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Reconciliation Requires Housing: The Role of Housing In Enhancing Access To Higher Education For Indigenous Learners – A Case Study At Western University

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in
Geography and Environment

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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete postsecondary studies at Western Ontario. Drawing from theories of Indigenous geographies, this study explores off-campus housing as a systemic disadvantage for Indigenous postsecondary learners in connection with reconciliation-based efforts at Canadian universities, which seek to "close the gap" in higher education attainment. This study is community-driven, guided by early conversations and direction from Indigenous campus leadership at Western University; this involved the design of research tools, support for recruitment of participants, and informed data analysis. In-depth interviews with fourteen Indigenous learners explored their off-campus housing experiences and influences on their studies, social and cultural relationships, health, and wellbeing. This study concludes that housing for Indigenous learners remains an underexplored opportunity despite recent and ongoing reconciliation-based efforts at Canadian universities.

Keywords: Indigenous, Student Housing, Higher Education, Relationships, Community, Reconciliation

Summary for Lay Audience

This research study examines how housing influences the decisions of Indigenous Peoples to pursue and complete postsecondary studies at Western University. Drawing from theories of Indigenous geographies, this study explores off-campus housing as a systemic disadvantage for Indigenous postsecondary learners in connection with reconciliation-based efforts at Canadian universities.

This study was guided by early and ongoing conversations with, and direction from, Indigenous campus leadership at Western University. Conversations with Indigenous campus leadership informed the design of research tools, support for recruitment of participants, and guided data analysis. In-depth interviews with fourteen Indigenous learners explored their off-campus housing experiences and influences on their studies, social and cultural relationships, health, and wellbeing. Results of interviews indicate that existing off-campus housing tends to meet the structural needs of respondents. However, study participants raised concerns about the rising costs of off-campus housing, feeling socially and academically disadvantaged due to their off-campus housing, and experiences of uncertainty regarding engaging in cultural activities within their homes. This study concludes that housing for Indigenous learners remains an underexplored opportunity despite reconciliation-based efforts at Canadian universities. Based on study participants' experiences, I argue that student housing developed with and for Indigenous learners at Western University would simultaneously demonstrate and advance Western's commitments to and investments in reconciliation by enhancing access to and success in completing postsecondary studies for Indigenous learners. Student housing developed with and

for Indigenous learners is necessary to provide housing options that appropriately support their academic success at all levels of study as well as their cultural and social wellbeing and health.

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Preface

The writing of this thesis comes at a time when, for over a year, Indigenous communities have been reclaiming stolen ancestors from mass burial sites on and near the grounds of former Indian residential schools. While this thesis explores the concept of reconciliation through an academic lens, community-led reconciliation is happening across these lands in communities, in homes, and our hearts, minds, and spirits. Just as decolonization is not a metaphor (Tuck & Yang, 2012), Indigenous Nations, leaders, and activists continue to demonstrate that reconciliation is not simply an academic concept. Reconciliation requires more than an apology. Reconciliation fundamentally requires action. This thesis supports and advances grassroots and academic assertions that acts in the name of reconciliation must be Indigenous-led and advance the wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples on the terms of the Indigenous Peoples themselves.

To me, reconciliation is more than an apology and fundamentally requires action. Action that is supported by direct and sustained investment. The processes and outcomes of reconciliation requires equitably shifting investments, resources, and power from the Canadian state to Indigenous Nations so that Indigenous Peoples can recover, revitalize, and restructure their Nations to thrive free from the intrusion and coercion of colonialism and its associated structures (i.e. capitalism).

Chapter 1

1 Introduction

This thesis examines the housing experiences and needs of Indigenous learners pursuing higher education at Western University (London, Ontario). Decades of student housing research have examined the direct and indirect benefits of student housing for postsecondary learners (Association of College and University Housing Officers - International et al., 2021; Graham et al., 2018; La Roche et al., 2010; López Turley & Wodtke, 2010; Schudde, 2011; Vetere, 2010). General studies into how students benefit from on-campus housing have identified multiple ways students benefit academically, socially, and overall from living in on-campus accommodations. Postsecondary learners residing in student housing are more likely to experience academic success throughout their studies, benefit from stronger social connections with their peers, and, overall, feel more satisfied with their postsecondary experience (Association of College and University Housing Officers - International et al., 2021; Graham et al., 2018; La Roche et al., 2010; López Turley & Wodtke, 2010; Schudde, 2011; Vetere, 2010). More recent studies have examined the unique experiences and potential benefits of on-campus housing for students of marginalized backgrounds, including students from families with low-incomes and racialized students (Laidley, 2014; López Turley & Wodtke, 2010; Soria & Roberts, 2021; Sotomayor et al., 2022). Examining student housing experiences through the lenses of race and income has highlighted the different ways postsecondary students experience housing during their studies. While racialized and marginalized postsecondary learners experience significant benefits from housing during their studies, they are the most likely to experience housing as a barrier to pursuing and completing their studies (Laidley, 2014; López Turley & Wodtke, 2010; Soria & Roberts, 2021; Sotomayor et al., 2022). Despite the recent turn in examining the unique housing experiences of marginalized and racialized postsecondary students, the field of student housing has paid less attention to the student housing experiences and needs of Indigenous postsecondary learners. Without Indigenous-specific student housing data, institutions do not know how available student housing options meet or fail to meet Indigenous learners' cultural, academic,

social, health and wellbeing needs. Thus, student housing poses a systemic disadvantage for Indigenous learners.

Fortunately, the release of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action have spurred Canadian universities to critically examine and redress the ways in which the academy perpetuates anti-Indigenous discrimination and systemic disadvantage. Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action identified ninety-four areas of redress for all levels of government and institutional actors, such as universities. The Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada further clarified that reconciliation requires a transformative change to systemic structures by stating:

Reconciliation must support Aboriginal peoples as they heal from the destructive legacies of colonization that have wreaked such havoc in their lives. But it must do even more. Reconciliation must inspire Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to transform Canadian society so that our children and grandchildren can live together in dignity, peace, and prosperity on these lands we now share. (p.8)

In their responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, Canadian universities have focused much-needed and critical attention on historic investments in reconciliation-based efforts, which have initiated pedagogical, operational, and systemic changes (to varying degrees) (Bernard, 2015; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Styres, 2020). One of the primary goals of these reconciliation-based initiatives and investments is to address the disparity in higher educational attainment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the limited Indigenous-specific literature and this thesis, the role of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete postsecondary studies remains underexplored.

A community-driven case study, this thesis examines the role of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete postsecondary studies at Western University. Drawing theoretically from Indigenous geographies in connection with Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, this thesis examines housing from the perspective of reconciliation to explore the following research objectives:

- 1) To explore the relationship between housing and access to higher education for Indigenous learners.
- 2) To examine the influence of housing on the academic journeys and holistic health and wellbeing of Indigenous learners.
- 3) To explore how housing could enhance access to and success within higher education for Indigenous learners.

Results of in-depth interviews with fourteen Indigenous learners who are currently pursuing or, within the past five years, have pursued a degree at Western University demonstrate the influence of housing on the academic, cultural, social, health and wellbeing of Indigenous postsecondary learners.

This chapter will introduce the author's positionality and how she came to study Geography, focusing on Indigenous housing experiences. Secondly, an outline of the research context is presented. The research context is followed by an explanation of the research problem and objectives. Next, contributions of the research to the study of Geography in general and the field of student housing more specifically are detailed. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview of the remaining thesis chapters.

1.1 Positionality

Fundamentally, *Geographies of Indigenous Health* traces the inequities of health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples from the colonialization of Turtle Island to the contemporary and multiple systems and activities that uphold colonial ways of doing and knowing on these lands (Richmond & Cook, 2016). Thus, how the researcher is positioned (culturally, socially, economically, etc.), as well as how they position themselves, the community and the research as a whole throughout the study, is critical to contributing to this field of research. My approach to this research is informed by my experiences of housing discrimination, precarious housing, and social housing.

I come to this research from my experiences as a visibly racialized Indigenous woman surviving the colonial state.

In late 2011, I won the lottery. In a sense. At the time, I was a single parent of a young child. We were safely though precariously housed on-reserve. While thankful for having a safe and affordable roof over our heads, I did not own a vehicle at the time and meeting even our basic needs (getting groceries, attending ceremonies, finding employment) was a struggle. Family and friends certainly helped us during this time, but I knew we needed to find a long-term solution. I had been attempting to find housing in the city of Hamilton but was repeatedly met with racial and income discrimination. Experiences that were both blatant (being told a unit was no longer available in the middle of an open house) and discrete (no longer having my phone calls returned after providing my full name - “Bomberry” is distinct to Six Nations.).

Fortunately, over a year earlier (and long forgotten), I had filled out a form for social housing. Like most Canadian cities, social housing in Hamilton is limited and vastly outpaced by demand. The waitlist for a social housing unit in Canada can last years and decades for those with special needs (Aleman, 2016). Nevertheless, my name came up earlier than most in less than two years. I "won the lottery" because the urban Indigenous community of Hamilton had prioritized social housing units for Indigenous women-led families. Recognizing the multiple barriers and dangers Indigenous women face in accessing safe and affordable housing, the urban Indigenous community of Hamilton had developed a prioritization framework informed by cultural values and harsh housing statistics, including disproportionate rates of homelessness among Indigenous residents.

The relief of knowing my housing costs would flex according to my income gave me the confidence to return to school—first, a General Arts and Sciences certificate at Mohawk College. Then, an Honours Bachelor of Sciences degree at McMaster University. Now, I am pursuing a master of Geography at the University of Western Ontario. My communities provided the essential resources (safe and affordable housing) that made it possible for me to pursue higher education. Once I began my postsecondary career, the Indigenous campus communities ensured I felt and knew I belonged here. Indigenous communities have been critical support throughout my journey to the academy. Contributing back to the communities that have supported me has guided my approach to research as a Haudenosaunee scholar.

I come to this research inspired by my lived experience and informed by my academic studies while supported and guided by my communities. I firmly believe housing is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities. Furthermore, appropriate and affordable housing can provide a sense of safety to explore one's gifts and contribute (professionally and personally) to one's community. However, it was not until I *got lucky* that I received access to the housing I needed to pursue higher education and ultimately discover how I could contribute back to my communities.

1.2 Research Context

Access to student housing is widely recognized to positively influence postsecondary students' experiences and completion rates (Antonucci, 2016; Ong, Petrova, & Spieler, 2013; Thomsen & Etkemo, 2010). However, lacking Indigenous-specific data, these studies have not sufficiently disentangled the experiences of Indigenous learners. Although limited in quantity, research specific to Indigenous learners reveals that their housing experiences and needs are socially, culturally, and economically distinct; further, access to affordable and culturally appropriate housing influences where Indigenous learners decide to pursue their studies, and it also predicts their retention (Archibald, 2004; Motz & Currie, 2019; Wallace, Maire, & Lachance, 2004). Notably, there are no known published studies examining Indigenous learners' housing experiences at universities in Ontario.

The increased diversity of student populations at Canadian universities has prompted innovation and adjustment in the provision of services and supports to encourage a sense of belonging (Songsore & Buzzelli, 2019). Increasingly, Canadian universities have recognized that the provision of services and supports for Indigenous learners must be informed by local Indigenous communities (Bernard, 2015). However, although there has been a significant increase in Indigenous-specific initiatives and resources on the campuses of Canadian universities since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action in 2015 (Universities Canada, 2020), the role of housing in enhancing access and success in higher education for Indigenous learners has not yet been meaningfully brought forward in this conversation.

To enhance access to higher education for Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous-specific and localized research is necessary to appropriately examine the role of student housing in enhancing access to and success in higher education for Indigenous learners.

1.3 Research Problem and Objectives

Housing is commonly understood to be fundamental to the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities. Whether operated by postsecondary institutions or the private market, student housing is designed to address the specific needs of postsecondary learners. Research examining postsecondary student housing has consistently demonstrated academic, social, and personal benefits for residents. However, the field of student housing research has paid less attention to the experiences and needs of Indigenous postsecondary learners. Research that has examined the postsecondary experiences of Indigenous learners on lands occupied by the Canadian state has established that the postsecondary housing experiences and needs of Indigenous learners are distinct from non-Indigenous learners (Archibald, 2004; Motz & Currie, 2019; Pidgeon et al., 2014; Pidgeon & Rogerson, 2017; Wallace et al., 2004; Walton et al., 2020). Although limited in number, these studies have highlighted the significance of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete postsecondary studies. Access to culturally appropriate and affordable housing has been identified by Indigenous student housing research as a significant barrier to the pursuit and completion of postsecondary studies (Archibald, 2004; Motz & Currie, 2019; Pidgeon et al., 2014; Pidgeon & Rogerson, 2017; Wallace et al., 2004; Walton et al., 2020). Notably, there have been no published student housing studies conducted in Ontario, Canada, focusing on the student housing experiences and needs of Indigenous learners. This thesis aims to respond to this knowledge gap by examining the role of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete postsecondary studies at Western University, which is located in London, Ontario.

This thesis aims to characterize the off-campus housing experiences and needs of Indigenous learners at Western University. The primary research question examines "How does housing in London, Ontario, influence the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete

postsecondary studies at Western University?" Three objectives were identified to answer the primary research question and achieve the research purpose. First, indigenous learners who were currently pursuing or, within the past five years, had pursued a degree at Western University would be interviewed according to the following three objectives:

1. To explore the relationship between housing and access to higher education for Indigenous learners
2. To examine the influence of housing on the academic journeys and overall health and wellbeing of Indigenous learners
3. To explore how housing could enhance access to and success within higher education for Indigenous learners

1.4 Contributions of the Research

The completion of this study will illuminate the influence of housing on the recruitment, continuation, and completion of postsecondary studies of Indigenous learners at the University of Western Ontario. Despite substantial investments nationally and provincially to enhance access to higher education for Indigenous Peoples, there is limited research exploring housing influences on the recruitment, retention, and success of Indigenous students. The anticipated immediate impact of this project is that it will inform student housing policy and, in doing so, enhance internal efforts to support the success of Indigenous learners at Western University. The findings from this research will also provide novel contributions to national conversations exploring Indigenous Peoples' access to and experiences in housing and higher education.

1.4.1 Contributions to Indigenous Campus Community at Western

This study was a community-driven study and conducted in collaboration with the Indigenous campus leaders - Christy Bressette, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President from Western's Office of Indigenous Initiatives and Amanda Myers, Director of Western's Indigenous Student Centre. Through early and ongoing dialogue with Indigenous campus leadership, research outcomes for this study were co-developed to align with and advance current and planned initiatives to enhance support for Indigenous students at Western University.

The Indigenous campus community's desired outcomes for the study were to receive a summary report about the housing experiences and needs of Indigenous learners at Western. Additionally, Indigenous campus leadership requested audience-specific policy briefs about Indigenous student housing needs to be shared with senior leadership at Western University, municipal leaders, and local organizations, such as housing providers.

1.5 Chapter Outline

This section outlines each of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

1.5.1 Community Profile

This chapter provides background information on the municipality of London, Ontario and the campus community of Western University. In addition, this chapter provides the localized context of London's unique housing situation, student housing availability at Western University, and the commitments to reconciliation of urban and campus leadership.

1.5.2 Literature Review

This chapter explores the social and academic significance of student housing at postsecondary institutions and standard housing models provided by Canadian universities. The current models and availability of student housing at postsecondary institutions will then be connected to the availability of housing options in surrounding urban centers, focusing on the experiences of Indigenous postsecondary learners. Finally, this chapter will describe the significance of reconciliation in understanding Indigenous learners' student housing experiences and needs.

1.5.3 Methods

This chapter explains how this research study was conducted. The selection and use of Indigenous research methodologies are described. A review of research tools and how data was analyzed is also provided.

1.5.4 Results

This chapter presents the results of the fourteen qualitative semi-structured interviews. Results are categorized according to the study objectives as follows:

- a) The Role of Housing in Accessing Higher Education explores the relationship between housing and access to higher education for Indigenous learners
- b) Housing Experiences examines the influence of housing on the academic, cultural, social, health and wellbeing of Indigenous learners
- c) Housing as a Facilitator to Accessing and Succeeding In Higher Education explores how housing could enhance access to and success within higher education for Indigenous learners

Data were analyzed iteratively with an initial review by the author, followed by ongoing conversations with the author's supervisor and Indigenous campus leaders at the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the Indigenous Student Centre to discuss the overarching themes emerging from the in-depth interviews. Guided by these conversations, additional rounds of coding were completed to draw out experiences and ideas to group the data into more significant concepts.

