TOO MUCH TIME AND THE DAYS ARE LONG:
HOUSING NATIVE ELDERS IN A SMALL NORTHERN COMMUNITY

by

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ABSTRACT

The Northwest Territories faces many challenges and elders' housing is one of the greatest. Many elders alive today were born in the bush and lived in log cabins. They are in many respects the last links to a declining way of life. The number of independent elders in the small northern communities is also increasing, and they have special housing needs. Addressing these needs appropriately requires an understanding of who elders are and what their roles are within the community.

This thesis evaluates the housing alternatives provided by the Northwest Territorial Housing Corporation for elders in Fort Providence, and the Northwest Territories in general. The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate existing housing programs to determine their relevance to native elders and to provide information that is useful to community planners, native leaders and health care providers. The answers to the issues and problems raised in the literature review are supplied by the elders. The implications of the elders' answers are then reviewed in light of the literature review.

The results of the study reveal that the definition, role and responsibility of elders have changed significantly over the last forty years and that their housing alternatives are limited, but apparently acceptable. The major concerns elders have with their housing is reflective of the changes they have experienced in their life time. Many prefer living both traditional and modern ways, incorporating both the tent and the bungalow into their lives. The roles of elders may have changed but the values and importance of elders has not decreased. Many elders still live in their own rental homes, often their first 'Western' style homes, taking care, or being taken care of, by family. Interestingly, a new category of elder seems to have emerged - the single elder that is either divorced, separated, widowed or never married. These "new" elders, by choice, choose to live in the seniors' residence. The
study also reveals that elders are more interested in the maintenance of their homes, and ensuring that they can transfer their rental homes to their children, then they are of their housing alternatives.

Finally, the study shows that existing Northwest Territorial Housing Corporation programs and community planning practices have a strong emphasis on the physical aspect of elders' housing to the exclusion of elders social needs. The elders indicate that their physical environment including, their home, community and countryside is linked to, their social environment. Improving elders' housing physical alternatives must therefore go hand in hand with enhancing their social conditions as well.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ii  
Table of Contents iv  
List of Tables ix  
List of Figures x  
Acknowledgement xi  

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION  
1.0. Purpose of the Thesis 1  
1.1. Background 2  
1.2. Objective, Definitions and Scope 3  
1.3. Approach 5  

CHAPTER TWO: THE ELDER  
2.0. Introduction 8  
2.1.1. Cultural Distinctions 9  
2.1.2. Economic Distinctions 9  
2.1.3. Functional Distinctions 10  
2.1.4. Defining Indian Elders and Senior Citizens 10  
2.2. The Role of the Indian Elder 11  
2.2.1. The Traditional Role of the Elders 12  
2.2.2. Indian Elders Today 12  
2.3. Myths About Long Term Care 15  

iv
2.4. Community Planning and Elders
  2.4.1. Elders' Physical Needs
  2.4.2. Elders' Social Needs

2.5. Demographic Overview

2.6. Conclusion

CHAPTER THREE: HOUSING INDEPENDENT ELDERS

3.0. Introduction

3.1. History of Elders' Housing in the Western Northwest Territories
  3.1.1. Pre-Contact Period
  3.1.2. Non-Governmental Influence
  3.1.3. Federal Government Influence
  3.1.4. Territorial Government Influence

3.2. Northwest Territories Housing Corporation and Independent Elders
  3.2.1. 1979 Northwest Territorial Housing Corporation Review
  3.2.2. 1985 Northwest Territorial Housing Corporation Policy Review
  3.2.3. Aged, Disabled and Chronically Ill Report
  3.2.4. 1990 Elders' Housing Conference

3.3. Northwest Territorial Housing Corporation Independent Elders' Programs
  3.3.1. Senior citizens' Home Repair Program
  3.3.2. Home Improvement Program
  3.3.3. Emergency Repair Program
  3.3.4. Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program
CHAPTER FIVE: ELDERS' HOUSING NEEDS IN FORT PROVIDENCE: THE ELDERS' PERSPECTIVE

5.1. Introduction

5.2. Interview Method

5.3. The Findings
   5.3.1. Age, Length of Residency and Household Size
   5.3.2. Understanding When One Becomes an Elder
   5.3.3. Are Elders Happy Living in Fort Providence?
   5.3.4. What Would Make the Elders Happier in Fort Providence?
   5.3.5. Do Many Elders Live Alone?
   5.3.6. Where Do Elders Prefer to Live?
   5.3.7. What do Elders Like/Dislike About Their Homes or Suites?
   5.3.8. What Changes Would Elders Make to Their Homes or Suites?
   5.3.9. Where Did the Elders Live Before Their Present Residence?
   5.3.10. Why Do Elders Choose to Live in the Seniors' Residence?
   5.3.11. Where Would the Elders Interviewed Prefer to Live?
   5.3.12. What Are the Elders Greatest Living Expenses?
   5.3.13. Do the Elders' Have Difficulty Doing Anything in Their Homes or Around Town?
   5.3.14. Are times Better or Worse for Elders Now?
   5.3.15. If the Elders Had One Wish?

5.4. Study Implications
   5.4.1. Elders
   5.4.2. Elders and Their Family
# LIST OF TABLES

Table I: N.W.T.H.C Capital and Rental Housing Programs 38  
Table II: Population Forecast 53  
Table III: Age Structure in Fort Providence 54  
Table IV: Fort Providence: Housing Stock Distribution by Ownership 57  
Table V: Interview Summary 62  
Table VI: Elders Needs Vs. Northwest Territorial Housing Corporation Programs 79
| Figure 1: | Fort Providence Location Map | 1 |
| Figure 2: | Fort providence Regional location Map | 49 |
| Figure 3: | Map of Fort Providence | 50 |
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1.0. Purpose of the Thesis

This thesis evaluates Northwest Territorial Housing Corporation (hereafter cited as N.W.T.H.C) housing policy and programs to determine their relevance to native elders in the Northwest Territories (hereafter cited as N.W.T.). The elders are an important component of every northern community, yet they receive little attention in housing literature and government policy. This thesis provides information that is intended to be of use to policy planners, leaders, and elders. It is based on a study of housing needs, conditions and provision in Fort Providence, a community of 700 people, 233 air Km Southwest of Yellowknife. See figure 1.

Figure 1
Location Map

Source: G.N.W.T. and Hamlet of Fort Providence Fort Providence Data Base. Reinders Ltd.:p.3.
1.1. Background

In 1990 the N.W.T.H.C. undertook a public review of its programs and policies. The people of the N.W.T. clearly indicated that they wanted more than just a roof over their heads. They wanted homes and they wanted to help design and build them (N.W.T.H.C. 1990, 22). The N.W.T.H.C. contended that it also wanted to help communities to define and meet their own housing needs (N.W.T.H.C. 1990, 22). Indeed, the N.W.T.H.C. indicated that its policies "must generate programs that satisfactorily address pressing needs without weakening traditional social institutions and customs" (N.W.T.H.C., 1990).

There are many significant housing issues facing the N.W.T. The population of the North is growing about three percent per year - almost three times the Canadian average (Dickerson 1992, 22). Because of this growth the minister responsible for the N.W.T.H.C. in 1990 stated there was an immediate need for 3,000 housing units, and that it would take at least 10 years of current production to meet existing demand (Dickerson 1992, 140). In essence,

The controversy surrounding the housing issue involves meeting the needs of a rapidly growing population (particularly in small communities), providing appropriate housing, and involving individuals in the decision making process concerning housing (Dickerson 1992, 136).

Even though there are relatively few elders in the N.W.T. housing them is among the most pressing of issues. Feather and Irvine (1990, 26) identify the following challenges specific to elders' housing. They age and die sooner than most Canadians; they are more likely to live in multi-generational homes and take care of children. In addition, rapid social change is endangering traditional Indian values and bringing family violence and elder abuse. Finally, a lack of appropriate elders' housing can sometimes result in removal to distant institutions. This can result in cultural and emotional deprivation due to separation from family and friends, and adjustment to the loss of independence (Feather and Irvine 1990, 26-27).

The process of understanding and clarifying the needs of elders is just beginning. In fact,
"there is a veritable desert of information and knowledge about rural elderly and their environments, let alone native elderly, in rural, isolated communities" (Hodge 1984, 3). It has been noted that policy for elderly in the United States have considered the elderly as white, English speaking and relatively educated (Gelfand 1976, 13; Blandford and Chappell 1990, 397). The situation is similar in Canada. There is simply a lack of knowledge concerning native elders and more research into the special housing needs of native elders is required to help leaders, decision makers and elders.

1.2. Objectives Definitions and Scope

The objectives of this thesis are:

1) To gain an understanding of the role of elders in a northern community.

2) Review the history of elders' housing in the N.W.T. and existing N.W.T.H.C. elders' housing programs.

3) Discover the differing ideas about the N.W.T.H.C. elders' housing programs from the Fort Providence elders, the Fort Providence Band and Hamlet councils, the N.W.T.H.C., community planners, and health providers such as nurses and social services personnel.

4) Provide community specific recommendations that enhance independent elders' housing options and community planning practices with respect to elders.

Elders' housing is defined for the purpose of this thesis as accommodation, adapted
in some way, to the changing social, cultural and physical needs of older natives. It includes single family homes; seniors' housing projects for independent elders' consisting of independent units in an apartment building, town-house or seniors' residence; and congregate or sheltered housing that provides housing with some communal facilities and personal service.

This thesis focuses on the N.W.T.H.C. housing programs for independent elders. However, it recognizes that other Territorial government programs can affect the lives of elders. However, these are beyond the scope of the thesis¹ and are discussed to the extent elders feel they are important during the interview process.

Cultural and social factors should not be ignored when attempting to understand elders and their housing needs (Pecarski 1989, 4). This thesis considers the factors identified above to the extent elders chose to deal with them during the Fort Providence Interviews.

The thesis reviews N.W.T.H.C. elders' housing policy and programs and documents Fort Providence's current attitudes towards them. The implications generated are specific to Fort Providence but likely apply to other communities in the N.W.T. since the N.W.T.H.C. programs vary little from community to community and demographic profiles of other communities are similar. However, varying cultural, social, and historical differences among communities must still be considered when attempting to generalize from the findings of this study.

¹The interrelationship between elders' housing and elders' other needs are complex and not well documented. Needs such as health care, combined nursing - old age homes, homemaker services and transportation are elements closely related to housing yet distinct in their own right. This thesis recognizes the complexity of overlapping interrelationships but examines only the housing component of elders lives.
1.3. Approach

The thesis begins with a literature review. Part one of the literature review defines the native elder and examines the changing role of elders. It also provides a general understanding of how community planners affect elders and the changing demographic makeup of elders in the N.W.T. Lastly, it explores four dominant myths about the long term care of elders. Part two of the literature review explores the history of elders' housing in the Western Northwest Territories and explains N.W.T.H.C elders' housing programs in the N.W.T..

