

Tansi ekwa nanâskomêw, - têniki
Hello, how are you and thank you

Thank you to Regina City Council for allowing me to voice my support of the motion that full operational funding to solve homelessness throughout the City using a housing first, supportive housing model be included in the 2023 Budget.

My Name is Pastor Nick Helliwell, and I am an Indigenous Spiritual Elder, a High School Youth Pastor at Gentle Road Church of Christ, and a founder of the Rising Above Regina Discipleship Project.

Gentle Road Church of Christ has been involved in numerous street outreach initiatives for many years. My wife Vivian and I, also have been addressing many destructive aspects of life in North Central Regina for many, many, years. We have helped many homeless people in Regina through those years and we continue to reach out to, intercede and advocate for Regina's vulnerable homeless indigenous peoples.

Indigenous people are dying at an alarming rate from a number of social factors, all of which are many times higher among Indigenous people than those of the general population. Many of those factors are exacerbated when one is homeless. Chronic alcoholism, drug usage and overdoses, street violence, to name just a few.

The City of Regina has made many public statements about Reconciliation for its Indigenous citizens and yet four years after its first commitment to address homelessness, many indigenous people are wondering if the leaders of this city speak with forked tongues.

Adequate Housing is seen as a basic human right, yet in the inner city of Canada's Queen City, literally blocks away from this hallowed hall, indigenous people are lying in the streets literally dying because their right to adequate housing is not being met. Canada's Indigenous people hold the Treaties they made with Queen Victoria as sacred. Yet here in the heart of the city named in her honor the blight of homelessness among the indigenous peoples seems to highlight a shameful disregard of this sacred relationship.

As has been exposed by recent events – the explosion of a gas line destroying a housing complex owned by the Saskatchewan government – the problem is not necessarily a shortage of housing units, but a lack of access to housing.

The issue of chronic homelessness in Regina among indigenous people stems from systemic barriers that indigenous people face towards unincumbered and full participation in life in the city of Regina. This is, I humbly submit, is the real root issue.

Page 13 of Everyone is Home report states: "Communities, such as Regina, are taking action through comprehensive, community-based systems planning processes to address policy and practice that either contribute to homelessness and housing insecurity or get in the way of meaningful solutions."

Also enshrined in that report is the passion of the people involved, "of community members in Regina (who) are engaged and passionate about seeing an end to homelessness in their community."

There are a number of organizations and individuals who have worked diligently over many years to identify barriers that homeless indigenous face, as well as methods and means to address such barriers.

The recognition of Regina being situated on our indigenous homelands, without committed action towards Regina's indigenous homeless, is meaningless. Without committed action, without passing MN22-3, it can only be concluded by the indigenous peoples of this city, that its leaders do indeed speak with forked tongues.

Therefore I urge you, Mayor Sandra Masters, and all of the members of this City Council, to not let the good work that was begun with the Everyone is Home report die, to continue to revive the work by passing MN22-3, that full operational funding to solve homelessness throughout the City using a housing first, supportive housing model be included in the 2023 Budget.

Hai Hai, sawêyihcikêwin.
Thank you, God Bless you.