1.5.5 Discussion

This study was conducted in London, Ontario, as a case study at Western university. Through in-depth interviews with Indigenous learners, this research examined the role of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete higher education. This chapter will present the insights gained from participants: 1) housing becomes increasingly significant to Indigenous learners as they progress through their studies; 2) off-campus housing tends to meet the structural needs of Indigenous learners but often requires residents to reconcile cultural, financial, social, health and wellbeing needs not met by housing, and 3) Indigenous student housing developed with and for Indigenous learners would involve different types of housing to create a community of Indigenous learners. This chapter will also outline the limitations of the

research study and the theoretical contributions of the study. Finally, policy implications for Western University, as well as other universities located within the area now referred to as Ontario, are also presented.

Chapter 2

2 Literature Review and Theoretical Context

Literature for this review includes empirical, non-empirical papers and policy documents examining postsecondary student housing experiences and needs. Recognizing the unique educational experiences of Indigenous Peoples, the initial database search focused on works attentive to the housing experiences of Indigenous postsecondary students in the settler state of Canada. Further literature was included in this review to situate the research in the broader conversation of postsecondary student housing experiences and needs. The geographic scope of this review is limited to Turtle Island (also referred to as North America) in recognition of the unique histories, contexts, and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples on these lands. This literature review identified three key themes and related knowledge gaps in understanding the role of housing in enhancing access to postsecondary education for Indigenous Peoples in the settler state of Canada.

Although student housing research has not reached a consensus on how on-campus housing benefits postsecondary learners, there is consistency in the literature that on-campus student housing has an overall positive influence on the attrition and success rates of postsecondary students (Association of College and University Housing Officers - International et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2018; López Turley & Wodtke, 2010; Schudde, 2011; Soria & Roberts, 2021; Vetere, 2010). Student housing research has identified numerous benefits to residing on campus, including improved academic performance, a greater sense of belonging, and overall increased satisfaction with their program of study (Association of College and University Housing Officers - International et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2018; López Turley & Wodtke, 2010; Schudde, 2011; Soria & Roberts, 2021; Vetere, 2010). Exploring the housing experiences of racialized and marginalized students reveals housing to be an important factor in their academic success and feeling of belonging to the academic community (Laidley, 2014; Leung et al., 2020; López Turley & Wodtke, 2010; Soria & Roberts, 2021; Sotomayor et al., 2022). Despite this evidence, as well as the increased desire for universities to create more supportive and welcoming environments for a diverse campus community (Songsore

& Buzzelli, 2019), there is a concerning trend of privatizing student housing at universities in Canada (Evans & Sotomayor, 2021; Revington & August, 2019; Sotomayor et al., 2022). The increased presence of privatized student housing around Canadian campuses will likely exacerbate existing housing affordability and access concerns for all postsecondary students and community members. Indigenous, racialized, and marginalized residents are more likely to experience it more deeply than non-Indigenous and racialized residents (Hogan & Berry, 2011; National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017).

However, there is limited research examining the compatibility between student housing options at Canadian universities and the housing needs of Indigenous students. Current literature has identified that the physical structures, policies, and practices of student housing at Canadian universities frequently do not meet the housing needs of Indigenous Peoples (Archibald, et al., 2004; Pidgeon & Rogerson, 2017; Wallace, Marie, & Lachance, 2004; Walton, Hamilton, Clark, Pidgeon, & Arnouse, 2020). When on-campus housing fails to meet the needs of Indigenous students, they must seek off-campus housing. However, private housing searches may also provide limited housing options due to racial discrimination (Mozt & Currie, 2019). Faced with limited on and off-campus housing, Indigenous students are at-risk of experiencing housing instability and/or homelessness during their studies. The second central theme of this review brings forward an emerging body of literature examining how housing insecurity and/or homelessness experiences negatively impact the success of postsecondary students (Hallett & Freas, 2018; Leung, Farooqui, Wolfson, & Cohen, 2021; Silva, et al., 2017). Finally, the third theme of this review examines the timely opportunity to address the housing challenges Indigenous postsecondary students face off campus. Now is a particularly opportune time to examine the role of housing in the recruitment, retention, and completion of postsecondary studies for Indigenous Peoples, as many Canadian universities are actively seeking to *indigenize* their campuses to better support Indigenous students (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Pidgeon, 2016). The proposed research project is poised to fill in the identified knowledge gaps. This study is an example of the localized studies needed to inform national and university-level initiatives to enhance access to and success of postsecondary studies for Indigenous Peoples through student housing.

2.1 Postsecondary Student Housing and the Needs of Indigenous Learners

Housing is more than a physical structure. Housing is representative of key societal values such as cultures, morals, and economic status. For Indigenous Peoples, housing is also an important place to learn and practice spiritual health, such as use of traditional medicines and conducting spiritual ceremonies. Thus, housing was a critical pathway for colonization to change the social and cultural practices of Indigenous Peoples (Perry, 2003). Traditional housing structures of First Nations reflected First Nations' understandings of family (often more extensive than settler conceptions), gender roles, social, economic, and cultural practices (Perry, 2003). Transforming and erasing Indigenous understandings of housing (physically, socially, and culturally) was therefore key to advancing the colonial project.

The housing experiences of Indigenous students are culturally distinct from those of non-Indigenous students (Pidgeon & Rogerson, 2017). While many Indigenous Nations share commonalities in worldviews, culture and histories, Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island are not a monolith. Indigenous postsecondary students carry multiple identities, such as diverse spiritual beliefs, genders, economic status, and educational experiences, which require distinct support in the Canadian university environment (Pidgeon, 2009). Despite their individuality, Indigenous students are more likely to find postsecondary student housing incompatible with their housing needs (Pidgeon & Rogerson, 2017). Empirical studies examining the housing experiences and needs of Indigenous postsecondary students identified that the non-traditional demographics of Indigenous students (such as being mature in age and requiring child and family-friendly housing) are not commonly accounted for or supported in traditional student housing models at Canadian universities (Archibald, et al., 2004; Pidgeon & Rogerson, 2017; Wallace, Marie, & Lachance, 2004). While providing an important and insightful narrative, the current literature articulating the postsecondary student housing needs of Indigenous Peoples is limited in geographic scope. Addressing the housing needs of Indigenous students at Canadian universities requires localized research that recognizes the unique strengths and challenges of the community and campus environments Indigenous students are situated in.

2.2 Housing Students in Urban Centres

Indigenous students must seek off-campus accommodations when on-campus student housing does not meet their needs. Examining student housing affordability is essential in understanding the risks and impacts of housing instability and/or homelessness for postsecondary students. Students from low-income households are at higher risk of experiencing housing instability (uncertainty of housing accommodations) and/or homelessness (lack of shelter) (Hallett & Freas, 2018). Being concerned with unstable or lacking housing has been shown to cause emotional and mental stress (Hallett & Freas, 2018). Often, concern for one's housing may distract students from their studies, leading to lower academic performance (Laidley, 2014; Leung et al., 2020; Reynolds et al., 2018; Sotomayor et al., 2022). Indigenous postsecondary students may be at higher risk of experiencing housing instability and/or homelessness not only due to limited financial resources but also due to impacts of racial discrimination (Currie et al., 2020; Hogan & Berry, 2011; Motz & Currie, 2019; Sotomayor et al., 2022). A recent study of experiences of Indigenous Peoples, immigrants and racialized experiences of discrimination in London and Middlesex County revealed high levels of discrimination reported by participants (Vaswani & Esses, 2021). In exploring the experiences of discrimination experienced by Indigenous participants, Vaswani & Esses (2021) found that Indigenous Peoples were more likely to report utilizing passive coping strategies (such as acceptance of discrimination as part of living in London). Indigenous participants also reported feeling discouraged, powerless, anxious, and depressed due to experiencing discrimination in London (Vaswani & Esses, 2021).

Studies examining the off-campus housing searches of Indigenous students have revealed additional challenges to accessing housing due to racial discrimination (Motz & Currie, 2019; Pidgeon & Rogerson, 2017). Indigenous students have expressed hesitancy to engage in cultural practices for fear of loss of housing (Archibald, et al., 2004). The stress Indigenous students experience as a result of racially discriminatory housing practices is believed to negatively impact their academics (Currie, Motz, & Copeland, 2020; Motz & Currie, 2019). Further research on housing affordability is needed to understand how to better support students from marginalized, low-income, and diverse backgrounds. In order to enhance access to higher education, Indigenous-specific research is needed to appropriately disentangle the socio-

economically distinct experiences and risks of housing instability and/or homelessness for Indigenous postsecondary students. Exploring institutional infrastructure through a structural inequality framework draws attention to how existing structures, such as student housing, deliver uneven benefits to students (Naylor & Mifsud, 2019).

2.3 Reconciliation & Education in Canada

Canadian educational institutions played a significant role in the historical and ongoing dispossession, oppression, and cultural genocide of Indigenous Peoples. Notably, the social policies and legislations behind the Indian residential school system coordinated the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities to be placed in institutions that explicitly sought to separate children from their Indigenous languages, cultures, Knowledges, and identities. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released ninety-four calls to action, calling on all levels of government as well as Canadian institutions and systems to redress the harms caused by the residential school system to advance reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples on these lands. Of the ninety-four calls to action put forth by Canada's TRC, eleven calls to action are education-specific. The education-specific calls to action highlight the need for all levels of government and education institutions to redress historical policies that have led to discrimination of Indigenous Peoples in educational settings and to invest in Indigenous-led solutions rooted in reconciliation. However, reconciliation efforts within the academy have been widely criticized for lack of meaningful change (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Peach et al., 2020; Styres, 2020).

Reconciliation-based initiatives and investments in the academy have been characterized by Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) as (1) *Indigenous inclusion*, whereby universities seek to increase the number of Indigenous bodies on campus (students, faculty and staff) but have made little to no change in structure and policy; (2) *Reconciliation indigenization*, which extends beyond Indigenous inclusion and seeks to establish equality between Indigenous and Canadian knowledges; and (3) *Decolonial indigenization*, which furthers Reconciliation indigenization through a fundamental change in university structure and operations through a shift in power dynamics between Indigenous Peoples and Canadians. The findings of Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) highlight the reliance of academic institutions on *Indigenous inclusion* efforts, which

require little to no change in the power and operation. Similarly, Peach et al. (2020) and Styres (2020) call for reconciliation-based initiatives within the academy, commitments, and investments to focus on transformative change in power structure and resource allocation.

Identifying the unique housing needs of Indigenous postsecondary students and building the appropriate supports fit well within the current movement to indigenize Canadian universities. Indigenization in the university environment is a process whereby changes are made to university policies, curriculum, spaces and practices to better support Indigenous students and Indigenous ways of doing and knowing (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Peach, Richmond, & Brunette-Debassige, 2020; Pidgeon, 2016). In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, and on behalf of Canadian universities, Universities Canada Chair David T. Bernard (2015) published a statement acknowledging the role and responsibilities of Canadian universities in advancing reconciliation. A significant number of reconciliation-based initiatives have begun on Canadian university campuses as a result, such as the development of Indigenous senior leadership roles, increased Indigenous content and focus across academic programs, and increased hiring of Indigenous faculty and staff (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Universities Canada, 2020).

Canadian universities that have pursued Indigenous student housing initiatives through an *Indigenous Inclusion* framework have seen limited success (Pidgeon & Rogerson, 2017). For example, student housing practices that set aside housing units for Indigenous students may find limited utilization of these units by Indigenous learners if the building units do not accommodate the family status of Indigenous students (Pidgeon & Rogerson, 2017). A closer examination of Indigenous-specific student housing literature, however, clearly indicates Indigenous learners have distinct needs that can not be fully met through existing student housing options (Archibald, 2004; Motz & Currie, 2019; Pidgeon et al., 2014; Pidgeon & Rogerson, 2017; Wallace et al., 2004; Walton et al., 2020). As early as 2004, Archibald's report to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation identified housing as an important factor in the decisions of Indigenous learners to enroll at specific institutions. Analyzing data collected from questionnaires, individual interviews and sharing circles with Indigenous students and staff, Archibald's research emphasized housing as a significant factor in the decisions and abilities of Indigenous learners to

continue and complete their studies (2004). The unique housing experiences and needs of Indigenous learners documented by Archibald and Wallace et al. in 2004 have been confirmed by more recent studies. Studies conducted by Motz & Currie (2019) and Currie, Motz and Copeland (2020) reported the increased biophysical stresses of Indigenous postsecondary students who reported experiencing racially-motivated housing discrimination in their searches for off-campus housing. In 2017, Pidgeon & Rogerson conducted a secondary analysis of existing Indigenous student housing data and a content analysis of Canadian universities' current student housing policies. Pidgeon & Rogerson (2017) reinforced Archibald's 2004 findings that housing plays an important role in the recruitment and success of Indigenous learners. However, Canadian universities still have significant work regarding appropriate infrastructure, policies and practices (Pidgeon & Rogerson, 2017). Therefore, initiatives seeking to meet the unique housing needs of Indigenous postsecondary students must be oriented toward *Reconciliation Indigenization* or *Decolonization Indigenization* to account for and address the structures, policies and practices that fundamentally disadvantage Indigenous students in accessing existing student housing. This requires postsecondary student housing initiatives to be informed by the needs specific to their geographic, cultural, and political regions (Pidgeon, Archibald, & Hawkey, 2014). Collaborative research guided by the Indigenous community is best positioned to explore the unique needs of Indigenous students.

2.4 Theoretical Context

This case study draws theoretically from the field of Indigenous geographies of health. The emergence of Geographies of Indigenous Health as a discipline has been pivotal in supporting, calling attention to and advancing the autonomy of Indigenous Peoples and communities in leading health initiatives for their communities and directing resources to meet their unique needs (Coombes, Johnson, & Howitt, 2012). Geographies of Indigenous Health center Indigenous Knowledges, experiences, and voices to examine and understand Indigenous Peoples' health and wellbeing (Richmond & Nightingale, 2020). By utilizing this strengths-based approach to examine the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples, Geographies of Indigenous Health counters the biomedical health perspective by recognizing the health and wellbeing of

Indigenous Peoples as inherently robust and resilient in the face of historical and ongoing violence (racism, sexism, and colonialism). This shift in research approach has been pivotal in changing how Indigenous Peoples and others view the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples as well as Indigenous Nations and communities. Approaching a research project from this standpoint transforms what questions are asked, how they are asked, and of whom, all of which place increased significance on the positionality of the researcher(s).

2.4.1 Indigenous Geographies of Health

Geographies of Indigenous Health move understandings of the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples out from western knowledge systems and into Indigenous ways of knowing and being. For many Indigenous Peoples, health is holistic, encompassing physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional wellbeing. In addition to income, employment and education, housing is now widely recognized as a social determinant of health, whereby housing influences health outcomes and health can influence housing outcomes (Richmond & Cook, 2016). Indigenous understandings of health are rooted in wholism, which recognizes the relationships between physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing in connection to self, family, community, and environment (Anderson et al., 2006). For Indigenous Peoples, housing is an important site for practicing traditional health and wellbeing ways, such as through smudging and conducting ceremonies.

Health inquiries conducted through the lenses of western knowledge systems often pathologized and compartmentalized the health of Indigenous Peoples (Reading & Wien, 2009).

Unsurprisingly, this research has helped to perpetuate solutions rooted in western understandings of health, primarily focused on the biomedical model of health (Ahenakew, 2011). The normative and limited scope of the biomedical model of health is incapable of considering the social and historical influences on health and wellbeing (Ahenakew, 2011). Based on the biomedical model understanding of health, Canadian health policy for Indigenous peoples has primarily laid the burden of change (to improve the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples) on Indigenous communities. In contrast, Geographies of Indigenous Health scholarship critically interrogates the roots of Indigenous health inequities – racism, sexism and, most importantly, colonialism (Bourassa, McKay-McNabb, & Hampton, 2004; Richmond & Cook, 2016). The

results of this shift in inquiry have brought into focus the systems of Canadian settler society (health, justice, economic, etc.) that have been and continue to systematically disadvantage and discriminate against Indigenous Peoples resulting in negative health outcomes (Richmond & Cook, 2016). These social systems must be interrogated and transformed to address the health inequities Indigenous Peoples experience.