To address the issues identified in the literature review, existing N.W.T.H.C. elders' housing policy and programs were evaluated through interviews in Fort Providence with elders, band and community council members and N.W.T.H.C. staff, and health - social service providers.

Two communities were contacted to determine if at least one would participate in the study. Fort Providence accepted. Fort Resolution declined any further research on elders because of previous treatment of elders by researchers. According to Fort Resolution's band manager, Mr. Irving, elders are very reluctant to divulge information because they feel like they are "being milked for information and they are not getting anything in return. They feel like they are being used ... many people come and research the elders, leave, and never get back to the elders or the community" (Irving, 1993). There is no direct impact of Fort Resolution's decline on the thesis. However, the general implication of Mr. Irving's comments should be noted by all researchers intending to work or study in the north, especially if they intend to conduct research with native elders. Fort Providence agreed to participate in this thesis.

Elias (1991, 189) and Gamble's (1986, 23) approach to understanding the people,
the issues and their ideas is grounded in the belief that theory is specific to place, people and time, and that research in native communities is inappropriate and disrespectful unless carried out by someone who understands the local culture and values. As Don Gamble notes (1986, 22-23), "only individual experiences—whether rational or irrational to the observer—and not the application of Western scientific facts or methods are concrete in the N.W.T. and that confusion about the application of Western scientific method is confusion about the differences among information, knowledge and wisdom."

Community planners working with native communities and elders

have little with which to work except bodies of information, knowledge and various theories and methodologies of how information and knowledge should be interpreted. If either the information, knowledge, or methods are faulty, so to is the plan (Elias 1991, 189).

The planner or researcher working with natives will not serve local interests if standard-oriented evaluations are employed. Standard-oriented evaluations involve comparing the real quality of a person's life with some assumed universal standard of quality of life. The Indian Association of Alberta for example, rejects this approach because standards are usually imposed by non-natives. If these non-native standards are accepted outright it will lead to imposed goals, and consequently assimilation (Elias 1991, 193). "If standards are created, they must be created within the context of aboriginal communities and refer explicitly to local circumstances" (Elias 1991, 193).

From a community planning standpoint, the planner is accustomed to providing social and community facilities and services to certain standards. Few of the assumptions about the standards of provision are tested considering elders' changing circumstances (Burton and Cherry 1970, 29). This thesis attempts to reveal community planning assumptions about elders' housing, and to identify elders' housing needs from their
viewpoint.
2.1. Introduction

Little is known about the Indian elders and their housing needs. A review of how elders are defined draws upon economic, cultural and functional criteria. Ultimately, a definition that incorporates the dominant characteristics of biological functioning and spiritual awareness are used to denote the significant characteristics of an elder in this thesis.

The role of elders is another topic that lacks substantive research. Generalizations of how elders traditionally interacted with and served the extended family and the community exist, but they are brief and anecdotal. Also, the literature simply does not help one understand the traditional cultural contexts of elders, and how their roles are evolving.

Community planners can and do affect the lives of elders. Elders, in turn, have a stake in the process and product of community planning. To that end, the planner has responsibility for knowing who the elders are and understanding what their roles are within the community. Finally, understanding the changing demographic mix in the N.W.T. is important to understanding population growth, change, and their effects on the housing needs of the elder.

There are three general ways of defining an elder person - culturally, economically, and functionally (Pecarski, et.al.,1989, 9). Every society has a category of people who are older, distinctive and knowledgable. In every case these people have different rights, duties, privileges and burdens from those of their juniors, but the criteria for defining this category vary (Foner 1984, 8).
2.1.1. Cultural Distinction

Traditionally the social status of an Indian elder is determined by the person's ability to perform the required tasks associated with the status. For example, the older a man gets without losing his "food providing skills" and hunting abilities, the stronger his magical power is believed to be, since the entire community views his successful resistance to the aging process (Sharp 1981, 105; Blanford and Chappell 1990, 387; Knudtson and Suzuki 1992, 13). An elder, as illustrated in this example, is an acknowledged chronologically older person who is independent, self-reliant, and spiritually endowed.

The situation of elderly women differs from that of the men. Where men have the paramount job of obtaining food from the bush, women have the reproductive, handicraft, and food processing jobs. Hence, the status associated with elderly women differs from that of men because a woman's job can continue after a man's job has ceased because of physical deterioration. Also, women are able to retain their social status longer than men. This occurs because women, unlike men, do not destroy their self respect and reputation when they need help (Sharp 1981, 106-107; Vanstone 1974, 82).

2.1.2. Economic Distinction

A definition grounded in economic criteria is the dominant chronological age definition (usually age 65) (Pecarski, et al., 1989, 9). However, chronological age is less relevant to Indian society because there is no fixed or absolute age when individuals become old (Foner 1984, 11). Foner (1984, 12) notes chronological age is an important index in the western wage-oriented society because it is primarily oriented to the needs of the western, industrialized economic system.
2.1.3. Functional Distinction

In Indian society old age is often defined in functional terms. "[t]hat is when biological deterioration sets in, as this effects productivity, mobility and strength - when the individual's capacity to contribute to the work and production of the group to which one belongs is substantially changed" (Foner 1984, 12). Therefore, old age in traditional native society does not begin at a particular chronological age but when health deteriorates (Blanford and Chappell 1990, 386).

The functional distinction suggests that becoming old is based on biological functioning and health. Ethnographers note that various physical signs of aging including reduced mobility and independence mark the transition into old age for most cultures. Associated with the physical aging process is the onset of new social roles and expectations (Foner 1984, 26). The onset of functional changes in Indian people is therefore a significant determinant of aging.

Many studies show that Indian people as a cultural group in Canada have much shorter life expectancies. For example, Indian men and women can expect to live fifteen and ten years less, respectively, than their non-native counterparts (Blandford and Chappell 1990, 387; Manson and Callaway 1984, 171-172; Alberta Senior Citizens Secretariat 1986, 13-14). In fact, the impairment level of natives forty-five years and older is comparable to non-natives aged sixty-five and older (Shortt 1986, 1).

2.1.4. Defining Elders and Senior Citizens

Based on the preceding discussion, definitions of elder and aging as applied by non-indians varies significantly from those determined by Indians themselves. "Cultural
differences, economic systems less dependent on the wage economy and functional health differences suggest that an alternative definition must be sought" (Pecarski, et.al.,1989, 10). Based on information presented in this section, "elder" includes all native persons that are recognized by their community as chronologically older, independent and spiritually endowed; having particular maturity, wisdom and knowledge of their cultural roots and traditions.

"Senior Citizens" is a non-indian term referring to people aged sixty-five and over who are eligible for a wide range of special territorial and federal programs. Native communities have adopted the term senior citizen to indicate eligibility for special programs and services funded by the federal and Territorial governments (Alberta Senior Citizens Secretariat, 1986, 11). The criteria based solely on the chronological age of sixty-five years does not account for the rate of a native person's functional decline. Therefore, age fifty-five (+) is used as the general cut-off for the chronological component of elderhood. The primary reason for selecting age fifty-five as a cut-off are the "functional and biological differences between the Indian and non-indian population" (Pecarski, et.al.,1989, 10; Spero and Manson 1989, 43).

2.2. The Role of Indian Elders

This section briefly examines the traditional roles of Indian elders in the life of the family and community. Furthermore, it attempts to determine the housing implications of this role.
2.2.1. The Traditional Role of the Elder

Traditionally, elders lived in an extended family, and in that setting passed on traditional knowledge, cared for children, provided spiritual guidance, shared wisdom, and made known to the young people the laws of living (Malloch 1984, 10). In turn, the respect and concern that young people showed for their elders served to meet the needs of those too old to provide and care for themselves. As elders' recall,

People really cared for each other in the past. The extended family reached out and encircled everyone, including widows, the orphaned children and elderly. The equal worth of all members of the community was respected, and safe-guarding the health and well-being of the people was a collective responsibility (Malloch 1984, 10).

Economically, the elders' demanded and received great respect because everyone of the same sex had the same occupation. Elders possessed many years of experience and learning; skills and wisdom necessary for survival in the bush. "In this situation, listening to elders was undoubtedly beneficial, so those who did who were better off than those who did not" (Lange 1988, 27).

Spiritually, the elders in the community pointed the younger people toward their rituals and growth processes. This was done to help the younger ones become more aware of themselves, and the natural world around them. This guiding role nurtured an exploration of individual truth within the context of a spiritual relationship between the individual and the Creator (Knudston and Suzuki 1992, 180).

Not all Indian elders are the same, nor are all Indians a homogenous group. They vary widely with tribe, band, location, time and language spoken. This section focuses on the Dene of the N.W.T. and the Athapaskan Indians in general.
2.2.2. Indian Elders Today

Today, elders live differently. Traditionally, they were the most important people, at the forefront of decision making and community life. Their roles, particularly since the mid 1970's are seen to have become less important (Alberta Senior Citizens Secretariat 1986, 42).

Elders today still live in extended families with almost half the pensioners in the N.W.T. claiming child tax credits on their income tax returns compared to only two percent for the rest of Canada (Hicks 1991, 43). They also face many problems never experienced before including; loneliness, mental and physical abuse, loss of importance, family break-up by divorce or separation, declining economic importance, lack of respect, and loss of security.

In the past, elders had something to offer the family and the community. They were a proud and independent group that remained with the community, getting help from their families when required. Individual initiative, resourcefulness and knowledge, once highly regarded attributes are no longer important. In this context, growing old is a stressful experience. Also, the old age pensions given by the Canadian government make the elderly an important economic asset, but people who are not productive in a direct physical or subsistence sense are more often tolerated than respected (Frimmer 1973, 28).

"Older natives have strong feelings about wanting to stay in their home communities close to family and friends, language, traditional foods and cultural roots" (Alberta Senior Citizens Secretariat 1986, 2). The family continues to provide shelter, care and companionship. While elders' provide services such as babysitting, or contribute funds to the general budget. Elders want to remain close to their families, and resistance to moving
into institutions or outside the community is great. However,

since the management of social housing, including the allocation of units to families, is done by local Housing Associations [in the N.W.T.], the question of whether to provide separate accommodation to young families is often a controversial issue. Often, Housing Association Boards composed of older residents will ignore requests from young families for separate housing, preferring that they remain with their parents (Lodgdsdon and Seto n.d., 12).

