizations? (check both at personal and organizational levels)
- What have you learned about the specific needs and preferences of Indigenous home-seekers?
- How equipped do you feel to respond to the specific needs and preferences of Indigenous service users?
- Derived from your participation in Giiwe, has your organization adapted existing services or created new procedures to better respond to the needs of Indigenous home-seekers? In that case, what has been done?
- Have you perceived any changes in the number of Indigenous peoples that access your services?
- What do you think Giiwe could have done differently to better strengthen the capacity of participating agencies in responding to Indigenous-specific housing needs?

Inter-agency collaboration and Indigenous leadership

- What have you learned about the way that Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies in Grey County collaborate in responding to Indigenous homelessness?
- What have you learned about the efforts and challenges of local Indigenous organizations in supporting service users?
- What do you think has been achieved through the monthly Giiwe circles?
- How does Indigenous leadership express itself within Giiwe? How important is this leadership to you?
- What is the relationship between the Giiwe project and other inter-agency committees or projects in Grey County?
- What do you think Giiwe could have done differently to better improve inter-agency collaboration on Indigenous homelessness?
- What could be the priorities for a next phase of Giiwe?
- How can Giiwe be continued after project completion?
- How willing would your organization be to lend support to ensure the continuation of Giiwe? What could be the best way to express this commitment to funders?

Evaluation questions

- Is there anything else that you would like to see included in the evaluation report of the Giiwe Project?
- How do you think the evaluation findings of the Giiwe Project could be most successfully shared with other social service agencies and funders?

Appendix V – Final Sharing Circle Questions

What do you think has been achieved today and during the whole Giiwe project?

What do you think the continuation of Giiwe should look like?

What kind of support could your organization lend to ensure the continuation of Giiwe?

Appendix VI – Intake ideas for inter-agency collaboration on Indigenous homelessness

Inter-agency collaboration

Participating in the Giiwe Project. Inter-agency work that focuses on Indigenous needs is perceived to be just starting in Grey Bruce. An interviewee suggested that future Indigenous-specific collaborative work should continue after the Giiwe project finishes, but focusing on other Indigenous-specific needs.

Developing face-to-face relationships and professional connections between workers. Taking the opportunity of being a small community to create a solid network between workers. Finding a common ground requires recognizing who we are, where we come from, and what our privileges and biases are so that we can work together.

Sharing knowledge. Interviewees reported wanting to know more about the types of services offered on reserve and off reserve that are specific for Indigenous service users. In the context of Grey County, interviewees mentioned interest in learning more about the programs offered by the Indigenous-led agencies in Grey (SOAHAC, M'Wikwedong, MNO, Huronia), and who to call in each organization.

Celebrating the 'little steps forward' and validate the efforts to change things for better. Working as a team with a positive outlook on the work going forward. Recognizing the good things that organizations are doing to build capacity and improve collaboration.

Re-writing the 'housing' chart. A meeting in 2017 organized by the United Way produced a chart that identifies the housing supports available in the local context and the agencies that provide them. The chart should be re-evaluated to find gaps. Each gap could be addressed collaboratively, one by one, delegating responsibilities and work to be done between each meeting. The chart could include a list of 'Refer client if...' statements for supports that are not directly related to housing (e.g. mental health, financial counselling, legal aid, etc.).

Establishing an Indigenous-specific service provider listserv. Setting up a central email list for workers to ask 'I have this client in this situation, who can help with what?' If there were questions that were not answered, then those questions can be addressed at the next Giiwe Roundtable.

Reviewing internal service policies. Supporting selected services in identifying how to enable vulnerable service users to maintain a continued access to the program.

Consultation on mental health and addictions. Fostering Indigenous input to the amalgamation of local addictions and mental health services.

Informing Grey County's 10-year housing and homelessness plan. Providing feedback regarding service gaps, funding priorities, policy changes, and how to better support Indigenous people that live in the Grey region. Acknowledging that housing issues are amplified for Indigenous people and making commitments as to how to address these disparities.

Bringing more voices in identifying housing gaps in Grey County. Producing a document that any agency could use to apply for funding regarding affordable housing or a safe emergency shelter.

Fostering Indigenous leadership. Encouraging local agencies in hiring Indigenous workers, fostering collaborative work with the leadership of Indigenous-led organizations.

Competency in responding to Indigenous-specific needs and preferences

Building capacity to adopt anti-oppressive, rights-based, trauma-informed, feminist, intersectional approaches in service provision. Although these approaches are not specific to Indigenous service users, interviewees did refer to them as useful in understanding the unique circumstances of each service user. Extra support and compassion might be required to understand why a person is seeking support and yet is struggling to follow through with appointments and follow-ups.

Incorporating ongoing cultural safety training through Giiwe. All interviewees referred to the importance and willingness to learn more about cultural awareness / competency / safety. Some interviewees stated that training should be ongoing and delivered to all staff members across agencies. Suggested ideas for training within the Giiwe Project included: 1) having a twenty-minute insight into an Indigenous-specific issue in the local context as related to housing. 2) Cover both the Canada-wide history of colonization and the local history in Grey County.

Supporting staff to incorporate Indigenous approaches to healing. Suggested ideas included: 1) supporting staff to understand whether it would be appropriate for them to incorporate traditional teachings such as smudging and the medicine wheel in their work. *"I need the very beginnings 'this a medicine wheel, this what it's used for, let's do a demonstration on it.'"* 2) Experiencing the use of traditional healing practices. 3) Developing a fact sheet for service providers regarding Indigenous cultural practices and their meaning.

Supporting partner agencies in arranging more welcoming spaces. Whether through modifying the physical space or improving customer service, interviewees mentioned that they would like to know what they could do to create more friendly and safer spaces. For example, they could receive orientation about artwork to incorporate to their facilities or how to obtain supplies for smudging.

Engaging potential service users in informal settings. Attending Indigenous community events on an informal basis was suggested as an effective strategy for fostering relationships and familiarity between community members and workers.

Incorporating the voices of service users. Fostering a sense of value and advocacy from community members in improving service design and delivery.