The social systems of Canadian settler society individually and collectively control access to the resources necessary for the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities (Reading & Wien, 2009). How these systems influence the health and wellbeing of society are understood as the social determinants of health (Reading & Wien, 2009). The social determinants of health of importance for this research project are experiences of racism, homelessness, and access to education. Experiences of racism, for instance, have been recognized by Public Health Canada as a social determinant of the health of Indigenous, Black, and other racialized groups (Government of Canada, 2020). In 2020, the Toronto Board of Health declared anti-Black racism a public health crisis and advocated for the appropriate allocation of resources in the municipal's next budget to address the issue (Boisvert, 2020). Housing, too, has been recognized as a critical social determinant of health. Lack of housing, or homelessness, contributes to poorer health outcomes than those with secure housing (Anderson & Collins, 2014). Indigenous Peoples disproportionately experience homelessness, poor housing, and inadequate housing (Anderson & Collins, 2014). Education as a social determinant of health examines the relationship between increased positive health outcomes influenced by higher levels of educational attainment (Shankar, et al., 2013). However, financial, and cultural barriers and experiences of discrimination hinder the postsecondary attainment of low-income Indigenous Peoples (Shankar, et al., 2013). Geographies of Indigenous Health provide an essential insight into the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples by centring Indigenous experiences and ways of knowing to critically examine the complex interactions between relevant social determinants of health (Richmond & Nightingale, 2020). While acceptance of housing as a critical social determinant of health is helpful to the health and wellbeing of all, addressing the specific health needs of Indigenous Peoples through housing requires Indigenous-specific research and scholarship. This research study examines Indigenous learners' housing experiences and needs at the University of Western Ontario.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter situated this study within existing student housing literature and the education-specific Calls to Action put forth by Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Building from student housing studies conducted with general student populations and studies exploring the housing experiences of Indigenous learners outlined the significance of this study. Drawing theoretically from the Geographies of Indigenous Health, this research project focuses on the unique housing experiences of Indigenous postsecondary learners who have or are currently pursuing a degree at the University of Western to call attention to systemic inequities that disproportionately exclude and disadvantage Indigenous Peoples within the postsecondary education system.

Chapter 3

3 Community Profile

This research project calls attention to the systemic and systematic discrimination Indigenous Peoples endure in the face of the Canadian state's occupation of their lands, which requires a close examination of the active roles of western social structures (in general) and western education institutions (specifically) in the oppression and dispossession of Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island. Therefore, it is imperative to examine the wider community (Municipality of London, Ontario) as well as the unique campus community of Western University to understand the unique experiences and needs of Indigenous Peoples accessing the social systems of housing and education.

3.1 Community Location

The geographic location of London, Ontario (and Western University within it) is significant in examining the housing experiences of Indigenous learners. While London has similarities common to many urban settlements on lands occupied by the Canadian state, its geographic proximity to Indigenous communities, historical and contemporary economy and social make-up have created an urban environment distinct from other Canadian municipalities of similar size.

3.2 London, Ontario

London, Ontario is the largest non-Indigenous settlement to the following Indigenous communities – Oneida Nation, Chippewa of the Thames First Nations and Delaware Nation. The municipality of London, Ontario, is situated in the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabek and Lūnaapéewak Nations. The territory is covered by the Dish with One Spoon, initially established by the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek Nations to peaceably share lands and resources.

The City of London describes itself as a culturally diverse mid-sized urban centre. According to Statistics Canada (2016), London's general population is approximately 486,505 residents. Statistics Canada also approximates that 74,735 residents of London identify as a visible

minority, comprising 15% of the overall population (2016). The three largest groups of visible minorities in London include Arab, South Asian, and Black (StatsCan, 2016).

Economically, London's key sectors are agriculture and food, manufacturing, technology, health, and professional services. Notably, Western University is among London's top five employers regarding the number of employees.

3.2.1 Indigenous Populations

According to the 2016 Statistics Canada census, approximately 9,755 residents who identify as Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) comprise 2.5% of the overall population in London (StatsCan, 2016). Most Indigenous residents in London identified their home communities as Oneida of the Thames, Delaware of the Thames, and Chippewa of the Thames, which (as noted above) are the three communities London is situated next.

Based on data collected from an Indigenous community-driven health survey, Indigenous Peoples residing in London, Ontario, experience poorer physical and mental health than non-Indigenous residents (O'Brien et al., n.d.) and are more likely to experience housing precarity or homelessness (Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre et al., n.d.).

3.2.2 Reconciliation in London, Ontario

Although the City of London has not established an official plan for advancing reconciliation across the municipality, the City's Community Diversity and Inclusions Strategy published in 2019 identifies establishing an Indigenous relations office for London as a priority. Additional priority areas identified include ensuring reconciliation-inspired action is Indigenous-led and developing accountability and implementation body and plan to advance the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action (City of London, Ontario, 2022). In 2021, the City of London hired an Indigenous Community Liaison to guide the municipality's reconciliation-based actions and investments and nurture relations with Indigenous community members (Free Press staff, 2021).

3.2.3 Housing in London, Ontario

Table 1 provides a snapshot of London's housing market between 2015 and 2021 and reveals an increase in average rental increases across all apartment sizes (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2020). Although the rental market in London remains less expensive than in major centres such as Toronto, the rising costs of housing overall follow similar trends seen in major urban centres (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2020).

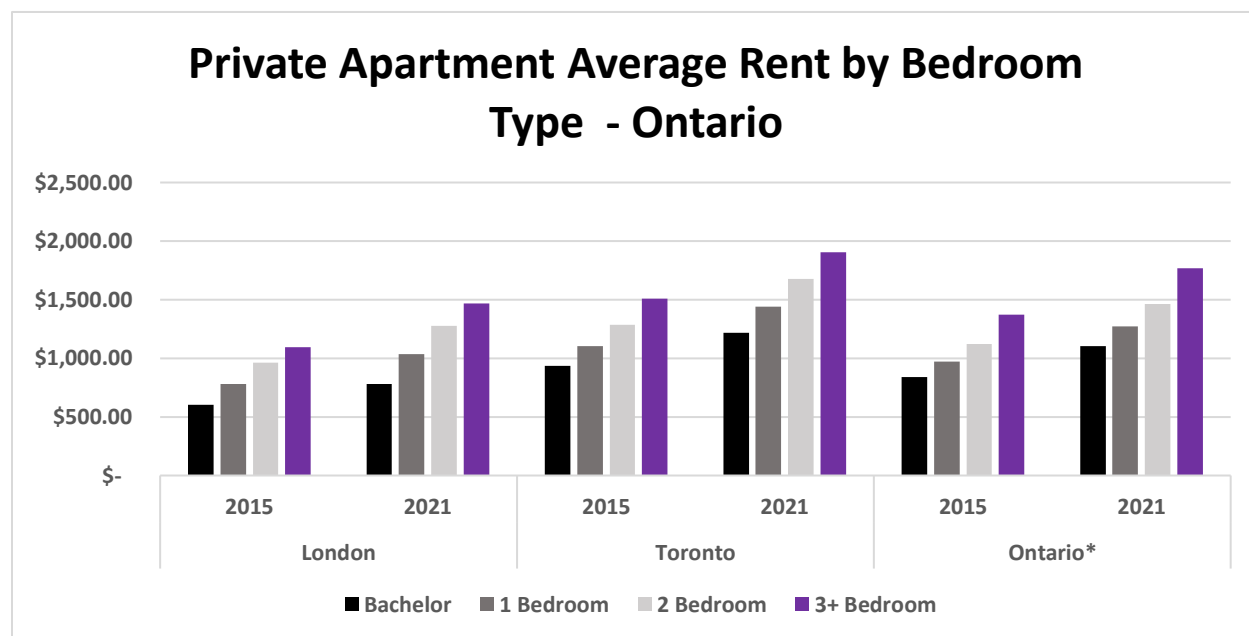


Table 1. Data pulled from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation - Rental Market Survey data from 2015 and 2021

The housing market in London is also influenced by the significant increase in population in the last five years. Statistics Canada data (2022) reveals that London's population grew from less than 500,000 to over 543,000 residents, representing a 10% increase in population size. The population growth rate in London is more than double that in Toronto (4.6%) and almost twice the population growth in Ontario (5.8%). However, the increase in rental housing costs during this period suggests that initiatives to house London's growing population have not kept pace.

3.3 Western University

Western University was established in 1878 and officially opened three years later in 1881 (Western University, n.d.). The original four faculties of Western included Arts, Divinity, Law, and Medicine (Western University, n.d.). Ranking among the top 1% of postsecondary institutions globally, learners studying at Western now have the option to study across twelve

faculties (n.d.-a). As of 2020, Western's full-time student population totalled over 30,000 across all levels of study – undergraduate, graduate, and professional (Western University, n.d.-a).

Western's most recent strategic plan (Western University, 2021) highlights three key themes of growth:

1. Greater Impact
2. People, Community, and Culture
3. Western's Place in the World

Continued commitments to advancing reconciliation at Western are identified under Theme 2 – People, Community, and Culture. Under this strategic area, Western renews an institutional commitment to "increase Indigenous voices and presence across all levels of community life, work, study, and research." (2021, p. 15) Notably, a focused effort on increasing Indigenous learners to Western is identified as a key opportunity to promote reconciliation on campus (2021).

Western University is affiliated with Huron University College, Kings University College and Brescia University College. Many of Western's student services, including those offered by the Indigenous Student Centre are also available to students attending the three affiliated university colleges. However, the focus of this study is the main campus of Western University.

3.3.1 Indigenous Learners

Among the general student population, approximately 591 students identify as Indigenous at Western University (Western University Office of Indigenous Initiatives, 2021). The Indigenous Student Centre at Western was established to provide Indigenous learners with a physical space on campus that reflected their identities and responded to their unique needs (Western University Office of Indigenous Initiatives, 2021). Western's Indigenous Student Centre provides a central space for Indigenous learners to gather, access academic and cultural supports, and build a community on campus (Western University Office of Indigenous Initiatives, 2021). In addition, the Indigenous Student Centre offers several amenities for Indigenous students, including

computer and printer stations, study space, a lounge area for socializing, kitchen facilities and after-hours access (Western University Office of Indigenous Initiatives, 2021).

Additional investments in enhancing Indigenous representation and Knowledges on campus included the recent hiring of Western's first Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President – Indigenous Initiatives to oversee and coordinate the sustainability and development of Indigenous initiatives identified in Western's Indigenous Strategic Plan (Western University Office of Indigenous Initiatives, 2021). More recent investments include the targeted recruitment of Indigenous scholars and staff across all faculties, the development of Indigenous spaces on campus, such as the Indigenous Learning Space and the creation of new scholarships for Indigenous learners at all levels of study (Western University Office of Indigenous Initiatives, 2021).

3.3.2 Reconciliation at Western

Since the establishment of the Indigenous Student Centre, Western University has made numerous commitments and investments in Indigenous initiatives. Like most Canadian universities, Western has publicly endorsed Universities Canada's "Principles on Indigenous Education," developed with Indigenous leaders in response to the release of the Truth and Reconciliation's Final Report and Calls to Action.

In 2016, Western launched its first Indigenous Strategic Plan, outlining eight priority areas to coordinate a university-wide effort to decolonize and indigenize the institution (Western University Office of Indigenous Initiatives, 2021). The eight areas of strategic investment include:

- i. Strengthen and build relationships with Indigenous communities
- ii. Nurture an inclusive campus culture that values Indigenous Peoples, perspectives, and ways of knowing
- iii. Enhance Indigenous students' experiences
- iv. Achieve excellence in Indigenous research and scholarship
- v. Achieve excellence in Indigenous teaching, learning, and pedagogy

- vi. Decolonize and Indigenize Western's institutional practices and space
- vii. Become a university of choice for Indigenous students
- viii. Increase representation of Indigenous staff and faculty members

An annual report published by Western's Office of Indigenous Initiatives reports back to the community on progress made in each strategic area and identifies key activities within each strategic area requiring further attention.

3.3.3 Student Housing

Western Housing runs student residences provided by Western University. On-campus, Western Housing offers eleven student housing buildings, each providing essential features such as building-wide Wi-Fi, housekeeping, study lounges, laundry facilities, and gym spaces (Western Housing, 2022). Of the eleven on-campus student housing buildings, three offer traditional dorm-style residences, three other buildings offer a hybrid residence providing more privacy with shared kitchens and gatherings spaces, while the five remaining buildings offer suite or shared apartment-style residences (Western University, 2022).

While on-campus residences are prioritized for first-year students, Western Housing also provides additional housing options for upper-year and graduate students and students with families (Western University, 2022). On-campus, Western Housing provides 299 1-bedroom units and 99 2-bedroom apartment-style units for upper-year and graduate students (Western University, 2022). Off-campus, Platt's Lane Estates is situated on a 20-acre property and offers 196 townhouses with 2 to 3-bedroom units and 3-story walk-up apartment buildings with 204 1- and 2-bedroom units (Western University, 2022). In addition, the Platt's Lane community is located near elementary schools and daycares, shopping, and bus stops (Western University, 2022).

In 2017, Western Housing has collaborated with the Indigenous Student Centre to provide culturally informed student housing options for Indigenous learners at Western (Fracassi, 2017). This collaboration led to the development of "Ayukwanaktiyóhake'," a living and learning floor in Delaware Hall for Indigenous and allied students. The name of the living and learning floor,

“Ayukwanaktiyóhake,” is from the Oneida language and means “a safe place where we can find rest and security” (Indigenous Student Centre, n.d.). Programming specific to this housing option included opportunities to engage in ceremonial activities, a Visiting Elder program as well as academic supports (Indigenous learners who self-identify in their application to Western and are seeking on-campus residence in their first year are prioritized in Western Housing's selection process (Western University, 2022)).

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter briefly described the unique geographic location and socio-political history of the London, Ontario. An explanation has also been provided of how these elements have created a distinct environment for Indigenous Peoples on campus and in the community.

Chapter 4

4 Study Design and Methods

Geographies of Indigenous Health as a discipline have been pivotal in supporting, calling attention to and advancing the autonomy of Indigenous Peoples and communities in leading health initiatives for their communities and directing resources to meet their unique needs (Coombes, Johnson, & Howitt, 2012). Recognizing the significance of Indigenous epistemes and our distinct socio-political histories, there is no set method for conducting Indigenous geographic research (Coombes et al., 2014; McGregor, 2018). Indigenous geographers draw research methods from across disciplines that are most relevant and supportive to the context of their study, which often aims to call attention to social, historical, and political structures that dispossess and discriminate against Indigenous Peoples both individually and collectively (Coombes et al., 2014). Geographies of Indigenous Health center Indigenous Knowledges, experiences, and voices to examine and understand Indigenous Peoples' health and wellbeing (Richmond & Nightingale, 2020). Approaching a research project from this standpoint, which transforms what questions are asked, how they are asked, and of whom, places increased significance on the positionality of the researcher(s).

Inspired by my personal experiences with housing in pursuing higher education, this study examines housing as a structural barrier to higher education for Indigenous Peoples due to historical and contemporary sociopolitical policies and processes designed by the Canadian state. Thus, I chose a community-driven approach (a form of community-based research) to the study in collaboration with Indigenous campus leadership at Western. Utilizing a community-driven approach aligns the study with the self-identified needs and goals of Indigenous community collaborators (Castleden et al., 2012), which in this case study were represented by Indigenous campus leaders at Western University. Further, this approach recognizes the expertise of Indigenous community collaborators and invites participation from Indigenous campus leadership at all stages in ways that respect their capacity.

4.1 Study Design and Methodology

Establishing and nurturing relationships is fundamental to Indigenous research (Wilson, 2001; Tobias, Richmond, & Luginaah, 2013). Throughout the design and execution of this study, I have sought to engage the Indigenous community of Western to inform both *how* and *why* this research will be conducted. To ensure the study met the ethical standards of the Indigenous campus community at Western, I worked closely with the Vice-President of Indigenous Initiatives Christy Bressette and Indigenous Student Centre Director Amanda Myers for ongoing guidance and recommendations as to what was appropriate and necessary to include in research activities. Connecting with the Indigenous campus community early in study development has been key to establishing and promoting the research in meaningful ways with Indigenous communities across campus. Early engagement provided the necessary conversations to align research activities and outcomes appropriately with existing community initiatives and goals. The purpose of early and regular community engagement is to nurture a respectful and reciprocal relationship whereby the research meaningfully contributes to the ongoing work of the Indigenous campus community at Western. Further, Indigenous campus leadership provided crucial ethical guidance and expertise to ensure study activities respect established research protocols within the Indigenous campus community at Western. Equally important is how I position the research with the Indigenous campus community.