The extent to which younger Indian families accept or want elders living with them is unknown. Very little written on the subject, and ultimately, each band or community is best able to decide how the housing needs of its elders should be met (Pecarski, et.al.,1989, 16). Generally, elders are experiencing new economic and social realities but are still respected and valued for who they are. The reason for this lies at the heart of native culture - its spirituality. As George Barnaby explained to the Berger Inquiry,

[r]espect for the old people is another law, since all the laws come from the teaching by our elders, from stories that give us pride in our culture, from training since we are young; We learn what is expected of us. Without this learning from the elders our culture will be destroyed (George Barnaby as quoted in Frederick 1981, 38).

The following section outlines the dominant myths of long-term care as identified by non-natives. Traditional native families, and to a lesser extent modern native families regard the care of an elder as the long term care of a family member. In many ways this treatment of elders by their families runs contrary to what white, non-native's conception of long-term care. The intent is to expose the falsehoods that dominate the long-term care of seniors, and to compare these myths with the long-term care actually provided to elders' in Fort Providence.
2.3. Myths About Long-Term Care

Housing elders and ensuring their long-term care without institutionalization is important. To that end, it is vital that general misconceptions about the long-term care be dispelled. To many people, nursing homes and seniors' residences are synonymous with long-term care. That need not be the truth. Manson and Callaway (1884, 177) state that this perception stems in part from the high visibility and costs associated with institutionalization. However, long-term care is not only a health care question. Long term care also means non-institutionalized caring for the elders of one's community for a long time. Long term care also includes the elders home, the community, community centres, friends, family, churches, nursing stations and just about anywhere older people receive assistance.

Another myth would have one believe that only health care professionals can provide long terms care. That also is false. Everyone in a community can affect the lives of elders, and that includes community planners, housing authorities and N.W.T.H.C program managers and health care givers.

A third myth about long term care involves the idea that it constitutes a ready made solution for all the elders' needs. "Quite the opposite, long-term care services are required over the long term. Certain supportive needs may remain constant for the rest of one's life; others needs may only occur intermittently or change depending upon one's functional status" (Manson and Callaway 1884, 177).

A fourth stereotype about long-term care is that it is supposed to rehabilitate and protect elders from the symptoms of old age. Included are hospitals, old age homes, doctors, nurses, specially trained therapists, home-care and dietitians to name only a few. (Manson and Callaway 1884, 177). Yes, long-term care includes this, but it also includes
preventive medical and/or social action to ensure an optimal degree of independent living.

The last myth exposed by Manson and Callaway is the perception that long-term care is the formal responsibility of the state. Included is the notion that families retain limited responsibility for the care of their seniors, and that the state has a responsibility for ensuring a senior's well-being. Studies of the general Indian population in the U.S.A. indicate that about three quarters of all impaired elders' adults are cared for by their families. Therefore, long-term care depends heavily upon informal support from the community and the family (Manson and Callaway 1884, 178).

As long as these myths about long-term care persist, the range of housing options for the N.W.T.'s Indian elders remains limited. Community planning, as a profession, must become aware of these, and other myths. Only then will its processes and practices consider the real lives of elders.

2.4. Community Planning and Elders

Community plans, zoning bylaws and other related processes and regulatory tools affect the social and physical lives of elders. The following section briefly summarizes what the community planning literature contends planners, in general, should consider when planning with and for elders. These form the basis of the research.

2.4.1. Elders' Physical Needs

Planners can affect the physical form and social circumstances of elders in small northern communities in several ways. First, planners influence the general location of
activities in a community using the Official Community Plan and the process that is used to achieve consensus about land uses. Second, the zoning bylaw can either encourage or discourage innovative land uses. The preparation of a zoning bylaw can become a tool for learning and exploration about the housing choices elders' have in their lives. It can be an undemocratic exercise undertaken by planners, or a complex highly democratic process that engages elders and the community. Pin and Montreuil (1990) suggest that planners should:

- Develop communities to ensure that the location and design of services are adaptable to the changing needs of elders' who want to maximize independence.

- Ensure that seniors' problems and ideals are addressed in the community plan, and the process leading up to the plan. Elders as a group are generally not well represented and planners should try to make them part of the planning process.

- Develop a three way consultative process including elders, the community and the planner.

- Recognize the diversity of elders needs and priorities and prepare design regulations and zoning bylaws that meet those needs.
For example, the location of an elders' residence affects the location of walking and driving routes in a community. As one gets older, getting from place to place safely and easily becomes very important, especially when there is diminished agility and sensory ability. Locating elders' homes close to social service facilities such as churches, shopping and nursing stations is one important way of helping elders maintain a real sense of independence. Further, the walking routes between these places should consider the needs of elders. The walking routes should have; gradual grade changes, adequate lighting, brightly painted obstacles, well thought out routing systems and no barriers (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing 1983, 10-14).

2.4.2. Elders' Social Needs

Some of the most challenging tasks for the elderly in small communities is access to family, friends and facilities. Hence, an elder's home is more than a physical building. It is located in a community that has varying complexity and size depending on the season and the elder's age. The home is also a place of refuge in the winter, and a place where elders stay in contact with family and friends. The home becomes the basis for the community, it becomes a place where the elder belongs and defines a place for his/herself. That is why the site of the home is very important to the social well-being of the elder.

McClain (1991) develops a series of recommendations concerning the planners response to seniors' social needs. From the "personal side" planners must recognize and work with seniors in the development of local planning and zoning changes, and facilitate intergenerational services with neighbours. From the "neighbourhood side" more emphasis
should be placed on assessing the role of the community. Some communities provide responsive levels of interaction, others do not. For example, providing meeting rooms in a community centre for elders with an easy walking access is a formal way the community can increase seniors' mobility and improve links with the rest of the community.

Finally, improvements to the practice of planning are required.

Local governments must assess how well their planners understand the diversity of the existing older population, then introduce an improvement strategy that adopts a number of different approaches: (1) encourage enrolment in gerontology courses ...; (2) work more closely with seniors' advocates and community organizations; (3) look beyond the current Consensus and data for unique local information by conducting case study interviews, focus groups and by hiring seniors as field researchers .... The final approach is a commitment by planning staff and politicians to extending personal experience through socializing and talking to seniors in the community (McClain 1991, 28).

Community planners working in small northern communities must appreciate the ideals, fears, issues, hopes and priorities of elders. Only then will planners help find suitable solutions with elders. After all, "sound planning for seniors is essentially sound planning for the entire population" (Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing 1983, 9).

2.5. Demographic Overview

This section provides a demographic overview of the Indian elder population. This is not a detailed needs assessment for elders' housing or an analysis of reasons underlying demographic change. This section simply highlights the changes that have occurred, describes existing demographic composition and projects the size of future elders population over time. The conclusion considers the relationship between
In southern Canada the composition of the population will change substantially over the next 20 years as the baby boom generation enters retirement age, and mortality/birth rates decline. In the north, mortality rates have also declined over the last 20 years, but birth rates have remained high, largely due to substantial federal investment in health and social services (Steele 1986, 23-24). From 1981 to 1986 the N.W.T. grew 127 per cent while the Canadian population grew about 39 per cent. This growth was not due to immigration. Between 1982 and 1988, 3,187 people left the N.W.T., while the population grew by about 7,000. The increase is the population is due to high birth rates (Dickerson 1991, 140).

The number of persons aged 65 and over is expected to increase, but relative to the entire population of the north, it will remain small. Projections prepared by Eric Moore et.al. (1989), indicate that in absolute terms, the percent changes in the population aged 65 and over in the short term (1996) and medium term (2006), are impressive.

Between 1986 and 1996, the population aged 65 and over will grow by 52.3% and between 1986 - 2006, it will grow by 124.8%! This can be compared to the growth of the total population where the percent change will be 21.5% and 43.4% in the short and medium terms respectively (Eric Moore et.al. 1989, 23).

The absolute number of elderly in the N.W.T.'s population is small and will continue to be small. However, the proportion of elders in the N.W.T.'s entire population is expected to increase. (Eric Moore et.al. 1989, 23; Steele 1986, 25).

Understanding the implications of these numbers on elders' housing in the north is important. Unlike the housing issues that face southern Canadian governments, the N.W.T. will face unusual housing challenges because of two significant factors - geography and culture. First, sometime in the next century, the population of people aged
65 and over in the Yukon and the N.W.T. is likely to be similar in size to that of Prince Edward Island (hereafter cited P.E.I.) However, "the problems of providing services to an elderly population concentrated on a geographically small island compared to the problems of providing services to an elderly population dispersed in approximately sixty-five isolated communities [spread] across Canada's territories will be very different" (Eric Moore et al. 1989, 45). When the elderly are sparsely distributed as they are in the north, it is difficult and costly to locate appropriate elders' housing and make that housing effective. Second, "cultural diversity of the elderly population within the native people and between native and non-native poses a unique set of problems" (Eric Moore et al. 1989, 2). Given these two significant factors, N.W.T.H.C. policy solutions that help maintain the independence of elders become consequential; especially if cost and cultural appropriateness are important.

A note concerning the limitations of available demographic data is required. "Many difficulties exist in getting accurate data. Language and often limited reading and writing skills can become issues in completing federal census forms for older Natives" (Alberta Senior Citizens' Secretariat 1986, 13). In addition, the summer lifestyle of going out "on the land" interferes with the completeness of census data.

2.6. Conclusion

The literature shows that to understand elders one must acknowledge who they are and what role they play in the family and the community. Chapter five has provided a functional definition of elder that includes characteristics such as age, and less visible qualities like wisdom and spirituality. The elder also plays a role in the traditional and
modern Indian family. Understanding those roles and their implications on housing arrangements helps in our understanding of elders and their needs. Understanding elders needs and transforming those into tangible solutions on the ground, is, in part, the planner's job. To succeed, planner's must become sensitive to the physical and social needs of elders and the myths concerning their long-term care.
CHAPTER THREE
HOUSING INDEPENDENT ELDERS

3.0. Introduction

Elders traditionally lived in tepee's then log cabins and canvas tents, usually with their extended family. The move from the "bush" into modern bungalows has occurred in less then fifty years. This next section traces the changes in elders' housing, and to a lesser degree, the urbanization of native society, and documents the significant forces that have affected both.

Bent on a program of economic development the federal government encouraged the Dene to settle into permanent houses in new communities. Since then, the responsibility for elders' housing has passed from the family and the extended community to the territorial government and the N.W.T. Housing Corporation. Numerous housing studies have provided channels for elders' concerns about housing. However, the state of elders' housing has changed little.