Academic research has been pivotal in the oppression and dispossession of Indigenous Peoples (Smith, 1999). Recognizing this overarching concern about academic research *on* Indigenous peoples (McGregor, 2018; Frantz & Howitt, 2012; Smith, 1999), this research project will utilize an Indigenous research paradigm. An Indigenous research paradigm centers on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing from conception through to dissemination of study results (McGregor, 2018).

Grounding this study in an Indigenous research paradigm required a collaborative approach with Indigenous campus leadership at Western. Seeking to gather the housing experiences of Indigenous learners across faculties and departments, the Indigenous campus partners for this study were the leads of the Office of Indigenous Initiatives (Christy Bressette) and the Indigenous Student Centre (Amanda Myers). With established campus-wide networks, close

relationships with students, and years of experience supporting Indigenous learners in their studies at Western, collaborating and seeking the advice of Indigenous campus partners was crucial to the study's success.

The first phase of the research activities focused on relationship building with the Indigenous community of Western University. Study campus partners included the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the Indigenous Student Centre at Western University. Research activities for this phase of the study included ongoing conversations with Indigenous campus leadership to collaboratively refine research objectives, shape the study interview guide and inform the analysis of interview results. Engaging these research partners early and often helped to ensure research activities and outcomes respect established research protocols and are aligned with existing campus community initiatives and goals.

In recognition of the real and perceived power dynamics of academic research and Indigenous Peoples, as well as the potential sensitivity of issues discussed in interviews, Indigenous students were invited to identify the location and timing of interviews that made them most comfortable. A diversity of interview participants was desired to characterize the spectrum of Indigenous student housing experiences and needs. Eligibility for participating in the study was intentionally broad to explore a diversity of housing experiences. Study participants were: a) learners at Western University who self-identified as Indigenous; b) Indigenous learners who were currently pursuing or, within the past five years, had pursued a degree at Western University as a full-time or part-time student in any degree program at any level of study. The audio from the interviews was digitally recorded to accurately reflect participants' housing experiences. Of the fourteen audio transcripts, seven were professionally transcribed by GMR Transcription Services, and seven of the audio recordings were transcribed by me.

COVID-19 Implications

Research activities strictly adhered to safety protocols in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Study participants were provided with the option to complete virtual interviews throughout data collection activities. At the start of data collection (November 2021), in-person interviews were

proffered at the preference of interview participants but shifted to entirely online via Zoom in mid-December 2021 as required by Western University COVID-19 research protocols.

4.2 Data Collection Tool

The development of the data collection tool for this study was informed by the researcher's professional and personal experiences in the field and the background knowledge of study collaborators – Indigenous campus leadership at Western. Sharing Circles (an Indigenous research method similar to focus groups) was initially considered the research data collection tool. However, conversations with study collaborators and research supervisors identified that individual interviews would allow for the gathering of in-depth individual housing experiences, which would enhance understanding of how the local context (housing on and off campus) influenced the decisions of Indigenous learners in their decisions to pursue and complete postsecondary studies at Western University. Practically, utilizing individual interviews would also help avoid challenges such as scheduling conflicts and adjusting to shifting COVID-19 protocols.

Off-campus housing was selected as the focus of this study because Western University, like most Canadian universities, does not guarantee on-campus residence beyond first year. As such it was determined Indigenous learners, as well as most university students, reside in off-campus housing for the majority of their studies. For this study, "off-campus housing" was defined as:

- 1) Housing that Western Housing did not operate
- 2) Housing located within the municipality of London, Ontario
- 3) The primary residence of the participant, such as single dwellings, emergency shelters, shared accommodations, information arrangements and,
- 4) Regardless of whether the participant's name was on the agreement for the housing

Primary data for this study was collected through in-depth interviews with Indigenous learners who were currently or, within the past five years, had pursued a degree at Western University. The research had been introduced to Indigenous campus leaders and students in gatherings

unrelated to the study. A formal letter of introduction of the study to Indigenous campus leaders was disseminated in Spring 2021 to invite Indigenous campus leaders to discuss the study and opportunities for collaboration. During these early discussions, Indigenous campus leaders offered to assist with recruiting Indigenous learners through their campus and community networks. Recruitment initiatives by Indigenous campus partners invited participants to contact me directly to honour their anonymity in participating in this study.

Participants eligible to participate in the study self-identified as Indigenous and were currently pursuing or, within the past five years, had pursued a degree at Western University as a full-time or part-time student at any level of study in any program. Further eligibility requirements required participants to have lived in off-campus housing within the London, Ontario during their studies.

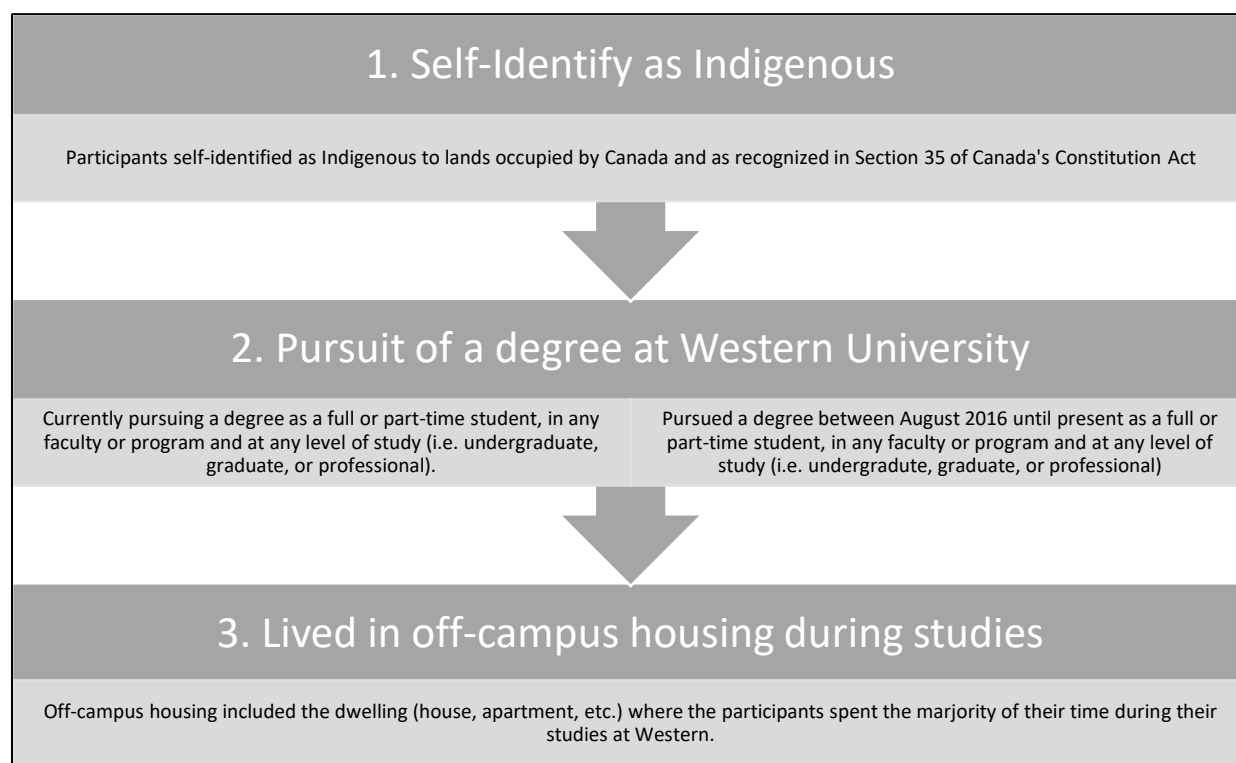


Figure 1. Study Eligibility

Participants' student housing experiences and needs were gathered through a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix A). Interviews lasted up to 60 minutes and were conducted in

person (on-campus) or online via the Zoom platform. To recognize their contributions to the study, participants were provided with a \$25 grocery gift card.

Using standardized interview guides enhances study rigour by supporting researchers to more easily compare and contrast experiences based on predetermined concepts and study focus (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). The author first developed the interview guides for this case study based on her personal student housing experience described in the opening of this thesis and informed by her previous professional experience working as an Indigenous Homelessness Policy Analyst for the urban Indigenous community of Hamilton. Then, the interview guide was refined through conversations with the author's thesis Supervisor, and Indigenous campus leads from the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the Indigenous Student Centre. Finally, through these conversations, the interview guide was refined to elicit the off-campus housing experiences of Indigenous learners by focusing on three primary objectives:

- 1) To explore the relationship between housing and access to higher education for Indigenous learners.
- 2) To examine the relationships between housing, academic journeys and Indigenous learners' overall health and wellbeing.
- 3) To explore how housing could enhance access to and success within higher education for Indigenous learners.

Sub-themes were identified within the interview guide to help ensure the depth of experiences was consistent across interviews. For example, in section one, "Housing & Access to Western," participants would be asked about their pathways to Western, the significance of housing in their decision to study at Western and what factored into their final decision to study at Western. In section two, Housing Experience, participants were asked to share their overall housing experiences and the role of housing in specific areas (such as expression of cultural identity, relationships, and academics). Finally, the third section, Housing as a Reconciliation, asked

participants for their recommendations on how housing might be designed to better support the needs of Indigenous learners.

4.3 In-depth Interviews

This research draws from qualitative interviews with Indigenous learners currently pursuing a degree and Indigenous learners who have pursued a degree within the past six years at Western University.

PARTICIPANT, Year of Study	INTERVIEW DATE	SETTING
Á:nen, 2 nd Year	November 25, 2021	(In-Person)
Wá:ri, <i>unstated</i>	November 25, 2021	(In-Person)
Sewátis, <i>unstated</i>	November 26, 2021	(In-Person)
Terés, <i>unstated</i>	November 26, 2021	(Virtual)
Katéri, 5 th Year	November 26, 2021	(In-Person)
Kó:r, <i>unstated</i>	November 29, 2021	(In-Person)
Tsíó, 2 nd Year	December 10, 2021	(In-Person)
Arisáwe, 2 nd Year	December 12, 2021	(Virtual)
Tí:io, Graduated	December 14, 2021	(Virtual)
Ióhstha, Graduated	December 15, 2021	(In-Person)

Sá:k, <i>unstated</i>	December 21, 2021	(Virtual)
Tsíni, <i>unstated</i>	December 22, 2021	(Virtual)
Warisó:se, Graduated	December 22, 2021	(Virtual)
Korí:ne, Graduated	January 5, 2022	(Virtual)

Table 2. Interview respondents, date of participation and format of the interview

4.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted with the support and guidance of my supervisor at each stage. During our regular check-ins, we discussed emerging themes and talked through how the experiences shared by participants connected to larger ideas within the field of Indigenous health geography and how to present findings back in the form of this thesis as well as a community report back.

Each participant interview was digitally recorded to ensure that experiences and comments were captured accurately. I also took notes during each interview to "flag" responses for clarification during our conversations and later reference them in data analysis. The seven in-person interviews were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed by GMR Transcription Services. While human transcribers conduct GMR Transcription Services, I reviewed each transcription for accuracy and to correct the spelling of Indigenous words and phrases. The seven virtual interviews were auto transcribed by the platform Zoom Inc. I edited these transcripts for corrections and formatting. During these revisions, I anonymized each transcript by removing identifying information such as their home communities, study program, and residential neighbourhoods. Each completed interview transcript was saved as a PDF file.

One of the most widely recognized methods for strengthening the credibility of qualitative studies in Social Geographic research is to provide some method for study participants to affirm interpretations of their experiences (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). The study consent form provided

participants to indicate whether they would like a copy of their interview transcript. In addition, they were invited to offer revisions, such as removing comments or elaborating on responses. Twelve of the fourteen study participants requested a copy of their transcript and received their corrected and formatted interview transcript by mail. These twelve study participants were provided three weeks to return their revisions or to contact me to request additional time. Two of the twelve respondents returned their transcripts, having identified minor grammatical errors in the transcription.

The first step in the analysis of transcripts was in the transcription process itself. As I edited each transcript, I noted recurring, thought-provoking, surprising concepts, experiences, and ideas that emerged from the transcripts. During this step, I took note of the convergence and divergence of housing experiences and needs based on the individual identities of each study participant. This process of anonymizing and transcribing allowed me to develop a brief profile for each participant that summarized who they were and key aspects of their housing experiences during their studies at Western University.

The second step of coding involved reviewing each transcript according to the interview guide major themes: (1) Housing Significance; (2) Off-campus housing experience; (3) Developing Indigenous student housing. This stage is when I developed an Excel file summarizing participant responses to each question and relevant quotes that captured key study themes. Within each subsection, I took note of common themes emerging from the data and organized each sub-section thematically. Direct quotes from participants were included to highlight the overall experience/idea at focus. Preliminary findings were presented to Indigenous community collaborators, the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the Indigenous Student Centre. These discussions confirmed the initial findings and encouraged me to continue data analysis through the process described above. These Indigenous campus leaders also provided direction for additional data to draw from the interviews that would be relevant to their campus-wide efforts to support Indigenous learners at Western University.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the qualitative methods used to gather and analyze the primary data gathered for the study. First, I began by situating the study within the field of Indigenous Geographies of Health to draw connections between the foci of the discipline with the selection of research methods for this study. Next, I reviewed the methods chosen and how they were employed throughout this study. Finally, I detailed the data analysis process, identifying how and when community leaders participated in the processes.

Chapter 5

5 Results of In-depth Interviews

This chapter outlines the results of in-depth interviews with fourteen Indigenous learners who were pursuing or, within the past five years, had pursued studies at Western University.

Participants were grouped as Indigenous learners *currently pursuing* an undergraduate, graduate, or professional degree at Western. Or as Indigenous learners who *had pursued* an undergraduate, graduate and/or professional degree at Western University between 2016 and 2021. Ten of the interview participants were Indigenous learners *currently pursuing* a degree, and four of the participants were Indigenous learners who *had pursued* a degree at Western University within the past five years. All interview participants currently pursuing studies at Western University had completed their first year of studies. Two interview participants were currently pursuing their degrees part-time. All others were pursuing their degree or had completed their degree as full-time students. Two interview participants were parents of young children.

Interview scripts were developed in collaboration with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the Indigenous Student Centre at Western University. The content of the interviews focused on three main research objectives:

- 1) To explore the relationship between housing and access to higher education for Indigenous learners
- 2) To examine the relationships between housing, academic journeys and Indigenous learners' overall health and wellbeing.
- 3) To explore how housing could enhance access to and success within higher education for Indigenous learners.

Results are categorized according to each theme of the three research objectives and are further explored through sub-themes.

Indigenous campus communities within Canadian universities are small and often well connected. To protect the privacy of research participants, quotes are marked with pseudonyms and identifying information such as the program of study has been intentionally excluded.

5.1 The Role of Housing in Access to Higher Education

All participants were asked to share their pathway to Western University, and how (if at all) housing influenced their decision to pursue higher education. This section outlines 1) how participants came to study at Western University, 2) how housing influenced their decision to pursue studies at Western, and 3) what other factors influenced their decisions to live and study in London, Ontario.

5.1.1 Pathways to Western

Participants were asked how they came to study at Western University. Responses to this question indicated whether participants had grown up in or lived in London before studying at Western. Or whether the interview participant had moved to London to study at Western. Eight of the fourteen interview participants had moved to London to study at Western, while the remaining had been living in London before studying at Western. Further, four of the fourteen participants had completed undergraduate studies at Western and were now pursuing or had completed graduate or professional studies at Western.

Home Community	# of Participants
London	6
Northern	2
Urban Centre in Ontario	2
On-reserve (Ontario)	2
Rural Community (Ontario)	1

Out of Country	1
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Table 3. Home Communities of Study Participants

Among the eight participants who had moved to London to study at Western, two participants identified moving from on-reserve, two participants had moved from northern communities (one from within Ontario and the second from out of province), and two participants had moved from other urban areas in Ontario. In addition, one participant had moved from a rural community in Ontario, and the eighth participant within this group had moved to London from another country.

Among respondents moving to London to study at Western, the three who had moved the furthest identified having pre-existing relationships that influenced their decisions to choose Western and move to London. The respondent who had moved from a northern community outside of Ontario had chosen Western alongside a close friend. The respondent who had moved from a northern community within Ontario had connected with the Indigenous Studies Centre through the "mini university program" during middle school and formed a strong connection with the staff. Finally, the student who had moved to London from another country had an older sibling attending Western.

5.1.2 Other Universities Considered

Respondents also shared the other universities they had considered in pursuing a degree in response to how they came to study at Western. Among the respondents who had considered studying elsewhere, each indicated interest in studying at least two other universities. Overall, the top four universities considered by respondents were McMaster University (n=4), University of Toronto (n=3), McGill University (n=2) and University of Ottawa (n=2). In total, studying in Toronto was the most common alternative consideration, with two additional respondents indicating they had considered another university located in Toronto or considering studying in Toronto in general.

University	# of Participants Mentioning
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University of Toronto	4
McMaster	4
McGill	2
Ottawa	2
York	1
Dalhousie	1
Queen's	1
Overseas	1
Other	1

Table 4. Universities considered by study participants other than Western University

5.1.3 Choosing Western University

In articulating their pathway to studying at Western University, respondents also revealed their reasons for choosing Western. Eight respondents indicated they had considered universities other than Western University for either their undergraduate or graduate degrees. The top four reasons respondents provided for choosing to study at Western over other universities included: financial considerations (n=4), housing affordability (n=3), having a more positive perception of London over the other cities considered (n=3), and having a pre-existing relationship with the Indigenous Studies Centre at Western (n=3).

Reason for Choosing Western	# of Participants Mentioning
Financial	4

Housing	3
Positive Perception of London	3
Relationship with the Indigenous Student Centre	3
Family	2
Academic Program	2

Table 5. Reasons for choosing to study at Western University

Often respondents indicated their reason for choosing Western was in consideration of multiple factors. The most common factor influencing respondents' decisions to study at Western was most closely related to housing. Among the four respondents who indicated financial considerations influenced their decision to study at Western, they reported that financial considerations were closely related to being able to afford housing in London or living with family during their studies (n=3). Additionally, respondents who indicated a more positive perception of London over other cities mentioned a preference for a mid-sized city over a major urban centre (n=3), perceived London to provide more access to green space (n=2) and/or perceived London to be "cleaner" (n=3). Housing was often a critical factor among study participants pursuing graduate or professional studies. Highly satisfied with their undergraduate student housing, Wá:ri explained:

So, yeah, that's pretty much why I stayed because I was thinking, like, "Okay, if I go to U of T Med (University of Toronto) or I go to McMaster, or any of these other places like, I don't know how...I don't know where I'm going to live. I don't know how I'm going to move my stuff from here to there. I don't have a car. I don't know if it's going to...if I'm going to get there, and it's going to be horrible. So I might as well just stay with what I know because I know that my living here is good, and I'd be able to study really well in this environment."

Among respondents who indicated their relationship with the Indigenous Student Centre as influential in their decision to study at Western over other universities, three indicated these relationships influenced their decision to pursue undergraduate studies at Western. One

respondent shared how their introduction to Western through the "Mini University" program coordinated by the Indigenous Studies Centre influenced their decision to come to Western:

So, when I was in grade eight, a lady came in from the Seven Generation Institute, which is located in the community there. And, she came in telling us about the Mini University program they have here [at Western]. They offered to pay for the expenses and everything. So, that's when I first came to Western. I spent the week here. I got to see the campus. I got to meet friends that I'm actually still friends with today, which is awesome. And ever since then, they [the Indigenous Student Centre] have always been super supportive, keeping in touch with me. They sent me a shirt in the mail and everything. So, that was a big choice. A determining factor for me to come here. (Katéri)

Early connections with the Indigenous Student Centre and ongoing efforts by Indigenous Student Centre staff to nurture relationships with Indigenous learners to demonstrate available supports were reported as influential in decisions to pursue studies at Western University.

5.1.4 Housing Significance

Interview participants were asked to identify to what extent housing influenced their decision to pursue studies at Western University. Overall, five identified housing as a significant factor in their decision to pursue studies at Western, one indicated housing was "sort of" a factor and eight indicated housing was not a factor in their decision to study at Western.

Among the five interview participants who indicated housing was a significant factor in their decision, housing affordability was reported as their primary concern. For example, one participant explained how the cost of housing costs influenced their decision to study at Western:

I had to think about my living costs. I had to think about whether it's better for me to live at home and to go to Western because it'll save me money. It'll save my family money. It'll just be better for all of us. Less stress. And so, [I thought] I'm going to do it. Whereas other people were considering their program. They were considering, "Where do I want to go? What do I want to study? What city do I want to live in?" Which is not something that I really thought about. Or felt like I could think about it. I considered it, but it was never my main priority. My education and going to school close to home – that was what I had to think about. (Tsío)

Among the eight who had not considered housing significant in their decision to study at Western, two had indicated they foresaw housing, specifically housing costs, becoming more of a factor in their academic decisions in the future.

So, I do think that it [housing] would be a factor. I think in older years, like in my upper years of study. It [housing] might be because obviously there's only so much money to go around. (Á:nen)

Among the four respondents who had completed undergraduate studies and were pursuing or had completed graduate studies, three indicated housing had factored in their decisions to stay at Western. Three of the four interview participants who were pursuing or had pursued graduate or professional studies had high levels of satisfaction with their housing in the upper years of undergraduate studies. When asked about the influence of housing on their decision to study at Western, Wá:ri indicated that satisfaction with their current housing was a key reason they chose to stay at Western for professional studies.

Now? Yes, because when I was applying to *the program*, honestly, probably the reason I stayed at Western was because I had such a good housing situation. (Wá:ri)

Within this group, the fourth respondent had reported dissatisfaction with their housing towards the end of their undergraduate degree. However, this respondent indicated that their feeling of community within the city of London influenced their decision to stay at Western.

I don't know when the switch happened, where London started to feel really like home for me, but I think in having that [decision] and, like, trying to figure out whether or not I would go to Toronto, it really became clear. (Warisó:se)

Among interview participants who pursued graduate or professional school at Western after completing an undergraduate degree, satisfaction with their housing was reported to significantly influence their decision to stay at Western. For one participant, their connections in London were also a key factor in their decision to stay.

Among the six respondents who had lived in or grown up in London before studying at Western, four indicated housing as a factor in their decision to study at Western. For these four respondents, being able to continue to live with family during their studies was viewed as a way to avoid debt. One student shared how housing costs influenced their decision to pursue studies at Western over McMaster:

So, I was grateful that my parents accommodated me staying at home, but I do look back and think, "Oh, I wish I went to McMaster," because you always kind of look and you're like, "Oh, I wish I did this or that..." But then I'm also like, "Well, I'm thankful I'm not \$40,000 more in debt." And then the whole changing cities and who knows how that adjustment would have been. But it [housing costs] definitely kind of was like that deciding factor, like "Okay, this is much more financially stable. So, I'm gonna be going to Western." Yeah. (Kó:r)

For these four respondents, being able to live with family during their studies was desirable over taking on additional debt to pay for housing.

Within this group, the two remaining respondents indicated they had chosen to remain in London and study at Western to stay close to family. These two respondents lived independently.

5.1.5 Searching for Housing in London, Ontario

Interview participants were asked to share if they had searched for off-campus housing in London and, if so, what their experience had been. During their studies, thirteen interview participants indicated they had looked for off-campus housing in London.

The lone respondent who did not search for off-campus housing had been offered housing by a close friend who owned a student house. This respondent had lived in residence during the first year and in an apartment operated by Western Housing during their second year. This respondent reported that they "did not have the whereabouts" to search for off-campus housing and reported feeling fortunate to have been offered housing by their friend. Therefore, this participant did not search for off-campus housing.

Despite all thirteen participants who searched for housing being successful in their search (with or without support), a common feeling expressed by all participants about searching for housing in London was lacking the appropriate knowledge to find and secure appropriate housing.

So, I did kind of feel like the apartment I did get was all I could get. (Warisó:se)

Some also felt there was no one in their family to ask about finding housing in an urban setting. One participant expressed this feeling of being unprepared to search for and securing housing in London:

I definitely didn't really have the whereabouts to find housing for myself. And none of my family had really ever lived in a city either. (Wá:ri)

When asked about reaching out to campus supports, this participant reported that when making their housing decision, they were not yet aware of Western Housing's off-campus supports or that the Indigenous Student Center also supported students in their housing searches.

5.1.6 Housing Search Supports

Participants were asked if they had accessed any support in their housing search during their studies at Western. Thirteen of the fourteen interview participants had conducted a housing search. However, within this group of participants who had searched for housing during their studies, seven reported they had not reached out for support from Western (in general), Western Housing, or the Indigenous Student Center. Three overarching reasons were provided when asked why these participants had not sought support in their housing search and decisions. First, participants who had grown up in or lived in London before studying at Western University indicated they had only conducted a preliminary housing search to judge whether living on their own was financially feasible. A second reason students reported not reaching out to campus supports during their housing search was that they did not feel campus supports would meet their housing needs. Finally, one participant shared their perception of finding housing accommodations through Western Housing as difficult to meet their need for single units:

So, I have a few friends who, after their first year, they got into student housing [with Western Housing]. From everyone that I've talked to, I found it seems like it's very hard to find just a place to live by yourself. A lot of it is you're on a waitlist. (Kó:r)

This participant further elaborated on the financial considerations that led to their decision:

And, affordability-wise, it didn't differentiate too much. So, it [hiring a professional real estate agent] just seemed like the better option. And yeah, I'm still like happy with that decision. If I were to go back, I wouldn't select from Western, like the real estate. I would seek out another real estate agent or something not affiliated with Western. (Kó:r)

A third reason students reported that they did not reach out for support in their housing search and decision was that they did not feel they needed support and/or they had been supported in

their housing search by a family member or close connection that worked professionally in housing.

Of the thirteen respondents who had searched for off-campus housing during their studies at Western, four indicated having been supported in their housing search by a family member or other close connection who worked professionally in housing (such as a property manager). Overall, participants supported by a family member or close connection knowledgeable about rental housing felt they had avoided poor housing and/or were being taken advantage of by property managers. One participant felt they would have struggled to find housing and likely would not have found satisfying housing on their own:

"I'm glad that, like, I had a friend who knew what she was doing and whose mom was, like, very involved because otherwise, I think that like I would have had a way worse time, and I probably would have gotten an apartment that was like, not nice. Because I just would not have known what to do or how to like navigate the process of housing and, like, finding a place that was actually good." (Sá:k)

Among the thirteen interview respondents who searched for off-campus housing during their studies at Western, two participants indicated they had reached out to Western Housing for support in their search. Among these two respondents, one reported being "well supported" by Western Housing, although they had eventually found their housing through the Facebook Market platform. In addition to the two participants who reached out directly to Western Housing, three other respondents had accessed the Western Housing website to search for off-campus housing. Overall, participants reported that the Western Housing website was easy to navigate and helpful. However, of the five participants who contacted Western Housing or utilized the Western Housing website, only one participant indicated finding their housing through the Western Housing website.

The Indigenous Student Centre was viewed as a place of support in searching for and maintaining housing. Participants reported being supported either by Indigenous Student Centre staff or connections made through the Indigenous Student Centre. For example, for one participant, finding housing and roommates to share housing costs was made possible through connections made through the Indigenous Student Centre:

I do have to say that the connections I made in the [Indigenous Student] Centre at Western facilitated the ability to get housing. If I didn't meet upper-year Indigenous students, if I didn't have those upper-year mentors and peers, I probably wouldn't have been in the same situation with housing, and I wouldn't have been so lucky. (Tí:io)

Participants who sought housing support from the Indigenous Student Centre reported high satisfaction and confidence in the Indigenous Student Centre as future support in addressing housing issues.

5.1.7 Securing Housing in London

Three of the fourteen interview respondents had applied to Western Housing for housing. Among these three participants, one was successful and resided in an apartment managed by Western Housing for one year before moving off campus. The two other respondents had applied to Western Housing but had not been successful in their application.

How Off-Campus Housing was Found	# of Respondents
Close connection with housing professional	4
Self	5
Personal Connections (i.e. family, friends, etc.)	3
Western Housing Website	1
N/A	1

Table 6. How study participants found off-campus housing in London, Ontario.

5.2 Housing Experience

The study's second objective was to examine relationships between housing, academic journeys and the overall health and wellbeing of Indigenous learners.

5.2.1 Overall Housing Satisfaction

Most interview participants were satisfied with their housing during their studies. Of the ten participants currently pursuing a degree at Western, seven expressed that their housing met their needs well and were very satisfied with their housing. The three other participants pursuing a degree at Western reported that their housing was sufficient and were "okay" with their current housing.

Of the four participants who had pursued a degree at Western, three reported that their off-campus housing had met their needs at the time sufficiently and rated their housing experience as "okay." One participant within this group reported being very dissatisfied with their initial housing during the first year of their studies but finding more satisfactory housing in their final years at Western.

Interview participants who were currently pursuing or had pursued a graduate or professional degree at Western reported being the most satisfied with their housing experiences. Common among this group was increased knowledge of the rental process and self-confidence in their ability to search for appropriate housing. Recognizing how housing had impacted their experience, Warisó:se took on an informal housing mentorship role to help new Indigenous students at Western avoid negative housing experiences.

When talking to students who are like thinking of [coming to Western], I have had to be like really explicit to be, like, if you're moving to London and you're not living in residence, like, talk to me. (Warisó:se)

Another reason this group of participants shared for being more satisfied in their housing was a feeling of being financially secure enough to find desirable housing. For one participant they reported their off-campus housing experiences during undergraduate studies at Western were "okay":

[During] the transition from the first to the second year, I was more limited in where I could live based on band funding. ... Overall, my housing experience during undergrad was okay. Overall. (Tsíni)

Tsíni further shared how their increased financial stability in *professional school* has allowed them to afford more desirable and appropriate housing:

For *professional school* now, I am more financially secure and have easier access to funding. I feel more secure. I really enjoy the place we live in now.

Study participants reported increased off-campus housing satisfaction and often associated their increased satisfaction with increased confidence in their ability to find appropriate housing and increased financial stability to afford more desirable housing.

5.2.1 Housing Interruptions

Most study participants reported only minor interruptions to their studies due to housing issues. The most common interruption experienced was needing to vacate their units due to fire alarms. Participants reported that while no fire had taken place, in accordance with fire safety protocols, they were required to vacate their premises until permitted to re-enter by fire officials. Often this interruption would last an hour or longer.

You'd have to [leave the building], and I live on, like, the top floor. To, like, leave and then, you know, hang out outside for, like, an hour, hour and a half sometimes.
(Warisó:se)

However, one participant reported a significant interruption in their studies due to housing. Due to the cost of their housing and related expenses, this respondent had to increase their work hours and decrease their course load to maintain their desired grade average.

In my fourth year, I whittled it down to four courses a semester instead of [five]. I think I went down to three [courses] one semester as well, and it's because I just needed to work more, or I needed to find other sources of income despite the pandemic that was going on.

This participant further elaborated on the academic impact caused by needing to increase their work hours:

It was hard because, again, for <program name>, they expect a lot. And again, through the shift of moving and then the pandemic, my grades dropped a bit. So, some of the courses I retook some of the courses I took in my fifth year, I retook from the previous year and improved my mark. So, it [increasing work hours] did have an academic impact, and that was also one of the other reasons I opted for a fifth year – was to improve on some of the things, which thankfully I did. (Kó:r)

For most, their housing did not cause major interruptions in their academic journeys. However, minor interruptions (such as frequent false fire alarms) did cause inconveniences that interrupted the comfort of participants. For one participant, unexpected housing costs resulted in their decision to lower their course load in their fourth year of undergraduate studies, causing them to extend their studies by an additional year.