A review of current N.W.T.H.C. elders' housing programs in section 3.3 of this chapter illustrates the problems elders encounter. Programs and policies designed to address the needs of independent elders are lacking. Further, existing programs maintain a southern orientation based on home ownership, equity and market valuation. The north is a place where notions of equity, ownership and land take on very different meanings. To an elderly northerner, these social and cultural differences are almost incomprehensible. As a result, many existing elders' housing programs appear very out of place and inappropriate.
3.1. History of Elders' Housing in the Western Northwest Territories

3.1.1 Pre-Contact Period

Archaeological records have established Dene occupation of the western N.W.T. as far back as 11,000 years. The Dene spoke Athapaskan languages and lived in an expansive territory below the tree line (McMillan 1991, 7). Before European contact the Dene lived independent, self-sufficient lifestyles as hunters and gatherers. Their shelters were easily constructed using materials available. The seasons and the location of game dictated their subsistence pursuits and settlements patterns.

In winter, groups of twenty to thirty related people lived together in camps with smaller family groups setting out to find game (McMillan 1991, 8). In summer, the Dene congregated into larger groups of one hundred and more. Although hunting and fishing camps were seasonally established at prime hunting and gathering locations, permanent houses did not exist.

The Dene, as a hunting culture, needed shelters that were easily constructed. Caribou skin tents were the preferred type of shelter, but bark shelters were also constructed. (Special Committee on Housing of the Legislative Assembly, 1985, 18). Elders describe the "old-time" tepee as requiring 75-80 caribou skins and being large enough to house up to four extended families. Each family occupied a specific area of the structure (James 1983, 35). The elders lived in the large tepee's with, and contributed to the extended family. When resources became scarce the intra-group and inter-group cooperation helped them survive. However, as unrestricted wanderers almost constantly on the move from one hunting and fishing location to another, they could make little provision for those who were unable to keep up. As evidence shows, people often died at younger ages, often of hunger, and that the aged and chronically ill had little chance
Thus, abandonment of the aged was widespread. An early historical source estimates that one-half of the elderly ... of both sexes perished in this manner ... Yet, it was not uncommon for the aged, like the blind and otherwise infirm to be pulled along a toboggan as the rest of the band moved from place to place. It is probably true, therefore that abandonment of the aged and sick, though frequent among some groups, was resorted to only when the young and vigorous themselves appeared to be in danger during an extended period of game shortage (Vanstone 1974, 83).

A cautionary note concerning the treatment of elders is required. Dene elders themselves admit there are historical elements missing. Hence, it is "sometimes difficult to identify the truly traditional Dene lifestyle as it was before to European contact, because the influence of the traders, and later the missionaries has been felt for more than two-hundred years" (Mallock 1984, 3).

3.1.2. Non-Governmental Influence On Housing

Invasions north by fur traders and missionaries in that order, affected the way native people lived in the N.W.T. Trade with the fur-traders in the Southern Mackenzie did not begin until the late 1700's, and it was not until 1840 that the first trading post opened and the fur trade really to hold (Mallock 1984, 4-2). Initially the fur trade had little affect on the Dene. They continued their yearly subsistence rounds simply adding the trading post to their round of stops, to get foodstuffs and hunting-trapping implements (Asch 1977, 49-50). Later, stops at trading posts lengthened and money became the medium of exchange.

As the Dene' dependence on the trading post increased so did competition between the trading posts. The traders encouraged native people to shift away from the traditional
subsistence economy to that of one based on trade paid for by highly valuable furs and skins. Traders, in an attempt to forge closer ties with the Dene offered; alcohol, food below cost, summer jobs, welfare and credit. These and other factors contributed to a "new emphasis on the nuclear family as an independent economic entity and began the trend to settle [semi]-permanent communities" (McMillan 1991, 9).

Concurrent with a more individual lifestyle focused on trade and individual satisfaction came the principle of money. The economic importance of elders began to decline with the introduction of money as a medium of exchange. Money began to replace the generalized reciprocity characteristic of the traditional Dene society, and with that, the security and safety elders had come to rely on.

The Anglican and Roman Catholic missionaries soon followed the traders north in the mid 1800's establishing missions in the Western arctic, usually near existing trading posts (Mallock 1984, 20). The prolonged contact with the missionaries in the semi-permanent camps near the trading post and missions affected the role of the elder. Where before they served to transmit traditional wisdom, knowledge and skills, now, according to the missionaries, they were no longer needed for the task because the church was responsible for the transmission of wisdom and knowledge (Vanderburgh 1988, 24). Also, prior to 1945, health services for the elderly, infirm and ill were provided on an unorganized basis by various people in communities including shaman, medicine men, Hudson Bay Company employees, members of the R.C.M.P, missionaries and other employees of religious groups (McDermit and Lindquist 1979, 4). This further encouraged the Dene to remain in permanent camps near the newly established trading posts and missions.

Traditional extended Dene families by the mid 1800's lived in permanent log homes,
they also constructed log warehouses and maintained storage buildings. In the summer families usually erected small tepees next to their log homes (James 1983, 40). In less than eighty years the Dene incorporated Christianity, money and semi-permanent settlements into their lives. Undoubtedly these changes affected the elders; they could live longer, were healthier, but in turn, had relinquished some of their prestige within the group.

By the 1950's the fur trade collapsed. A traditional pattern of life adapted to the fur trade ended abruptly. The Dene could not return to their traditional lifestyle, nor could they fill the economic void left by the collapse. In response to the urges of missionaries and others to provide the necessities of life to the Dene, the federal government became an active participant in the lives of the Dene.

3.1.3. Federal Government Period

Two significant federal government initiatives affected the lives of Dene elders in the Western Arctic; economic development of the north and the emerging welfare state programs.

In 1956 the Territorial Council officially asked the federal government to provide support for the Indian population; either in the form of fur price subsidies or a program of economic development (McMillan 1991, 11). The federal government opted for economic development. From that point on the government ceased to accept hunting and trapping as a viable economic way of life. "It was thought that the aboriginal people had no alternative but to conform to a wage based society" (N.W.T. Special Committee on Housing 1985, 20; Mallock 1984, 21).
The federal government's economic development approach involved the development of permanent settlements. Schools were constructed and teachers recruited from southern Canada taught English, basic education, homemaking, child care, and occupational training to children and adults. Also, regular health services were provided with old age pensions and welfare benefits (Dickerson 1991, 136; N.W.T Special Committee on Housing 1985, 20; Rea 1968, 299; Cameron 1985, 26).

These programs and facilities undoubtedly triggered a shift away from a semi-nomadic hunting culture to one of permanent settlement (Logsdon and Seto n.d., 1-3 and McMillan 1991, 10). This, in turn, further negatively affected the roles, responsibilities and status of elders and the broader community Kinship support networks.

The first permanent homes constructed in these newly established settlements were crude, built of scrap materials left by the white men who had come north. Often whole families crowded together in cramped quarters where contagious infections and pernicious diseases such as tuberculosis were rampant (Goliger 1981, 25). The federal government using the local federal Indian agents tried to help to help the Dene improve their housing conditions.

Often, local sawmills were established through the Indian agent. Dene families supplied logs, labour or cash and the government supplied grants to assist them in building their own houses. In the four year period from 1958 to 1961, the Indian Affairs branch assisted in the Construction of 239 homes for Indians in the N.W.T. (Logsdon and Seto n.d., 4).

By 1964 Indian housing problems scarcely improved. Crowding became chronic, disease and very poor housing conditions persisted. In response to these and other problems the federal government's Indian Affair Branch in 1968 introduced its Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing program (also known as Rental Housing and Rent-to-Purchase...
Housing) to the western arctic. Latter that same year, the administrative responsibility for Indian housing was transferred to the newly formed Government of the N.W.T..

The Rent-Geared-to-Income housing program was a direct way of getting the Dene into better housing. As they could not afford loans for good homes, let alone understand the concept of a loan, other ways of getting them into adequate housing were devised. The Rental program essentially subsidized their housing. The government paid for everything and in return, the Dene paid a small fixed amount of their irregular incomes in rent. In short, housing became a federal welfare issue.

3.1.4. Territorial Government Influence

By 1968 the federal government's direct involvement in Dene Housing in the N.W.T. waned. The newly formed Government of the Northwest Territories (hereafter cited G.N.W.T.) would now direct the fortunes of Dene housing. For three years the G.N.W.T.'s department of Local Government assumed the initial lead role in program delivery, although four other G.N.W.T. departments soon shared in the task. There were problems, however, as Mr. George Barnaby (1985) of Fort Good Hope indicated:

... there has always been problems with housing, especially since the territorial government got involved in it. If you look back before the government moved north, I mean everybody owned and build their own houses and had responsibility for everything they decided. They[...] did it for themselves. About 1968 or 1969, there was a big push by the government to change everything around ....I guess it involved everything, but it also involved housing. There was a lot of time and money spent introducing a new rental program of housing. At that time people were promised that they would pay a couple of bucks a month and they would have a lower rental unit, that is what they were called. So that was a pretty good deal, you get all you electricity and fuel oil plus the house for two dollars a month.
Along with that a lot of the old houses, were destroyed. At that time there was no council, nothing to advise the territorial government. They did not recognize the band councils. They did not talk to them. So a lot of the houses were destroyed. Some of them were pushed over with cats. Some of these people still do not have houses. Their houses were never replaced. Also they would have no choices but a rental house. That means their houses were taken away from them and then they would have to rent from the People who took them away. Mr. George Barnaby - Fort Good Hope Public Hearing July 10, 1984. in (Special Committee on Housing of the Legislative Assembly 1985, 19).

As the supply of homes and money to maintain them was limited, a socially acceptable allocation scheme developed naturally from within the Dene themselves. It was not unusual for elders and camp leaders to exercise their traditional authority when allocating available housing to families in the community (Special Committee on Housing of the Legislative Assembly 1985, 23). Hence, the elder's role may have changed but the respect and social influence accorded the elder apparently did not.

In 1971, the G.N.W.T. commissioned a Task Force on Housing "to study, discuss and develop meaningful solutions to the this great problem" (Council of the N.W.T. 1972, 1). The two principle recommendations of the task force were:

1) The responsibility for all housing programs be placed under the control and direction of the Government of the N.W.T., and

2) A N.W.T. Housing Corporation be established and headquartered at Yellowknife, to create, co-ordinate and give direction to housing programs based on need, environment and research, so as to make available an adequate standard of housing to all residents of the N.W.T. (Council of the N.W.T. 1972, 4).

These recommendations were adopted and on January 1, 1974, the N.W.T. Housing Corporation (N.W.T.H.C.) commenced operations. The N.W.T.H.C. inherited some 3,080 housing units, none were adapted to the needs of independent elder. From the Dene standpoint, the self-reliance of the individual and the group "gave way to overwhelming
dependence on the government. Where the responsibility for survival of the entire group had once been shared by all individuals, caring for one another in an interdependent way, almost all responsibility had now been taken over by government” (Mallock 1984, 23). Emphasis added.

3.2. N.W.T.H.C. and Independent Elders

The Northwest Territorial Housing Corporation, in its first ten years of operation (1974-1984) focused on the shelter requirements of the general population of the north. The special housing needs of elders, let alone Dene elders, in small communities received scant attention.

In 1976, two years after the formation of the N.W.T.H.C., concern for the health and care of elders emerged. As E.W. Drake emphasized in the case of Indian peoples,

[t]heir social structure [is] largely a gerontocracy ... where the older people are seen as the source of wisdom an experience to be consulted in all things ... making them leave an area which holds meaning for them ... [is] often traumatic, [especially] after the small settlements where is able to be on a first name basis. Identities are lost ... and language variations leave them helpless to communicate ... and the lands where they hunted and fished in their youth are removed form them [emphasis added] (E.W. Drake in (G.N.W.T. Department of Social Development 1976, 98-99).

The department of social development emphasized that in the future, the "emphasis should be on enabling senior citizens to remain in their homes as long as possible.” (G.N.W.T. Department of Social Development 1976, 1).

In May of 1977, the N.W.T.H.C. and the department of social services initiated a joint review of the housing needs of elders. In April of 1978, the Senior Citizens'
Accommodation Task Force Report received approval from the N.W.T.H.C. (in Frederick 1981, 52-53). The recommendations of the report specific to the N.W.T.H.C. were as follows:

1) That no senior citizens' accommodation be built that does not include plans for the present/future provision of needed home support and personal care services.

2) The establishment of a joint committee including the Departments of Social Services and Health aimed at merging housing services and long-term care development.

3) That the funding or provision of necessary services to aged in senior citizens' homes be the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Services. That the provision and management of all property management functions be the responsibility of the N.W.T.H.C. through their agent, the local housing authority/association. The allocation of units to tenants should be made by an admissions committee composed of members from the housing association/authority, local Health and Social Services, and Health and Welfare.

4) That the construction division of the N.W.T.H.C. begin assembling a portfolio of possible designs for senior citizens' facilities to be jointly approved by C.M.H.C. and the Department of Health and Social Services.

Interestingly, the needs of independent seniors residing in private or public homes are not considered. Elders, it appears, were expected to live at home with their extended families for as long as possible, then to move into seniors' homes. Adaptations to existing or future single family homes where elders lived was never a consideration.

3.2.1. 1979 N.W.T.H.C. Policy Review

By 1979 the native people of the N.W.T organized themselves politically and placed demands on the N.W.T.H.C. to abandon its centralized control over housing delivery and administration (McMillan 1991, 17). In response, a Task Force on Northern Housing Policy (see Joint Task Force on Northern Housing Policy, 1979) was formed to address these
and other issues. Its first objective was to "implement a community planning and housing policy development mechanism that involve[d] northern residents." As McMillan (1991) notes, this and other objectives had little impact on northern housing policy. N.W.T.H.C. officials continued to respond to community demands for involvement with pledges, but little action. Further, elders' housing was not perceived as an issue because there were relatively few elders, and they lived "in native communities ... and [were] still cared for in the family context" (McDermit and Lindquist 1979, 9).

3.2.2. 1985 N.W.T.H.C. Policy Review

Elder's issues resurfaced again in the 1985. A Special Committee of the Tenth Legislative Assembly charged with inquiring into the public concerns about housing in the N.W.T. again recorded the concerns of elders. Mr. Pierre Wedzin of Rae-Edzo, at one of the committee Hearings, summarized elders' concerns.

My wife cannot walk because she is crippled. In the wintertime it is very cold because there is no porch on the house. There is just one guy that repaired my house, just the door and windows, and they put the roof on the houses, that is all that he did. So I am very concerned about my house, and I think that it would really good if they could rehab it again. I have asked them to do it and they have said no because the house is not repairable. They said they were not going to fix it but they were going to condemn the place. Every month I am still paying the rent, but if they do not I will not pay my rent. Out of my cheque I pay for the rent, water and lights, but things are pretty high also.

We still get our pensions, but we are still poor, and we cannot pay for our rent out of our cheques. I am not the only one, everybody is the same ... We have a guy here in charge of housing and we always ask him to come and see our houses, but he never does. He just holds out his hand for our rent. I guess that he does not want to do anything about it.

My wife and I are both 81 years old. She has rheumatism and I have had to look after her for seven years. In the wintertime, we get a lot of snow coming
through the doors and windows, and it is still the same now. So, if you could repair it in a hurry, I sure would be happy. It is getting cold now, and there is a space about two inches under the door, and you can see right outside. Like I said my wife and I are both 81 years old, and we both get pensions. She is my wife and I have to look after her, but if we had a warm house it would be good, but it is to that way. So, if you could go over and take a look at my house, I would be very Happy (N.W.T. Legislative Assembly Special Committee on Housing, 1985, 22).

In response to Mr. Wedzin's and other elder's concerns eight recommendations specific to elders' housing were tabled in the final report, they stated:

1) That the Minister of Health establish a departmental enquiry into the housing conditions of N.W.T. elders for the 1986 winter session.

2) That the Departments of Health and Social Services and the N.W.T.H.C. develop a joint strategy to deliver an enriched version of the senior citizens home repair program.

3) That the N.W.T.H.C. make block funding available under the Senior Citizens (home) Repair program to community groups.

4) That the N.W.T.H.C. develop a program to repair and upgrade privately owned seniors' homes in all communities.

5) That the N.W.T.H.C. and C.M.H.C. consolidate repair programs such as the Rural Rehabilitation Assistance Program, the enriched Emergency Repair Program and the Senior Citizens (home) repair program; and to locate and support community delivery agents for these services to the public. (N.W.T. Legislative Assembly Special Committee on Housing, 1985, 70-71)

6) That all seniors living in N.W.T.H.C. rental housing who are also the head of households pay the assessed minimum rent ($32).

7) That N.W.T.H.C. units occupied by seniors receive first priority when repair and maintenance funding is allocated

8) That seniors living in their own homes be forgiven territorial property taxes.

Recommendations one, six and eight were implemented and the report Aged, Disabled and Chronically III was submitted to the legislative assembly in 1986.
3.2.3. Aged, Disabled and Chronically Ill Report

The report provided a comprehensive assessment of programs available to elders and provided a series of recommendations concerning the condition of elders.

The community planning issues alluded to in the report include, accessibility, segregation, community focal points, zoning and planning participation. Many of the problems faced by elders involved walking access from their homes to other buildings and access into the buildings themselves. Elders also indicated they felt segregated in that they often preferred to live alone, yet remain close to family and friends. They felt their homes were distant from their extended family and friends and that often, they could not live where they wanted to. Elders also said they needed gathering places. In small northern communities few places that are accessible, and designed to serve the needs of elders as gathering places. Yet

virtually every Indian community has a noninstitutional focal point for aged-related activities ... Such focal points take several forms in addition to the classic senior centre model. On small reservations / [communities] that cannot support a separate facility, community centres may sponsor senior activities and set aside space for exclusive use by elders (Spero and Callaway 1984, 195-196).

Community focal points such as community halls are often not designed to accommodate the needs of elders. Access is often difficult and space not designed to accommodate the elder. Zoning and the community planning process also act to reduce the housing choices available to elders. Although not directly expressed by elders, the community planning process limits discussion on the housing options open to elders including, granny/grandpa suites, row housing, additions and stand alone one bedroom units.
The report's conclusions, specific to housing and independent elders asserted:

1) That when planning for the yearly allocation of houses for a particular community that consideration be given to the needs of the aged, disabled and chronically ill for the development of,
   - one bedroom houses,
   - one bedroom bachelor suites in the form of new housing or senior citizens homes,
   - granny/grandpa suites additions to existing homes, and provisions or the extended family in the seniors own home.

2) That the existing grants for elderly homeowners be maintained funding allowance for elders increased.

3) That information concerning home improvement grants for seniors be circulated to all community councils and social service staff.

4) That the N.W.T.H.C. in consultation with the Department of Social Services develop a special needs fund to pay for as ramps and grab bars and other aids elders may need.

5) The importance of accessibility standards to ensure barrier free accessibility.

6) All new houses that also accommodate elders should constructed consider the question of accessibility (G.N.W.T., Department of Health and Social Services 1986, 1-6).

The report on the Aged, Disabled and Chronically Ill provides a complete assessment of services available to elders in the N.W.T. Unfortunately N.W.T.H.C. policy concerning elders' housing did not change. The problems encountered by independent elders living in their own homes, or as part of extended families persisted. As late as 1989 official N.W.T.H.C. elders policy continued to maintain that "the elderly on the N.W.T are to remain in their own homes for as long as possible ... [and that] institutional projects and senior citizens homes are considered a last resort" (Beaulieu tom 1989, 93). But N.W.T.H.C. programs, continued, generally unchanged and the needs of the independent elderly persisted.
3.2.4 1990 Elders’ Housing Conference

An elders' housing conference sponsored by C.M.H.C. and N.W.T.H.C. in Yellowknife, N.W.T. convened elders and professionals working with elders. The objectives of the conference were to:

1) identify the issues seniors face in meeting their housing needs, and
2) to discuss and formulate practical solutions to respond to changing housing needs.

The conference generated many recommendations specific to independent elders wants and needs. The following recommendations specific to community planning were prepared:

- The encouragement of seniors involvement in the local community planning process.
- The encouragement of flexible building codes, zoning bylaws, regulations, and standards to allow for housing designs that reflect traditional lifestyles.
- That row housing, duplexes, and single dwelling homes all be considered as possible housing options for seniors.
- That the location of seniors' developments be in central, but not commercial, areas, close to churches, shopping, and health care facilities.
- That senior citizens' facilities be located in the core of the community.