5.2.2 Financial Influences of Housing

Higher education costs (such as tuition, books, supplies, etc.) are considered a barrier to pursuing postsecondary studies for lower-income learners, including Indigenous learners. Overall, the cost of housing was the most cited factor by study participants who reported housing as a significant factor in their decisions to pursue and complete postsecondary studies. Housing costs were also the most common reason study participant reported feeling dissatisfied with one's housing among study participants. However, study participants consistently perceived housing in London to be more affordable than in other Ontario cities, such as Toronto.

So, I think thankfully, just like I guess the housing market [in London], even though it's not great, it was good enough. (P6)

However, study participants reported that housing affordability in London had decreased during their studies. The decrease in affordability was most keenly noted by Indigenous learners who had previously pursued studies at Western.

During my time at Western, rent was as ridiculously high as it is now. (Tí:io)

Study participants who had studied at Western between 2015 and 2021 perceived housing in London to be more affordable than presently. A member of this group who was dissatisfied with their housing and had recently moved out of their undergraduate student housing noted that the increase in rental costs had deterred them from finding more satisfactory housing:

When I was leaving, they had already bumped it [rent] up to \$1,000 a month, which I thought was crazy. I don't know. Like, I feel like that building, you know, I could start to see how much, like, rent prices were rising, and I kind of felt stuck. (Warisó:se)

The cost of housing was highly influential among Indigenous learners who had grown up in London. Two study participants reported growing up in London. While these participants had considered pursuing studies at other universities, housing costs in other cities influenced their decisions to stay in London and study at Western University. Despite applying for and being accepted at other universities, both Tsío and Arisáwe chose to remain living with family in London and study at Western to avoid the extra costs of renting housing and taking on extra debt.

5.2.3 Cultural Influences of Housing

Interview participants were asked how their housing impacted and supported their cultural identities as Indigenous learners. Responses demonstrated how participants expressed their cultural identities within their homes and how their homes supported or did not support their cultural identities.

For some, their indigeneity was expressed through how they decorated their homes visually and audibly. Often this was through placing plants throughout the home to remind participants of their home communities and playing traditional music. As one participant shared:

So, culturally I would say yes because I live alone. I'm able to surround my living space with probably, like, fifteen to twenty plants. So, that's kind of, like, how I – like where my cultural side sort of comes into my living space. And thankfully, the walls are cement, so I do play music and everything. I like to sing traditional songs and everything. I don't think the walls are too thin that I'm interrupting anyone. (Kó:r)

Several participants noted feeling welcome as an Indigenous person in the building of their housing. However, these students also mentioned being aware of housing policies that would prohibit their engagement in certain cultural activities (such as smudging) or that they were unaware whether housing policies covering these activities would permit them to engage in smudging in their unit.

Yes. I mean, I think the people in the building are very accepting. So, I think regardless of what your culture is, they're welcoming to you. So, I'd say in that aspect, yes. But I don't, for example, I don't smoke or anything, but they don't allow that. Which I know is part of Indigenous cultures. So, there are things like that that I don't think they would make exceptions for, but as for the people in the building [they are accepting]. (Á:nen)

When asked for confirmation that this policy would also restrict cultural activities, such as smudging, the participant confirmed:

Yeah, I don't think they would [permit smudging]. They're pretty strict on their lease policy, and it's very hard to get in contact with them to be able to change the lease.
(Á:nen)

Several students indicated they were more likely to seek cultural activities and supports outside their home. The primary source for these cultural supports was the Indigenous Student Centre. Living far away from their home community, one participant emphasized the importance of being able to access cultural supports through the Indigenous Student Centre:

I liked that it [housing] was walking distance to the Indigenous Student Centre here. That I could go if I needed support. If I wanted to access any sort of cultural programming, if I wanted to connect with certain things that were happening back home, I was able to do that within walking distance from where I live. (Ióhstha)

Unsupportive or unclear housing policies regarding cultural activities (such as smudging) were a common experience. However, students seemed satisfied with engaging in these activities outside their homes and were well supported by the resources and programs offered by the Indigenous Student Centre.

5.2.4 Social Influences of Housing

A commonality among Indigenous cultures is their strong intersocial relationships. Indigenous concepts of families are often more expansive than what is considered "family" by western cultures. To understand the social impacts of housing on Indigenous learners, participants were asked to share how their housing supported their social needs.

A common experience of living off-campus for Indigenous learners was a feeling of disconnection from the campus community. Participants noted how living off-campus impacted their ability to build social relationships with their peers at Western. Participants noted the social impact of living off campus as unexpected. Á:nen shares how had they known how strongly living off-campus would limit social interactions with fellow students, they would have considered on-campus housing options more strongly.

I was always looking off-campus, but maybe in hindsight, I would've considered residence more heavily, knowing that it's hard to make friends when you're not [living] on campus, and you're in your second year.

For Á:nen, off-campus housing caused negative impacts on their social connections to campus. Similarly, Terés indicated their relationship with the Western community was impacted by living off-campus *and* the need to work during their studies:

I don't feel that connected to the community at Western. I haven't had the opportunity to be a part of it. (Terés)

As noted by this participant, living off-campus often requires Indigenous learners to supplement their income through employment. While employment provides the financial ability to secure housing, working often leads to less time to engage socially on campus.

5.2.5 Health and Wellness

Participants' responses to how their off-campus housing affected their health and wellness often began with the overarching significance of housing on individual health and wellbeing. All fourteen study participants indicated that housing, directly and indirectly, impacted individual health and wellbeing. Like most participants, Terés highlighted that having appropriate and stable housing has cascading positive impacts:

Having a nice stable home, where you feel safe, makes you have like...really a part of the whole wellbeing you have somewhere safe to go and don't worry. It helps you do everything else in your life with ease.

Terés further illustrates the mental health impacts of being generally satisfied with one's housing as well as the costs of housing:

I have a nice apartment and don't have much to complain about. It levels up my mental health because I don't have to stress about it.

Despite rating high levels of satisfaction with their off-campus housing, two study participants shared instances where their current housing posed immediate and long-term health risks. Sewátis's off-campus housing and health experiences represented the most severe of these two participants. Throughout our conversation, Sewátis indicated that their housing met their needs well. However, in exploring how their housing impacted their health and wellbeing, Sewátis

reported having to develop methods to maneuver within their off-campus housing to avoid serious and potentially permanent injury. For example, Sewátis lived with mobility challenges and, due to the structure of their off-campus housing, needed to take special care to avoid injury when walking up and down the stairs to access their unit.

Going up [the stairs] isn't too bad. Going down's the dangerous thing. So, I find if I'm looking at what's on the TV, and I'm looking ahead, my feet can go out too far, and I could slip on the stairs. So, I've gotta be conscious, pay attention to the stairs. It's a procedure. Down the stairs. Careful. Know where you are. Know where your feet are going. Every time. You just can't forget that.

Similar to participants Á:nen and Sewátis, Warisó:se seemed determined to reconcile the negative health and wellbeing impacts of their unsatisfactory housing by identifying positives to their housing.

I guess the original apartment [during undergraduate studies], like you know, met my needs and that it was, like, a place to stay, and you know in it, it did have a kitchen and I can make my own food and all that kind of stuff. But I did find it super stressful to live [there]. Especially, actually, in the last year that I was there. To live in a space where, like, I constantly felt like I had to, like, fight with my management company about, you know, like, applying the RTA [Ontario Residential Tenancies Act] and doing what they're supposed to do as landlords.

Despite being unsatisfied with their off-campus housing during undergraduate studies, Warisó:se emphasized that the proximity of their off-campus housing to local waterways and green spaces did provide some mental and emotional benefits.

So, one thing that actually I'm glad you brought that up because it's kind of hard to find in my old apartment, to see any good in it because it was just very stressful to be there. Honestly, for like the last year and a half that I was there, but the one nice thing is it was close to the river, and it was really close to the park, where you can walk. So on occasion, I walked to campus like through the kind of ravine, and I did find that to be, just, I don't know. Really awesome to have so close to me and have that option available because I found I often do it after like, you know, a long day of work and school was really kind of stressing me out and to be able to be near that was super awesome, and I know not all apartment spaces in London have that kind of closer access.

Even though interior living arrangements can be highly unsatisfactory, Warisó:se relates how a positive external environment, specifically proximity to public waterways and green spaces, can help offset some of the negative experiences and health impacts of one's housing.

Participants identified the health and wellbeing impacts of their off-campus housing through characteristics such as a sense of safety within one's home and neighbourhood, the physical structure of their building, proximity to or distance from desired amenities, cleanliness of their unit, relationships with others living in the unit or building, being able to engage in desired activities within their unit as well as the security and stability of their housing. For study participants, being satisfied or dissatisfied with their off-campus housing overall was most closely related to mental health impacts. Participants who reported being satisfied with their housing overall connected their housing satisfaction with how it supported their mental health. Among this group of participants, two distinct experiences were reported. Participants who lived in shared accommodations reported choosing and being satisfied with their housing because it offered opportunities to interact socially with others inside their homes.

A separate group of study participants who reported satisfaction with their housing indicated they had sought out independent living arrangements because they desired a space completely on their own. Kó:r relates how living with others would negatively impact their health and wellbeing:

I live alone rather than with roommates. Just from growing up as an Indigenous person and dealing with struggles along the way. [I've] also run into mental health concerns, and so living with others is very anxiety-provoking. And, so even though it's more expensive, I'm more comfortable living by myself and having my own apartment and having my own space.

For this group of participants, living independently was reported to positively impact their health and wellbeing.

The connections between housing satisfaction and mental health were also closely linked by study participants dissatisfied with their housing. Study participants who reported dissatisfaction with their off-campus housing related their dissatisfaction with how their housing negatively impacted their mental and overall health. Korí:ne who lives in an apartment building, reported several factors for being dissatisfied with their housing and shares how their apartment negatively impacts their mental health and overall wellbeing:

So, for me, like living in a high rise, it's sort of hard for me. Like, to, you know, get out more and sort of just go for walks, which is beneficial to my mental health. I know. And,

it's sort of just hard to do that. It's just not as easy to get outside, and you lose motivation to do so, which can happen, which can negatively affect your mental health.

Study participants dissatisfied with their housing also reported that their housing negatively impacts their mental health and overall wellbeing.

5.2.6 Housing “Luck”

The emergent theme not anticipated in the design of this study was the concept of "luck" in housing. From the initial interview with Á:nen to the final interview with Korí:ne, participants consistently mentioned being "lucky" or "fortunate" with their housing. Notably, when describing their overall housing experiences, participants frequently mentioned being "lucky" or "fortunate" early in their responses. To explore this theme, participants were asked to explain what it meant to be "lucky" in housing.

For some, being "lucky" in housing involved having the financial support of parents to afford appropriate housing:

I'm really lucky to have my parents helping me out." (Arisáwe)

For others, "luck" involved receiving financial support from their band or grants to be able to afford appropriate housing:

With [being] lucky, I think financially in terms of getting Band funding and also additional grants. I think I'm lucky to get the amount that I have because if I didn't, I would not have been able to afford it. (Katéri)

Another participant felt they were “lucky” to find adequate housing:

I feel lucky to live there just because the other places that we saw were so much worse than this place. So, I don't know. I feel like I definitely got a better living experience than a lot of other students at Western because just based on the other houses in London. Like, this one seems a lot nicer than those ones. (Sá:k)

Still, other participants explained that housing "luck" involved being chosen for their off-campus housing:

I think that I'm lucky that they were able to choose me over the other applicants that she said also applied to the sublet. (Katéri)

Another participant also explained that "luck" is both the environment surrounding their housing and its maintenance:

A neighbourhood I feel safe in. A place close to nature. A good landlord that is responsive but hands off. A place that is pest-free. These things sound very basic to me now that I'm saying this out loud, but that's kind of lucky to me. (Warisó:se)

Finally, "luck" in housing was also related to the study participants' relationships with other household members. As one participant noted:

Yeah, I think for me lucky in finding roommates. I will say is like, I feel fortunate that I've been able to find roommates. That it's not just like you cohabitate with people, like people you have relationships with and community with. Like, you know [having] conversations that we spent time together and, I think, for me, like, caring about other roommates' situations and not just have your own lives. I think it's hard for me to wrap my head around because I think living together is also so intimate in so many ways. So, for me, like, having people I know and I could chat with and that I feel comfortable with is super important. And that's why I feel lucky. (Warisó:se)

During interviews for this study, Indigenous learners consistently reported feeling *lucky* in their off-campus housing. Being "lucky" in housing for study participants is related to finding appropriate off-campus housing, being able to afford appropriate off-campus housing, basic maintenance of off-campus housing, and, for those in shared accommodations, finding roommates with whom they had formed positive and supportive relationships.

5.3 Housing as a Facilitator to Accessing and Succeeding in Higher Education

This study's third and final objective was to examine how off-campus housing might facilitate access to and success in higher education for Indigenous learners. Therefore, the interview questions within this section asked participants to share what their ideal off-campus housing might look like to fully meet their housing needs during their studies. In general, respondents

found this question challenging to answer and often required probing questions to elicit details of what their ideal student housing would look like.

5.3.1 Structure

Respondents often began by describing the physical structure of their ideal off-campus student housing. For most, the physical structure of ideal off-campus housing for Indigenous learners was apartment-style with shared gathering spaces, such as kitchens and living rooms. These participants valued their privacy and the opportunity to build community with other Indigenous learners at Western. One student highlighted the value of living with other students:

It's been a lot better because one of my roommates, you know, she did her master's as well in <program name>, and she had partially pursued a Ph.D. So, like, she was always around to like bounce ideas off of, which I found super helpful because I couldn't necessarily do that with my cohort anymore because we were online. And she was just a really good support when I had like frustrations with what was going on in my program sometimes and, you know, structures and stuff like that. So, I found that, like, super helpful to be living in a house with someone else that was Indigenous and knew what it was like to go to school and to just have that person to kind of vent to. (Warisó:se)

Despite not desiring shared accommodations within their ideal student housing, this group of respondents also identified a desire to live near other Indigenous learners.

5.3.2 Location

The second most emphasized characteristic of ideal off-campus housing for Indigenous learners among all respondents was the location. Specifically, study participants identified residing in student housing near campus as ideal. Being within walking distance was a highly valued characteristic of their off-campus housing experience. Respondents consistently reported being closer to campus as desirable, especially for academic success. Having moved further away from campus during their graduate studies, Warisó:se shared how valuable living close to campus was during their undergraduate studies:

I do think, yes, if I had done that [moved further away from campus] years ago, it would have been harder to like to motivate myself to go [to campus] because you just have one extra step or an extra kind of layer [to get to campus]. (Warisó:se)

Indigenous learners highly valued living near campus. However, Indigenous learners living close to campus facilitated not only academic success by decreasing the barriers experienced in getting to class and accessing academic resources. Living closer to campus also meant increased access to cultural and social supports. Ióhstha explained how living in proximity to campus meant they could also easily access cultural supports through the Indigenous Student Centre:

I liked that it was within walking distance to the Indigenous Student Centre here. That I could go if I needed support or if I wanted to access any sort of cultural programming. If I wanted to be able to connect with certain things that were happening back home, I was able to do that within walking distance from where I lived.

Having moved from their home community to London for their studies at Western, Ióhstha valued living close to campus in order to easily access cultural supports available through the Indigenous Student Centre. Study participants also reported valuing their proximity to Indigenous community supports available in London. For Tí:io choosing a university near First Nations communities and with strong relationships was an important part of choosing where to apply:

Well, the location had a lot to do with why I came to Western. I really only applied to places that were close to reserves and had, like, a strong Indigenous [campus] community. I knew, like, I applied to McGill, and I applied to McMaster, and I applied to Western because I knew that they had strong connections to local First Nations.

For Indigenous learners, housing location is often more than finding housing close to campus. Indigenous learners also consider the proximity of housing to cultural supports both on campus and in the community.

5.3.3 Off-Campus Housing Supports

According to study participants, a third significant component of ideal student housing for Indigenous learners would be the provision of cultural, social, financial, and personal supports and programs. Responses to what ideal student housing for Indigenous learners might look like in terms of support were often informed by what study participants found lacking in their student housing experiences. For example, the most common off-campus housing support suggested by study participants was housing affordability. In addition, study participants indicated that ideal

student housing would consider their funding sources (such as First Nation band funding, which provides limited financial support) in ways that would support Indigenous learners' ability to focus on their studies. Tí:io explains how these supports would be woven into the housing:

Having things like access to knowing when there's "Good Food" boxes and having like supports to sign up and things like that. And just ensuring like students have food security there. And being able to, like, have those programs worked into, like, this housing as well. So I'm not necessarily like workshops, but different ways of like drop-ins of like, "Hey you want to do like a lunch and learn how to cook things?" and just basic home skills because a lot of people are really in culture shock being away from their moms and grandmas that do the laundry and all the things.

Creating space for social engagement would also provide increased opportunities for residents to learn about and engage in cultural activities. Tí:io describes how they view ideal student housing for Indigenous learners supporting the cultural identities of students:

And also, I honestly don't think it should be smoke-free because I don't think that is very considerate of a lot of our students at all. Um, I think that it's like, there's a lot of stigma on campus against smoking. And a lot of our people come from communities where smoking is just a normal thing. ... I'm just [saying this] because like [smoking] is one of those things that in our community has been like a part of our communities for a long time.

Further, Warisó:se explains how sharing these types of cultural and community housing needs feels unwelcome in general housing discussions:

I've been waiting for someone to ask. ... I've had, like, this feeling about like smoking and certain things being "dry" and all this kind of stuff for a while. And there just hasn't really been an outlet for me to be, like, "Hey, this is how I feel about it." So, thank you.

For study participants moving to London from rural settings, off-campus housing supports would include helping Indigenous learners from non-urban centres navigate the city of London, focusing on navigating the London transit system. For example, Wá:ri, who had come to Western from a rural community, recalled how challenging an experience it was for them to navigate public transit during their first year at Western:

When I first came, I had a big problem with navigating public transit. That was probably my biggest thing. I didn't understand how buses worked. I didn't understand how any...I didn't even know how to use street signs or anything because we don't have that in my community. It's [my community] like two streets, right? So even knowing that the street

sign is parallel to what the street is, I didn't even know that. So navigating was just really difficult for me. ... Navigation was really difficult in the first year for me.

Two participants who had completed their studies noted the change in London's housing market since their time at Western and emphasized the need for a housing worker at Western to support Indigenous learners in navigating the housing market in London. Ióhstha asserted:

I think they need a housing worker. I think the Indigenous Student Centre needs a specific housing worker, absolutely. For Indigenous People. ... someone that is well-rounded in housing – finding housing and securing housing, knows the Landlord-Tenant Act in and out, helps assist students with their rights, advocates for them on their behalf if they're having issues with their landlords not responding if they need repairs. Just stuff like that. I think it would be great to have a worker like that here.

Participants' views of ideal student housing for Indigenous learners were informed by what they valued in their student housing and what they felt was missing from their student housing. Like their current housing experiences, study participants desired a mix of shared and independent accommodations close to campus. Unavailable within their current off-campus housing, study participants indicated that ideal student housing would be a community of Indigenous learners, where they lived together (in shared accommodations), close together (in separate units or buildings) or were connected through social programming and supports (such as shared dinners). According to study participants, ideal student housing would also support their cultural identities through housing policies, shared learning, and engagement in cultural activities. Most importantly, study participants identified ideal student housing for Indigenous learners that would consider their financial status. As envisioned by study participants, the ideal student housing for Indigenous learners would more intentionally support their cultural and social relationships and reflect their financial situations.

Chapter 6

6 Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the results of the study thesis and illustrate how this case study (1) enhances understanding of the influence of housing on the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete postsecondary studies as well as (2) the application of the concept of “reconciliation” in understanding the unique housing needs of Indigenous postsecondary learners.

First, I will restate the purpose and main objectives of the study. In this segment, I will connect the purpose and objectives of the study to the three major themes of results. Secondly, I will situate this case study within the theoretical understandings of student housing and describe how the result of the study adds to what is known about this concept. Finally, I will discuss how these findings can inform future student housing policies and contribute theoretically and methodologically to the literature, as well as the limitations of this study and potential areas for future research.

The completion of this study has brought into focus the spectrum of housing experiences and needs of Indigenous learners pursuing a degree at Western University. Research conducted in western provinces and focused on Indigenous learners has demonstrated that access to affordable and culturally appropriate housing influences where Indigenous learners decide to pursue their studies, and it also predicts their retention (Archibald, et al., 2004; Motz & Currie, 2019; Wallace, Maire, & Lachance, 2004). The findings of this research are of value to Indigenous community stakeholders as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous campus leadership at the universities across lands currently referred to as Ontario. It is further expected that findings from this study will also have policy implications related to enhancing supports for Indigenous students at universities across lands currently occupied by Canada, as well as regional, provincial, and national political bodies accountable for addressing the current inequities of higher education achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island.

6.1 Research Objectives

The purpose of this case study was to explore the role of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete postsecondary studies at Western University. The three main objectives of this study were:

- 1) To explore the relationship between housing and access to higher education for Indigenous learners.
- 2) To examine the relationships between housing, academic journeys and Indigenous learners' overall health and wellbeing.
- 3) To explore how housing could enhance access to and success within higher education for Indigenous learners.

6.2 Key Findings

This case study examined the off-campus housing experiences and needs of Indigenous learners who were currently pursuing or, within the past five years, had pursued a degree at Western University. This research aimed to examine the role of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete postsecondary studies at Western University. Participants also described how student housing developed with and for Indigenous learners might look at Western University. For this study, fourteen Indigenous learners were interviewed about how housing influenced their academic journeys. Participants shared how housing influenced their decisions to pursue studies at Western University, impacted their academic journeys and how they imagined housing could more effectively support the needs of Indigenous learners.

6.2.1 Housing Significance

Housing is becoming more significant among Indigenous learners than in previous cohorts and increases in significance among those choosing graduate studies. The significance of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete postsecondary studies was described differently amongst study participants. Three distinct groups of study participants indicated housing as a factor in their decisions to pursue studies at Western – (a) Indigenous learners who resided in London prior to studies, (b) Indigenous students who were mature in age and/or were

caregivers of young children, and (c) Indigenous learners pursuing graduate studies. For the first two groups, housing affordability was most significant in their decisions to study at Western University. Whereas the third group of participants reported that high satisfaction with their housing influenced their decisions to study at Western University.

A group of two study participants who grew up in London indicated housing figured significantly in their decisions to pursue studies at Western University. These participants reported that not having to pay for housing (by being able to continue to live with family during their studies) was a significant factor in choosing Western University over other universities. Studying at other universities would have required these participants to move, secure new housing and, in the process, take on additional debt to pay for housing outside of London. They prioritized avoiding what they perceived as unnecessary debt by continuing to live with family in their decisions to pursue studies at Western University.

The second group of three study participants that indicated housing as significant in their decisions to study at Western were participants with children and those who reported not pursuing postsecondary studies immediately after secondary school. Due to their mature age or family size, these participants were more likely to indicate not considering dorm-style student housing appropriate to their housing needs. Within this group, two identified as the primary caregiver of young children (n=2) and both identified as female. These participants had not lived in a student residence and have relied on off-campus rental housing throughout their studies. Among these three participants, they had already secured housing in London and/or perceived housing in London to be more affordable than elsewhere. Thus housing, specifically housing affordability in London, was a significant factor in their decisions to pursue and complete postsecondary studies at Western University.

Finally, for study participants who had completed undergraduate studies at Western University and were pursuing or had completed graduate studies at Western, housing was also identified as a significant contributing factor in their decision to remain at Western for graduate studies. Among these four participants, three indicated high levels of satisfaction with their housing in London, which contributed to their decision to remain at Western for graduate studies. Although highly dissatisfied with their undergraduate housing, the fourth participant in this group indicated

they perceived housing to be more affordable than other cities they had considered. As a result, this participant felt more confident in their ability to secure affordable and appropriate housing in London than in other urban centres, influencing their decision to remain at Western University for their graduate studies.

Among the five remaining study participants, although housing had not factored into their decisions to pursue studies at Western, two indicated increased concerns about housing costs during their studies.

As already under investigation by postsecondary institutions in Toronto (Levine, 2019), this case study draws attention to the structural barrier housing presents to pursuing higher education, focusing on how housing impacts Indigenous Peoples uniquely. Historical social and economic policies have created contemporary marginalization of Indigenous Peoples (Czyzewski, 2011; C. A. M. Richmond & Big-Canoe, 2018; C. Richmond & Nightingale, 2021), including Indigenous Peoples earning lower incomes than non-Indigenous Peoples (Statistics Canada, 2016). Thus, Indigenous Peoples experience greater impacts by housing affordability (or lack thereof) in urban communities. This case study demonstrates that housing is becoming increasingly more significant in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete postsecondary studies at Western University.

6.2.2 Housing Experiences and Influences

A recent study by Vaswani & Esses (2021) examining experiences of discrimination in London and Middlesex found that Indigenous participants in the study reported experiencing higher rates of discrimination than immigrants and visible minority participants. In exploring the experiences of discrimination experienced by Indigenous participants, Vaswani & Esses (2021) found that Indigenous Peoples were more likely to report utilizing passive coping strategies (such as acceptance of discrimination as part of living in London). A 2019 study by Motz & Currie demonstrated the multiple negative health impacts, including increased feelings of academic stress among Indigenous students who experienced racially-motivated housing discrimination. The findings of studies such as Vaswani & Esses (2021) and (Motz & Currie, 2019) help to understand why Indigenous learners may be willing to expect and accept housing in London that

meets their structural needs, but fewer of their cultural, social, academic, health and wellbeing needs.

All study participants identified how housing impacted their cultural and social relationships and their health and wellbeing. However, when asked to share how their housing met (or did not meet) their needs, initial comments from study participants focused on how well their housing met their basic structural needs, such as the number of bedrooms for study participants and their room/housemates or having sufficient space to engage in common activities such as cooking and studying. During this part of our conversations, Indigenous learners participating in this study commonly and quickly expressed appreciation for their housing during their studies. However, deeper into our conversation, when considering the influence of housing on their cultural, social, financial, health and overall wellbeing, all but one participant shared how their housing did not meet these needs. Upon reflecting on their unmet housing needs, participants shared how they reconciled how their housing did not meet these other needs. For most, the ways in which their housing did not meet their cultural, social, financial, health and wellbeing needs were minor, and they could accept these shortcomings until the completion of their studies. However, even in instances where their housing posed serious health dangers (such as in Sewátis's case), study participants continued to reconcile how well their housing was appropriate.

Among the fourteen study participants, ten indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with how well their housing met their needs. However, deeper into our conversations, four of the fourteen participants interviewed revealed how they reconciled how their housing did not meet their cultural, social, financial, health and/or wellbeing needs. Sewátis's housing experience presents perhaps the most poignant example where their housing structurally provided a secure home for them but posed serious dangers to Sewátis health due to their ongoing mobility issues. However, despite the real and daily dangers their housing posed, Sewátis expressed high satisfaction and gratitude for their housing. Similarly, Warisó:se expressed reconciliatory comments about why even though they were deeply dissatisfied with their off-campus housing during undergraduate studies, they intentionally expressed gratitude for this housing.

Results from this case study indicate that Indigenous learners have come to expect and accept less in their housing in London. Overall, Indigenous study participants were satisfied with how

well their housing met their structural needs. However, study participants consistently associated housing as significant to their cultural, social, academic, and overall health and wellbeing, even though their student housing often did not meet or support these needs. The most commonly reported way housing impacted their overall health and wellbeing was the ability to engage in cultural practices within their homes (such as smudging).

6.3 Policy Contributions: Developing Student Housing with and For Indigenous Learners

Through this case study, I have demonstrated that reconciliation at Canadian universities requires housing. Across these lands, Canadian universities are responding to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action to redress the academy's role in the dispossession and oppression of Indigenous People through reconciliation-based efforts and investments (Bernard, 2015; *Empowering Indigenous Students and Advancing Reconciliation*, 2020; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). These reconciliation-based initiatives and investments seek to critically examine and redress how the academy perpetuates anti-Indigenous discrimination and systemic disadvantage. Through this study, I have demonstrated that housing is a systemic disadvantage for Indigenous learners. The historic and ongoing social, economic, and educational policy have systematically disadvantaged Indigenous Peoples resulting in ongoing social, economic, health and wellbeing disparities and marginalization Indigenous Peoples disproportionately experience today (Czyzewski, 2011; National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2017; C. A. M. Richmond & Big-Canoe, 2018; C. Richmond & Nightingale, 2021). These issues include significant disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in all areas of life, specifically in income, housing and homelessness experiences, health and wellbeing, and educational attainment. Student experiences shared in this case study at Western University demonstrate how housing availability, affordability, and cultural appropriateness, influence the decisions of Indigenous Peoples to pursue and complete postsecondary studies.

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report and Calls to Action draw attention to these historical causes of contemporary issues facing Indigenous Peoples on these lands. As

well, to address these systemic causes of current disparities and marginalization, Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) outlined ninety-four calls to action requiring attention and investment from all levels of government and key institutional actors, such as universities, emphasizing that reconciliation fundamentally requires action.

To redress the disparity in educational attainment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, Canadian universities must continue to invest in and advance reconciliation as outlined by Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Utilizing the perspective of reconciliation draws attention to systemic structures that disadvantage Indigenous learners. For example, this thesis has demonstrated housing, including the lack of culturally appropriate student housing for Indigenous learners, as a key systemic disadvantage for Indigenous learners.

A requested outcome for this study from Indigenous campus leadership is the development of audience-specific policy briefs. These policy briefs will be drafted by the author and target campus and community leaders and stakeholders. Although the focus of this study was off-campus housing that was not operated by Western University, study findings provide an important starting point for the university as well as London community leaders and organizations regarding future student housing initiatives. For example, when developing future student housing, Western and Western Housing will find study findings useful in collaborative discussions with Indigenous campus leaders to explore how new student housing developments can be designed to better meet the needs of Indigenous learners. Additionally, the findings of this study can be utilized by Western to initiate community partnerships with the City of London and local housing providers to develop housing options specifically for Indigenous learners. Similarly, the findings of this study are useful to community stakeholders (particularly those that have made commitments to reconciliation, such as London City Council) in examining how community housing resources can better support Indigenous learners. The findings of this study as well as the policy briefs will help initiate accountability of campus and community leadership in regard to reconciliation broadly, and housing initiatives specifically.

Developing student housing with and for Indigenous learners at Western University would simultaneously demonstrate and advance Western's commitments to and investments in reconciliation by enhancing access to and success in completing postsecondary studies for

Indigenous learners. Student housing developed with and for Indigenous learners is necessary to provide housing options that appropriately support their academic success at all levels of study and their cultural and social wellbeing and health. To meaningfully support Indigenous Peoples in accessing and succeeding in higher education, Canadian universities must continue focused, intentional, and sustained investments in reconciliation. Reconciliation facilitated systemic change necessary to ensuring Indigenous learners are equitably served and supported in their studies. This thesis demonstrates that housing designed with and for Indigenous learners is a key resource missing from Canadian universities. Reconciliation on Canadian university campuses requires housing for Indigenous learners.

6.4 Theoretical Contributions

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of student housing by articulating how student housing for Indigenous learners is more than providing a physical structure close to campus for Indigenous learners. Utilizing the lens of Indigenous Health Geography, Indigenous student housing requires exploring the physical structures of housing, broader socio-economic influences that lead to differentiated experiences of housing (such as homelessness), as well as how housing as a structure reproduces and oppresses social and cultural ways of being.

The findings from this study demonstrate that while Indigenous learners valued proximity to campus and expressed satisfaction with their housing, they also were aware of the sacrifices made in these housing choices. Current off-campus student housing tends to meet the basic structural needs of Indigenous learners but often fails to meet their unique cultural, academic, financial, and social needs. Exploration of what ideal student housing would be like for study participants revealed a desire for the development of student housing specifically for Indigenous learners that would facilitate the establishment of an Indigenous learner community.

6.5 Methodological Contributions

This study builds on and advances the significance of utilizing Indigenous research methods in social geographic research. Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars within the discipline of Indigenous Geography have consistently called attention to how the discipline of geography has directly contributed to the dispossession and oppression of Indigenous Peoples, both historically and currently (Castleden et al., 2012, 2015; Coombes et al., 2012; de Leeuw & Hunt, 2018; Frantz & Howitt, 2010; Indigenous Peoples Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers et al., 2010; Koster et al., 2012; Larsen & Johnson, 2012; Leeuw et al., 2012; McGregor, 2018; Tobias et al., 2013). Scholars within the discipline have also emphasized both the opportunity and necessity for the discipline to critically examine how geographic research *with* and *for* Indigenous communities can be pursued for the benefit of Indigenous communities as well as our collective understanding (Castleden et al., 2012, 2015; Coombes et al., 2012; de Leeuw & Hunt, 2018; Frantz & Howitt, 2010; Indigenous Peoples Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers et al., 2010; Koster et al., 2012; Larsen & Johnson, 2012; Leeuw et al., 2012; McGregor, 2018; Tobias et al., 2013). Drawing from these works, I designed this case study to explore the social and physical structures and policies of housing at Western and in the city of London and how these structures and policies influenced the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue postsecondary studies.