The elders conference held in May of 1990 is the most recent official review and discussion of independent elders' housing issues. Over the previous fourteen years elders' housing was recognized as an issue, studied, discussed and documented. Since the first major review of the N.W.T.H.C. in 1979, elders' housing policy has changed little. The issues and concerns of elders expressed in the first review N.W.T.H.C. are repeated in the 1990 conference on elders' housing. The N.W.T.H.C., it appears, did little in the way of modifying its programs to address the real issues and concerns of independent elders.
3.3. N.W.T.H.C. Elders' Housing Programs

Broadly speaking, elders are eligible for either N.W.T.H.C. capital or rental programs. Capital programs are available to seniors that want to own, or already own their own residence. Rental programs are accessible to all seniors occupying homes or living units owned by the N.W.T.H.C. the following pages summarize the programs elders are eligible for. No handbook or source book on elders' housing programs exists. Therefore, the following pages represent the compilation of information from various sources including the University of British Columbia, the Government of the Northwest Territories Library, the N.W.T.H.C. library, and most importantly, interviews with N.W.T.H.C. staff.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>N.W.T.H.C. Capital Portfolio</th>
<th>N.W.T.H.C. Rental Portfolio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Home Improvement Program.</td>
<td>Level one seniors Units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program.</td>
<td>Access, Lease to Purchase Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Northern Territorial Rental Purchase Programs.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author using N.W.T.H.C. reports as found at UBC and in Yellowknife N.W.T., and from interviews with N.W.T.H.C. staff.

38
The N.W.T.H.C. has provided assistance to seniors since 1974. From 1974 to 1992 the number of programs elders qualified at least remained stable. In 1993 three N.W.T.H.C. programs were cut, or slated for termination in 1994 because of Federal government/C.M.H.C. Social Housing program cuts. Following, is a brief description of N.W.T.H.C. programs seniors are eligible for.

3.3.1. Senior Citizens' Home Repair Program

Senior citizens that live in their own homes can apply for financial help under this program. Only those repairs that help keep the applicant in his or her own residence are considered. Grants cannot exceed $7,500 per household. The funds are used for the purchase of materials and payment of labour. The N.W.T.H.C. pays all freight costs. Applicants must be at least 65 year old. Very few households can afford the operating and debt services associated with home ownership. For example, only one in 593 households can afford to purchase and maintain a home in the Kitikmeot region of the N.W.T. (Logsdon 1987, 13). Given these extremely low levels of home ownership, this program's applicability is, at best, limited in small remote northern communities.

3.3.2. Home Improvement Program (HIP)

The main objective of this program is to repair sub-standard housing to a level that will increase its useful life for 10 years. The amount of assistance given is the equivalent to half the cost of a new HAP house in that particular community. Home ownership is required for program illegibility. This severely limits the number of independent elders that
can apply. Further, homes must conform to C.M.H.C. standards and this adds substantial, potentially unnecessary costs.

3.3.3. Emergency Repair Program

The Emergency Repair Program helps core needy homeowners to repair their homes where threats to their safety exist. Core needy households are those that live either in physically inadequate and/or crowded dwellings because they cannot afford better homes. This assistance is in the form of a grant up to $8,000. Home ownership is required for eligibility consideration for this program. This program will cease in 1994 due to federal C.M.H.C. cutbacks.

3.3.4. Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP)

Similar to the HIP program, home improvements are to increase the life-span of the house for over 15 years. The maximum amount of the loan under this program is $25,000 of which as much as $10,000 is forgivable. Again, home ownership is a prerequisite for eligibility, making this program inaccessible to most Indian Elders. Interestingly, the average northern house has a life expectancy of about 15 years (Goliger 1981, 27). This is due to the heavy wear and tear caused by large crowded families, the harsh environment and construction practices.
3.3.5. Home Ownership Assistance Program (HAP)

This program encourages people to own their own homes. Families with sufficient incomes to maintain a home, as well as own the land, but without the financial resources to build a home are eligible. Assistance in the form of a material package and cost of freight, site development and material is provided. The applicant constructs the home and after five years owns the home outright.

Few elders have the financial resources to consider this program. Most elders are poor because they have worked outside the wage economy all their lives, and have no equity (Hicks 1991, 42; Logsdon 1987, 8). Further, the HAP program does not consider the special housing needs of the elder. For example, HAP homes constructed with senior suites are eligible for additional C.M.H.C. funding. Unfortunately N.W.T.H.C. has not taken advantage of this opportunity (Slauenwhite 1990, 33). Further, HAP projects are usually four bedroom units. This is due to the preference given to couples and families before single seniors. Also, the allocation of the N.W.T.H.C. HAP budget is based on the number of homes constructed, not according to monetary value of those homes (McLellan 1990, 22). This program terminated in 1992.

3.3.6. Northern Territorial Rental Purchase Program (NTRPP)

This program permits those persons living in social housing to use a portion of their rents towards the purchase of the house they live in. They should also have legal title to the land. The homeowner, in this case the elder becomes responsible for taxes, maintenance, utilities and insurance. This program has little relevance for elders because home ownership has little or no relevance. As a result, there is no effective market. Therefore,
houses have no market value and can only be appraised by their social value (Logsdon 1987, 14).

3.3.7. Public Housing Program

Since 1969 the N.W.T.H.C. has constructed public homes under the terms of the National Housing Act. Under this program subsidized rental housing is provided to families, single persons, and seniors unable to acquire adequate accommodation where they live. Seniors that are the head of households pay the minimum rent of $32 per month (Hicks 1991, 43). As such, the elders are competing with single parent families, singles and persons living in overcrowded homes for the units allocated to their community (Elders’ housing Conference 1990, 3).

This Program provides subsidized rental housing to people and families in need. "In need" means they are unable to acquire adequate accommodation in the private rental market in their community. Unfortunately, there is very little private rental housing in small northern communities for both cultural and economic reasons.

Economically, the northern economy does not encourage long term investment in quality housing by either individuals or private entrepreneurs. Without any certainty that there will be long term demand in a community there is no guarantee that consumers or developers can recapture their outstanding mortgage amount when they sell or rent (Carter, 1987, 4). Culturally, a home is not viewed as a financial investment, rented or otherwise, and family’s tend to view the location of the home as permanent. In addition, native people have no traditional attachment to the homeownerhip concept (Buchanan 1979, 21). Therefore, the value of a home is simply that of shelter (Logsdon 1987, 16).
Given these two broad socio-economic reasons, it is not surprising that there is little, if any, rental or private housing in small northern communities. As a result, the N.W.T.H.C. is by default the single greatest supplier and distributor of homes in small communities (Department of Health and Department of Social Services 1986, 187).

3.3.8. Level One Senior Citizens' Homes and Seniors' Clusters

Senior citizens' level one homes are housing units are funded and constructed and maintained by the N.W.T.H.C. An elderly person or couple reside in the level one units independently; that is they require no assistance from either the department of social services or the department of health. The local housing authority/association is responsible for the general management of the facility including maintenance, housing allocation and user fee assessment/collection (N.W.T. Departments of Health and Social Services 1984, 8).

The N.W.T.H.C. also acts as a client department to the departments of Health and Social Services, responsible only for the design and construction of level two and three seniors facilities (Herzog, 1993). All non-institutional level one, independent housing that forms part of a level two and three senior citizens' home, is funded by N.W.T.H.C. In 1984/85 senior citizen programs for independent elders constituted 4.5 per cent of N.W.T.H.C.'s annual capital program budget. The residences themselves are not provided

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2 Level-one care as defined by the Department of Social Services, Government of the N.W.T. (Department of Health and Department of Social services 1984, Appendix 2) is "care required by a client who is essentially independent and shows only a slight impairment (physical frailty and/or minor mental deterioration). The care required is mainly guidance or supervision with activities of daily living, i.e., laundry services, shopping and reminder to take medication."
out of a community's annual unit allotment. As of 1990 there were 226 housing units specifically designed and operated for seniors (G.N.W.T. Annual Report 1990, 90).

According to Herzog (1993) elders are suspicious of these projects because they feel that they are being institutionalized and their freedom reduced. Further, the administration of these facilities is awkward because they are not always occupied on a year-round basis by the independent elder. In the summer, many independent elders prefer to spend time "on the land" away from the facility (Herzog, 1993; Manson and Gallaway 1984, 190).

3.3.9. Alternative Housing

Alternative Housing or "Uncle Tom Cabins" are small one or two bedroom stand-alone houses starting in the mid 400 square foot range. They have no pressurized water or modern sewer facilities. Instead, they have "dip tanks" for water, and chemical toilets for sewage, and are heated with small oil-fired space heaters, or wood burning "air-tights".

The alternative housing program is, according to N.W.T.H.C., an inexpensive approach of providing modest housing. This program consists of a $50,000 one-time grant for the construction of the unit. The low cost and low technology of the unit are desirable because it provides basic shelter to households that cannot access public housing because it is inappropriate or not desired.

According to Herzog (1993) the demand for this type of housing is extremely low. Alternative homes are not funded by N.W.T.H.C. because they do not meet C.M.H.C. standards and no policy or program regarding these types of elders homes is prepared.
3.3.10. Access, Owner-Build Program

The owner-build program provides help in the form of a repayable loan to people who have the skills and resources to help build their own homes. Home designs and amenities are fixed. The amount of work the person puts into their homes is deducted from the loan. The remaining money owed is payable over 15 years. Before people become eligible for the program they must receive counselling from a N.W.T.H.C. program officer. For obvious reasons this program is not an attractive option for elders. Loans, mortgages, utility payments are not attractive options to an elders when they can live in level one units for $32 a month all expenses included. This is a new program initiated in 1993, in part, to replace the terminated HAP program.

3.3.11 Access, Lease to Purchase Program

This program is similar to the Access, owner-build program, except that N.W.T.H.C. builds the house and leases out the unit for a maximum of five years to a prospective owner. During this time the occupant must pay all maintenance and utility costs associated with the home. In short, they prospective owner must demonstrate the ability to succeed at home ownership. If successful, the N.W.T.H.C. client receives a 15 year loan from the N.W.T.H.C. The mortgage or repayment of the loan is such that it cannot exceed thirty percent of the clients (households) income. According to the C.M.H.C. this option is especially beneficial for seniors, physically handicapped, and lower income clients.
3.3.12. Maintenance Program

This program is available only to N.W.T.H.C. Access owner-build and lease to purchase program clients. Clients are counselled on what maintenance should be done and how to get it completed. Low income persons in both programs are eligible to receive a subsidy for maintenance in the form of a rebate that covers regular maintenance items. This is intended to allow lower income families to take advantage of both programs. The amount of the maintenance subsidy is based on the client's income and is determined during each regular counselling session. This program is in the developmental stage and should begin by the fall of 1993.

3.4. Conclusion

Traditionally, elders lived with the family and the community, moving frequently from place to place in search of food. With the collapse of their traditional economy and a program of economic development inspired by the federal government the housing situation of elders has changed dramatically.

Presently, elders continue to live with their extended families in tightly knit permanent communities in homes almost exclusively provided for by government. However, the government, through the N.W.T.H.C., has responded slowly to the needs of elders. Independent elders have consistently expressed concern about their housing to the N.W.T.H.C. Recommendations designed to help elders have dealt largely within the context of existing policy. Rarely if ever have alternate housing policies specific to the elder emerged.