Methodologically, this study demonstrates and advances the benefit of exploring Indigenous learners' housing experiences and needs through in-depth individual interviews through a community-driven research agenda. Engaging and taking direction from Indigenous campus leadership aligned the study with the needs of the Indigenous campus community and ensured the usefulness of the study results. Additionally, the engagement of Indigenous campus leadership early in the study developed informed the development of a study guide, which enhanced the exploration of how the local contexts (in the city of London and Western University as an institution) influenced the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete studies at Western University. Through intentional and informed probing, participants could articulate how their housing did not meet their cultural, academic, social, and/or health and wellbeing needs.

6.6 Limitations of Research

There are several limitations to this case study that are important considerations to fully understanding both the research findings and the development of future research exploring the student housing experiences and needs of Indigenous learners. First, although research findings illuminated a spectrum of Indigenous student housing experiences and needs, the participation group was small in number. As a result, it may not represent a fulsome overview of Indigenous student housing experiences and needs. Notably, one of the key groups who carry valuable insights on this topic but did not participate in the study are Indigenous learners who had left the academy before completing their program. A potential solution to this limitation for future studies could include partnering with local Indigenous organizations and broadening study promotion more broadly into the community (such as posters at local Indigenous Friendship centres).

Additionally, the lack of off-campus community engagement limited the scope of this study. Due to complications stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. limited in person gatherings) as well as the author residing outside of the London community, no community partners (such as N’Amerind London Friendship Centre) contributed to the community-driven methodology of this study.

6.7 Future Research

This case study was the first of its kind to examine the role and influence of housing in the decision-making of Indigenous learners to pursue postsecondary studies in Ontario. This study has contributed methodologically and theoretically to student housing research. Theoretically, future research might explore how Indigenous learners experience housing during postsecondary studies in different-sized urban centres in Ontario. For example, to examine the academic, cultural, and social implications of housing influences on Indigenous learners in a major urban centre such as Toronto compared to smaller urban centres such as Guelph. The housing

experiences and needs considered by Indigenous learners will look different according to how they perceive and value available housing, amenities, and resources to meet their needs.

Numerous participants indicated explicit or vague housing policies that created uncertainty around their ability to engage in cultural activities, such as smudging. Larger institutions, such as Western University, have clearly stated intentions to create a more culturally supportive campus environment for Indigenous learners. These statements aid in holding institutions accountable for the ongoing review and revision of housing policies that intentionally or unintentionally lead to cultural oppression. However, addressing similar policies in the private market can be more challenging and potentially jeopardize housing security for Indigenous learners. Future studies could examine municipal initiatives in Ontario seeking to standardize off-campus student housing and address issues such as housing discrimination in the general and student housing markets.

Finally, a longitudinal study of the role of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete postsecondary studies in Ontario would help address some of the limitations of this case study. A longitudinal study examining the housing experiences and needs of Indigenous postsecondary learners in Ontario would illuminate patterns in how Indigenous postsecondary learners are navigating and experiencing off-campus housing across cohorts. As noted earlier, all participants in this case study indicated that housing had not caused any major interruptions in their studies. Study participants were either currently completing or had completed their degrees. A longitudinal study engaging Indigenous learners at the beginning of their studies would be better positioned to capture housing issues as they occur and, thus, articulate how Indigenous learners are overcoming housing-related challenges during their studies. In addition, data from a longitudinal study would be valuable in eliminating housing-related barriers to accessing and completing postsecondary studies for Indigenous learners.

Methodologically, there are different ways the role of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete postsecondary studies could have been captured. For this thesis, individual in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted once with each participant. An alternative method could have been to conduct a Sharing Circle. Sharing Circles (also known as Talking Circles) are similar to the Western research method of

Focus Groups. Sharing Circles provide a platform where participants may be stimulated by the responses of others to identify experiences and needs that they may not have considered as important individually (Cameron, 2016). Sharing Circles are an Indigenous research method that is diverse in format but most commonly includes ceremonial welcoming practices, encourages the sharing of personal stories related to the main issue and is grounded spiritually through ceremony and Elder support (Walton, Hamilton, Clark, Pidgeon, & Arnouse, 2020). Collecting data through Sharing Circles would also attend to the accountability aspect of the study methodology. Group conversations would offer space for participants to share common housing concerns and issues and how these issues have been or could be addressed.

The off-campus housing experiences and needs of Indigenous learners might also have been collected through an online survey. An online survey could potentially increase the number of participants, which would increase the validity of off-campus housing experiences and the needs of Indigenous learners at Western University. Additionally, an online survey may have increased the participation of Indigenous learners who had pursued a degree at Western by removing the barrier of participants needing to set an interview time to participate and instead allowing this group of participants to contribute to the study at their convenience.

This case study has contributed theoretically and methodologically to the concept of reconciliation on Canadian campuses. Future research can build upon both this research's theoretical and methodological contributions.

6.8 Conclusion

This thesis was a community-driven study examining the role and influence of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete postsecondary studies at Western University. Study objectives and outcomes were co-developed with Indigenous campus leadership for positioning study outcomes to align with and advance existing and future initiatives to support Indigenous learners at Western University. Findings from this study contribute novel understandings of how Indigenous learners perceive, navigate, and experience off-campus housing during their studies at Western. Student housing for Indigenous learners is

more than a physical structure. Participant experiences demonstrate that housing for Indigenous learners should be a place of physical and mental rest and comfort where one can express their cultural identity and build connections among a community of peers. Study findings and policy recommendations offer campus and community leaders a starting point for re-examining how housing (on and off campus) can better meet the needs of Indigenous learners.

6.9 Epilogue

In summarizing the ultimate goals of Canada's residential school program, the Final Report of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission explain:

And Canada separated children from their parents, sending them to residential schools. It was done not to educate them but primarily to break their link to their culture and identity. (p. 2)

The relationship between academic institutions and Indigenous Peoples is rooted in violence. The policies and practices of Canada's educational system have been built upon the premise that Indigenous Peoples, cultures, and knowledges are inferior. Since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation of Canada's Final Report and Calls to Action, Canadian universities have begun committing to and investing in reconciliation to redress this relationship. Through various initiatives, university campuses have become sites of reconciliation, where Indigenous Peoples can see more of themselves reflected in the curriculum, landscape, and leadership. However, reconciliation requires housing. Housing is critical not only to the academic success of postsecondary learners but their overall health and wellbeing, which supports their academic success. For Indigenous Peoples, housing is also a critical space for expressing and embracing one's cultural identity. As shared by study participants, housing during postsecondary studies remains a site of expected assimilation. Housing is more than a physical structure for learners. Housing is where culture, identity, and practices are reflected, encouraged, and nurtured or where these facets of our identities are erased, discouraged, and ignored. Efforts to include Indigenous learners in existing campus housing structures are not enough.

Universities must critically re-examine housing from the perspective of reconciliation. Housing, viewed from the perspective of reconciliation, brings forward the cultural, social, and economic

injustices Indigenous Peoples experience, resulting in housing acting as a systemic barrier to higher education for Indigenous Peoples. While Canadian universities, including Western University, have made significant commitments to and investments in reconciliation, student housing remains an underexplored site of reconciliation. Student housing must be re-examined as a critical site for reconciliation to support and advance reconciliation commitments and investments. Experiences shared by Indigenous learners in this case study confirm findings from earlier Indigenous student housing studies that drew attention to the important role housing plays in the recruitment, retention, and success of Indigenous learners. Student housing developed with and for Indigenous learners is necessary to provide housing options that appropriately support their academic success at all levels of study and their cultural and social wellbeing and health. Institutional reconciliation efforts must include housing for universities to redress the role of higher education in the dispossession and oppression of Indigenous Peoples.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide – Indigenous learners currently pursuing a degree at Western University

Interview Guide for Indigenous Students Currently Pursuing a Degree at Western

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today to share your experiences. This study aims to examine the off-campus housing experiences and needs of Indigenous learners pursuing higher education.

For this study, "housing" is considered the place where you reside the majority of the time during your studies. This includes houses, apartments, condos, townhouses, and emergency shelters, regardless of whether your name is on the housing/rental agreement.

I appreciate that you have taken the time to read and sign the consent form prior to this interview.

Before we begin, I want to remind you that you have the right to refuse to answer any interview question. In addition, you may choose to end the interview at any time. You may also withdraw your contribution at any time during or after the study by contacting Dr. Richmond. Dr. Richmond's contact information is in the letter of information.

May I have your consent to begin recording now?

A. Introduction – Let's start with getting to know a little bit about you.

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself, including what you are studying?
2. How did you come to study ...?

B. Housing Need – The most common type of student housing on-campus are dormitories or shared accommodations.

3. What does your housing look like?
4. How well does your housing meet your needs?
5. Are you happy with your off-campus housing?
6. What would your ideal housing look like?

C. Housing Significance – When first thinking about pursuing a degree, there are often several factors in deciding where to apply and, ultimately, where to attend.

7. Did housing figure into your decision-making to pursue studies at Western?

8. Did you reach out to anyone at Western to help you make your housing decision?
 - i. If so, in what ways did they help you?
 - ii. Are there ways they could have helped you better?

D. Housing Cost – In many cities, the rising cost of housing has become a major concern. The costs of housing can influence where people choose to live, work, and study.

9. Did the cost of housing influence your decision to pursue studies at Western University?
 - i. *Prompt: What were some of the financial factors you considered? For example, did your source(s) of income, such as band funding, influence your decision?*

E. Housing Experience

10. Tell me what your housing experience has been.
 - i. Did housing interrupt your studies at any point?
11. Did you search for housing prior to your studies at Western?
 - i. If yes, what were some of the factors you considered in your search?
 - ii. Did you experience any challenges during your housing search?
 1. *Prompt: For example, having enough money for the first and last month's rent, having references for the application process, etc.*
12. Does your housing affect your health and wellness?
13. Are there issues outside of costs that have impacted your housing experience? (*Prompt: Issues such as the distance from your housing to campus, family or social activities.*)
 - i. If you had an issue with your housing, who would you reach out to for help?
14. Are there ways the Indigenous Student Centre/Office of Indigenous Initiatives could support Indigenous students regarding housing during their studies?

This concludes our interview. We greatly appreciate the time you have taken to share your housing experiences and needs.

15. Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not touched on today?

I appreciate the time you have taken to share your housing experiences. Over the next month, your interview will be transcribed. Once the transcription is complete, I will mail you a copy of your interview to the mailing address you provided. Please review your interview to ensure it accurately reflects your housing experiences and the comments you have shared with me today. You may

provide feedback to update your comments, remove any comments you do not wish to be included in the study or share additional comments.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out, and I would be happy to discuss any questions or concerns you may have.

Niá:wen <Name>.

Appendix B: Interview Guide – Indigenous learners who pursued a degree at Western University between 2016 and 2021

Interview Guide for Indigenous Learners Who Pursued A Degree At Western University Between 2016 And 2021

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today to share your experiences. This study aims to examine the off-campus housing experiences and needs of Indigenous learners pursuing higher education.

For this study, "housing" is considered the place where you lived the majority of the time during your studies. This includes houses, apartments, condos, townhouses, and emergency shelters, regardless of whether your name is on the housing/rental agreement.

I appreciate that you have taken the time to read and sign the consent form before this interview.

Before we begin, I want to remind you that you have the right to refuse to answer any interview question. In addition, you may choose to end the interview at any time. You may also withdraw your contribution at any time during or after the study by contacting Dr. Richmond. Dr. Richmond's contact information is in the letter of information.

May I have your consent to begin recording now?

F. Introduction – Let's start with getting to know a little bit about you.

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself, including what you studied at Western?
2. How did you come to study ...?

G. Housing Need – The most common type of student housing on-campus are dormitories or shared accommodations.

7. What did your housing look like during your studies?
8. How well did your housing meet your needs at that time?
9. Were you happy with your off-campus housing during your studies?
10. What would your ideal student housing look like?

H. Housing Significance – When first thinking about pursuing a degree, there are often several factors in deciding where to apply and, ultimately, where to attend.

7. Did housing figure into your decision-making to pursue studies at Western?
8. Did you reach out to anyone at Western to help make your housing decision?
 - i. If so, in what ways did they help you?
 - ii. Are there ways they could have helped you better?

I. Housing Cost – In many cities, the rising cost of housing has become a major concern. The costs of housing can influence where people choose to live, work, and study.

10. Did the cost of housing influence your decision to pursue studies at Western University?
 - i. *Prompt: What were some of the financial factors you considered? For example, did your source(s) of income, such as band funding, influence your decision?*

J. Housing Experience

10. Tell me what your student housing experience was like during your time at Western.
 - i. Did housing interrupt your studies at any point?
11. Did you search for housing prior to your studies at Western?
 - i. If yes, what were some of the factors you considered in your search?
 - ii. Did you experience any challenges during your housing search?
 1. *Prompt: For example, having enough money for the first and last month's rent, having references for the application process, etc.*
12. Did your student housing affect your health and wellness?
13. Are there issues outside of costs that have impacted your housing experience? (*Prompt: Issues such as the distance from your housing to campus, family or social activities.*)
 - i. During your studies, who would you reach out to for help if you had an issue with your housing?
14. Are there ways the Indigenous Student Centre/Office of Indigenous Initiatives could support Indigenous students regarding housing during their studies?

This concludes our interview. We greatly appreciate the time you have taken to share your housing experiences and needs.

15. Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not touched on today?

I appreciate the time you have taken to share your housing experiences. Over the next month, your interview will be transcribed. Once the transcription is complete, I will mail you a copy of your interview to the mailing address you provided. Please review your interview to ensure it accurately reflects your housing experiences and the comments you have shared with me today. You may

provide feedback to update your comments, remove any comments you do not wish to be included in the study or share additional comments.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out, and I would be happy to discuss any questions or concerns you may have.

Niá:wen <Name>.

Appendix C: Research Timeline

Time	Activity
July 2020	Initial presentation and discussion of research focus (Indigenous student housing experiences at Western University) to Indigenous students ¹
July 2021	The formal launch of a collaboration with Indigenous campus leaders – Office of Indigenous initiatives and the Indigenous Student Centre
August 2021	Ethics approval
November 2021	Participant recruitment
November 2021 – January 2022	Conducting in-depth interviews with Indigenous learners
December 2021	Project update and discussion with Indigenous campus leaders – Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the Indigenous Student Centre
January 2022 – March 2022	Transcription of interviews completed and copies provided to participants for confirmation.
March 2022 – May 2022	Coding and analysis of interviews
May 2022	Presentation and discussion of initial analysis with Indigenous Campus leaders – Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the Indigenous Student Centre
June – July 2022	Drafting of thesis

August 2022	Development of policy briefs based on research findings in support of Indigenous campus leaders – Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the Indigenous Student Centre
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Curriculum Vitae

Name: (Eulene) Victoria Bomberry

Postsecondary Education and Degrees: McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
2013 – 2019 B.Sc.

Related Work Experience Teaching Assistant
The University of Western Ontario
2020 – 2021
Lecturer
The University of Western Ontario
January – April 2022

Conference and Lectures:

Poster Presentation, “Reconciliation requires housing: The role of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete higher education.” Canadian Association of Geographers. Toronto, ON (virtual). June 3, 2022.

Research Presentation, “Reconciliation requires housing: The role of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete higher education,” Research presented at the conference on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching. Calgary, AB (virtual). May 1, 2022.

Research Presentation, “Reconciliation Requires Housing: The role of housing in the decisions of Indigenous learners to pursue and complete higher education.” Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement. BC (virtual). March 19, 2022

Panel Presentation, “Unsettling Geography: Opportunities and challenges for engagement in Indigenization,” Canadian Association of Geographers - Ontario, November 12, 2021.