A brief review of housing programs accessible to elders illustrates the dilemma. On
one hand the N.W.T.H.C. wants to encourage a private housing market. On the other
hand, it is by far the largest owner of homes in the north. Elders too poor to own homes
or unfamiliar with the concept of home-ownership have no choice but to remain in
government-subsidized housing. The government facing this reality has not developed
policies that reconcile the conflict between what the N.W.T.H.C. wants to achieve and the
reality of what actually exists in the north.
CHAPTER FOUR
FORT PROVIDENCE: A COMMUNITY PROFILE

4.0. Introduction

The following chapter bridges the literature review and the case study. It is intended to provide a general context for the interviews conducted in Fort Providence. This chapter briefly describes Fort Providence's history, its climactic conditions, demographic make-up and housing structure. Finally, this chapter provides a brief description of the senior citizens' home. By the end of this chapter the reader should have an idea of what Fort Providence like, and an understanding of its' dominant characteristics.

4.1. Location

Fort Providence is located on the northeast bank of the Mackenzie River approximately 80 km downstream from Great Slave Lake, in the Fort Smith Region of the N.W.T. (See Figure 2 and 3) The community is situated 5 km northwest of Highway 3 between Hay River and Yellowknife. The Mackenzie Ferry Crossing is 12 km southeast of the community.
Source: G.N.W.T. and Hamlet of Fort Providence Fort Providence Data Base, Reinders Ltd.: p.3
Figure 3
Community of Fort Providence

4.2. Brief History of Fort Providence

Fort Providence is an old community by Canadian standards existing for almost 100 years. The first contact between European explorers and the Slavey Indians of the area occurred when Peter Pond constructed a fort that operated from 1786 - 1788 (Perry and Clark 1971). In 1789 the fort was re-opened and enlarged by Le Roux, Alexander Mackenzie’s assistant in his 1789 norther expedition. By 1796, The North West Company established Livingston’s Fort, on the Mackenzie, eight miles downstream from Great Slave Lake. It flourished as an important provision depot in the 1790’s, then it declined and eventually closed in 1823 by an order in council of the Hudson Bay Company (H.B.C.) (Perry and Clark 1971).

Expansion of trading posts continued throughout the nineteenth century and by the mid 1800’s, the first Christian missionaries arrived in the area. The present day settlement was located 45 miles downstream form Great Slave Lake in 1861 by Mgr. Grandin, a Roman Catholic missionary (Frederick 1981, 31). Then, in 1867, the Grey Nuns established themselves in Fort Providence, and started a boarding school for children. Latter, another H.B.C. trading post was established and the community evolved and suffered the fate of other trading post communities.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (hereafter cited as R.C.M.P.) and other Federal Government Departments followed. They provided educational and medical facilities and opportunities for way employment. In addition, these agencies provided goods to the local native people who gradually made the young community a base form which to continue their hunting and trapping activities.

The net result was a shift towards settlement as apposed to a nomadic life accompanied by a decline in importance of the fur trade in the daily lives of community residents and the northern economy. Today, in fact, the old pattern
of mobile scattered population dependent upon faunal resources has now almost disappeared (Frederick 1981, 31).

4.3. Climate

Fort Providence has a brief, warm summers and long, cold winters. The mean daily temperature is -27.5°C in January and 16.3°C in July. The mean annual air temperature is -3.9°C. Annual rainfall averages 152 mm, snowfall 128mm and total precipitation 280mm. Average monthly wind speeds range from 4.9 to 9.7 km/h, the yearly average being 7.5 km/h. Prevailing directions are westerly in December and January, northeast in August, East in February and southeast all other months. (G.N.W.T. and Hamlet of Fort Providence 1989, 9-12).

4.4. Population

A survey conducted in June of 1988 placed the population of Fort Providence at 665. Census Canada calculated the population at 588. The actual number of people at that time lay somewhere between these two figures. The Hamlet of Fort Providence and the G.N.W.T. (1989) forecast a population growth rate of 1.8% per annum. The projection uses the cohort survival model and does not account for in or out migration. Forecasting populations in small communities using historical population date is difficult and often limited in accuracy. Hence, the accuracy of population forecasts is limited in the short term, and at best weak, for longer, 20 year, forecasts. However, based on the model, and understanding the accuracy issues, the forecasted population of Fort Providence for the year 2010, is 987 (see table two).
Table II
Population Forecast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>728</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>903</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>768</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>810</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>825</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>840</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>855</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>871</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>887</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: G.N.W.T. and Hamlet of Fort Providence Fort Providence Data Base. Reinders Ltd.p.15

4.4.1. Population Structure

In 1989, 60% of the people in Fort Providence were age 24 or less. This is expected to decline to below 50% over the next 20 years, with more people entering the 25-54 age grouping (see table two). As the G.N.W.T. and Hamlet of Fort Providence note (1989), reduced birth rates, and an aging population will contribute to a decrease in the number of person below age 24.
Table III
Age Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-24</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-54</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Actual- 75</td>
<td>Forecast-77</td>
<td>Forecast-92</td>
<td>Forecast-101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: G.N.W.T. and Hamlet of Fort Providence Fort Providence Data Base. Reinders Ltd.: p.16

4.5. HOUSING

A detailed field survey conducted in March of 1989 by Reinders Ltd. for the G.N.W.T. and the Hamlet of Fort Providence determined the following.

... [T]here are 150 residential housing units in Fort Providence. Of these, 94 are public, including a Senior Citizens Residence, 44 are privately owned and 12 are owned by either band, Hamlet, G.N.W.T. or Federal Governments. (see table three) In terms of housing, the Home Ownership Assistance Program (HAP) had been playing a much larger role in satisfying the demand for housing. From 1981 to 1988, 28 single family HAP units were built, while over the same period, 12 public houses ... were constructed.

The N.W.T.H.C. is currently developing a replacement program for the ... 38 public housing units considered to be in too poor a condition for the rehabilitation program" (G.N.W.T. and Hamlet of Fort Providence 1989, 21).
4.5.1. The Fort Providence Housing Association

Since most elders live in rental housing supplied by the N.W.T. and controlled by the
N.W.T.H.C., the N.W.T.H.C. has developed housing associations and housing authorities
as a way to give local people control and responsibility over the housing in their
community (N.W.T. Legislative Assembly Special Committee on Housing 1988, 2.2.-2.15.).
The roles of the housing association are to collect rent, administer and suggest
improvements or changes to N.W.T.H.C. programs and policies. The housing association
therefore has a two-fold responsibility. It is supposed to act as a link between the tenants
in the rental homes and the N.W.T.H.C., community councils and other agencies and , it
is supposed to administer existing N.W.T.H.C programs.

Members of the housing association include all tenants that occupy homes managed
by the housing association and owned by the N.W.T.H.C. The member is usually the head
of the household, and each family in a home is entitled to one vote at housing association
meetings. These voting members elect a board of directors or a group of people who they
trust to work for all tenants. The board of directors is supposed to carry out the rules and
by-laws of the association. The number of people on the board varies from community to
community, however there are never more than nine or fewer than five directors. Elections
for the board of directors are held every year and serve a two year term. Therefore, the
board is always made up of directors who have been newly elected and directors who are
serving the second year of their term of office (N.W.T. Legislative Assembly Special
Committee on Housing 1988, 2.2.-2.15.).

The housing association directors are responsible for hiring a housing association
manager. The manager then hires office staff and maintenance people. The role of the
housing association manager is important to the successful operation of the housing
authority because of the duties entrusted to the manager. The manager, responsible to the board of directors, is supposed to:

- advise and guide the board
- perform secretarial duties
- manage finances, physical property and stores
- administer programs
- supervise employees and manage maintenance
- counsel and assist tenants

In summary, the Fort Providence housing association is a registered non-profit society with by-laws and obtains its funding by entering into a management agreement with the N.W.T.H.C. A board of directors is elected from the tenants of the rental housing in the community. The board is responsible for the management and administration of N.W.T.H.C. programs and policy and the promotion of local housing interests to the N.W.T.H.C., local Band, Hamlet and Metis councils. The operation of the association is managed by the housing association manager hired by the board of directors.
Table IV
Fort Providence Housing Stock
Distribution by Ownership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Type of Unit</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>Public Housing including Seniors' Res.</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Private Housing including 28 HAP units</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Government Housing (G.N.W.T., RCMP, NCPC...)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>TOTAL UNITS: 29% Ownership; 63% Rental</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4.6. Fort Providence Senior Citizens' Home

In 1977 the Fort Providence Housing Association requested the construction of a Senior Citizens' home. As noted in Chapter Three, no N.W.T.H.C. policy specific to funding, construction, operation and management of elders' housing existed at the time. This request from Fort Providence, in essence, set the stage for elders' housing policy development in the N.W.T.

4.6.1. Facility Description

The facility actually consists of three buildings and a smoke house. The main building consists of four bachelor units (one for the physically challenged), each with its own bathroom, kitchen and bedroom (which can be isolated by a folding sliding door) and exterior and interior entries. Each unit also has storage areas in the living and bedrooms.
The other units in this building are the personal care units. They are equipped with a sink, refrigerator, two burner elements and living-bedroom areas that can be combined to form double rooms by opening a folding sliding partition. The facility also contains a laundry room, a small lunch room, a lounge, enclosed screened patio and a self contained suite to allow for supervision of the facility (Frederick 1981, 44-45). The other two buildings each have two one bedroom units and a bachelor unit. Each living unit has a storage area, a cooking area and a private bathroom. The facility can accommodate, in total, ten independent elders, four dependent elders, one supervisor and one physically challenged elder. The facility is located next to the Roman Catholic Church and the nursing station, near the banks of the Mackenzie River, on a flat site.

4.7. Summary

Chapter Four provides an overview of Fort Providence's dominant characteristics. It is an old established community that has excellent year round road access. It has a predominantly young population, although that is expected to change in the next 20 years. Also, its population is expected to grow about 1.8% per year, unless some unforeseen in or out-migration occurs. The community endures relatively harsh cold winters and short summers. The N.W.T.H.C. owns most of the homes in the community, although the HAP program has encouraged increasing home ownership over the last 10 years. Finally, Fort Providence lead the development of policy with respect to elders' housing in the late 1980's. It currently operates a seniors' home through the Housing Authority, accommodating ten independent seniors and four dependent seniors.
CHAPTER FIVE

ELDERS' HOUSING NEEDS IN FORT PROVIDENCE: THE ELDERS' PERSPECTIVES

5.1. Introduction

The provision of adequate housing for native elders is an issue that is beginning to receive attention. The literature does not provide much knowledge about native elders, or their housing needs or problems. Often, the literature on native elders' housing has a "southern slant" or a "reserve slant." Knowledge relative and pertinent to the small, mostly native communities in N.W.T. is practically nonexistent. The following chapters attempt to breach this vacuum of knowledge by exploring the world of the Fort Providence Elder.

Over a two week period the elders of Fort Providence were interviewed by the author. Approximately 60% of the elders living in single family residences and 70% of the elders in the seniors' facility were interviewed. The knowledge the elders shared during the interviews forms the basis of this chapter. The intent of this chapter is to examine what the Fort Providence elders had to say about the issues and problems identified in the literature.

Chapter Five consists of three substantive sections. The first explains the nature of the research conducted in Fort Providence. The second explains the outcome of the research in Fort Providence. The third examines the general implications of the findings for the community of Fort Providence, community planning in the N.W.T. and the N.W.T.H.C.
5.2. Interview Method

First, a preliminary set of guided interview questions were prepared. Unfortunately, there is not much literature concerning the formulation of guided interview questions for to the Dene or Slavey culture. Therefore, the guided interview question used in the thesis (Appendix A) are drawn almost exclusively from a similar study of Indian Elders' housing prepared by (Pecarski et.al., 1989),

The guided interview questions examine three broad areas including, the elder in Slavey society, elders' housing conditions and, elders' housing past and present and future. To the extent possible the questions attempted to address the issues and questions raised it the literature review. To encourage elders to speak freely, the interviews were not recorded with mechanical recording devices such as tape recorders. Instead, answers were recorded using pen and paper. The author's experience is that mechanical recording devices make native people, especially elders, feel awkward, uncomfortable and generally shy.

A limitation shared by people conducting interviews in a differing cultures are the linguistic and cultural barriers. One cannot know, with any degree of certainty, if the questions formulated are easily interpreted by local interpreters, or if words exist in that cultures vocabulary to adequately capture the question's intent. For example, one word that elders and interpreters had difficulty with was "wish."

Once receiving permission to enter Fort Providence a research licence was issued by the Science Institute of the G.N.W.T. The actual interviews commenced on June 29, 1993.

Identifying the elders to interview became the next task. The method used for identifying the population is uncomplicated. First, the Housing Authority manager identified
all the homes where she believed elders lived. The same process was used with the Sub-Chief and Chief of the Fort Providence Band, at separate places and times. The results were 100% consistent. They all selected the same homes. Also, elders in the seniors home were all labelled together as seniors. The literature indicates that chronologically elderhood should begin at approximately age fifty-five. The elders interviewed average age sixty-five, and only one approximated the fifty-five age cut-off. Therefore the actual number of elders is smaller than the literature would have one believe and that elderhood begins latter than expected. Three Slavey interpreters, Philip Constant, Victor Constant and Albertine Nadli assisted in the project. One is a professionally trained, the other two are not.

English speaking elders were contacted first, with the intention of improving the guided interview questions before interviewing elders needing interpreters. In total, twenty-one elders were interviewed. Nine from the seniors' facility and twelve from Single family residences. Nine of a possible thirteen elders (69%) residing in the senior's facility were interviewed. Both level one and two residents were interviewed. Twelve of a possible twenty elders (60%) living in single family residences were interviewed. Two of the elders living in single family homes were "on the Land" and unavailable for interview and one refused to be interviewed.
Table V
Interview Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Number of Elders in Fort Providence</th>
<th>Elders Available For Interview</th>
<th>Elders Interviewed</th>
<th>Elders NOT willing To Participate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elders in Seniors' Facility</td>
<td>13(^3)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9 (69%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elders in Single Family Homes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18 2 were &quot;on the land.&quot;</td>
<td>12 (67%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Elders</td>
<td>35 (100%)</td>
<td>31 (86%)</td>
<td>21 (68%) of Available Elders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author. Interview data with the elders in Fort Providence, July, 19993.

The actual interviews consisted of sixteen questions and took from three-quarters of an hour to two hours to complete. The average time spent per interview was approximately one and a half hours.

5.3. The Findings

The following section summarizes the interview findings. The findings are presented in the sequence the questions were asked. Although specific questions were asked, all interviews were open-ended allowing the elders to explore issues important to them. The material in quotations represents the words used by the persons interviewed. They may

\(^3\)When the interviews were conducted two rooms in the seniors residence were vacant and ready for new occupants. The total capacity of the seniors' facility is fifteen people.
however have been edited for brevity. Names of the people submitting their views are not revealed for reasons of confidentiality.

5.3.1. Age, length of residency and household size

The average age of the elders is sixty-five. Elders living in single family residences (hereafter cited as SFR) have lived there on average fifteen years, while Elders living in the senior facility have lived there for 8.5 years. Eight of the twelve (75%) SFR households are married and have either children or grandchildren living with them. Three of the twelve (25%) respondents are widowed. The average household size for SFR elders is 3.5. Six of the nine (67%) elders interviewed in the seniors’ facility are bachelors. The remaining are widowed separated and divorced. Eighty percent of the elders in the facility are male.

5.3.2. Defining when one becomes an elder

Fourteen elders had an opportunity to respond to this question because the question was added to the interview guide midway through the study.

Elders in SFR

Eight of the nine (89%) elders respondent living in SFR’s indicated that chronological age defined when one became an elder. The age ranged from fifty-two to seventy-five. One elder (10%) residing in a SFR associated biological functioning and elderhood. No elders from either the seniors' facility, or the SFR’s, referred to traditional notions of
elderhood.

Elders in Seniors' Facility

Two of the four respondents (50%) from the facility did not know when one became an elder. One (25%) indicated biological functioning and one elder (25%) said "whenever I stop drinking I guess."

The Fort Providence Band Council Chief

The chief identifies two types of elder, the ordinary and the spiritual elders, both independent of age. The spiritual elder "has contact with the spirit world through dreams and visions." The ordinary elder feels "caught between the old spiritual knowledge and the modern knowledge, and often say 'what do I know'." Therefore, persons seventy years old may not feel like an elder because they do not have contact with the spirit world.

5.3.3. Are elders happy living in Fort Providence?

Elders in SFR

Five of the twelve (42%) said they were happy living where they were because their relatives and immediate family lived in town. Four respondents (33%) liked Fort Providence because they considered the town and the land around it theirs. Three elders (25%) liked Fort Providence because it is their birth place. Two elders (17%) liked living in the town because the hunting and fishing in the surrounding area is good.

Elders in the Seniors' Facility
Six respondents (66%) said they liked living in Fort Providence and had no problems with it. Three (33%) elders living in seniors' facility did not enjoy living in Fort Providence. They disliked living in Fort Providence because there was too much drinking. They wanted a place of their own, where they could grow a garden and live with family. As one elder put it, "it is my hometown, but too much booze in this town. When you go out on the land its like a rest." Another elder said, "you see young kids growing up with booze, sometimes I wish I could say don't do that, because the way people are now is not good."

Summary

Eighteen of the twenty-one (86%) of elders interviewed liked living in Fort Providence. Three (14%) did not. One elder applied summarized the reasons why elders like living in Fort Providence. "I was born and raised here, it is my home town and I miss my food when I am not here." Twelve of the twenty one respondents (43%) said they liked it because they were born there and had their relatives and immediate family in town. Seven (33%) of elders liked it because they considered the town and the surrounding land theirs, and they knew it. Four (19%) said they liked it because the fishing and hunting in the area is good and they enjoyed the food.

5.3.4. What would make the elders happier in Fort Providence?

Elders in SFR

Four of the twelve respondents (33%) said nothing could make them happier. Three respondents (25%) indicated they are happy as long as they get visitors. Two elders (17%) want to see less drinking in town. Two elders (17%) want their home repaired. One
elder (8%) thinks a wood stove is all she wants, while another elder (8%) wants to find a way to pass his rental home onto his children.

Elders in the Seniors' Facility

Four of the nine respondents (44%) like things just the way they are. Two respondents (17%) want to clean up the booze problem, while two others (17%), wish they had more visitors. Also, working, living closer to the river, teaching the children the right way and having less money borrowing would make elders happy. Each item is mentioned once and represents (11%) of the respondents in the Seniors' facility for a total of (44%).

Summary

Seven (33%) elders indicated that nothing could make them happier. Four elders (19%) said that if people drank less, five (24%) said if they continued to get visitors or more visitors. The remaining elders each offer different opinions about what would make them happier, they include, working, living closer to the river, going into the bush, teaching children the right way, getting their homes repaired and, less money borrowing. Each response represents one elder or five percent of the sample. Two elders, one from each group did not respond because they were unsure what could possibly make them happier.

5.3.5. Do many elders live alone?

Elders in SFR

Five (42%) elders living in SFR’s think only bachelors, widowers and elders that do not like kids live in the seniors home; three (25%) believe that many elders live alone; two
(17%) think that some elders definitely live alone. The remaining three respondents (24%) think there are "lots," "not sure" or "no" elders living alone.

Elders in the Seniors' Facility

Three (33%) elders living in the seniors home believe most elders live with family; two (22%) think many elders live alone; two (22%) believe most elders living alone, live in the facility and; two (22%) think that not many elders live alone.

Summary

Five (24%) of twenty-one elders believe many elders lived alone. Seven (33%) of the twenty-one elders thought the elders that lived alone, lived at the seniors' facility. Four (19%) of the twenty-one elders believe that "not many elders live alone." Four (19%) elders believe that some elders lived alone. One elder (5%) is not sure.

5.3.6. Where do elders prefer to live?

Elders in SFR

Elders living in SFR's are also evenly split about where they would prefer to live. Five (42%) want to live in the bush; four (33%) prefer to live in SFR's; four (33%) want to live in homes they own, not rent. In terms of location one elder (8% of sample) wants to live alone, two elders (16%) want to live by the river.

Elders in Seniors' Facility

Elders in the seniors' facility are evenly split about where they prefer to live. Three
(33%) would live in the bush; three (33%) want to live in their own homes, but costs are prohibitive and three (33%) prefer to live in the facility.

Summary

Cumulatively, eight (31%) elders want to live in the bush, seven (33%) prefer to live in SFR's while seven (33%) elders want to remain where they are. The remaining elders indicate they either want to live alone or near the river.

The desire to live in the bush expresses itself in many ways. Elders interviewed talked about going on the land on a temporary basis both in the summer and the winter for weeks or months. One elder said "lots would like to live down the river, and many move down in the spring and come back in the fall." To what extent this migratory pattern occurs is unknown, but it exists.

5.3.7. What do elders like/dislike about their homes?

Elders in SFR

Elders living in SFR's do have dislikes but five (42%) of respondents said they would not change anything. However, five (42%) of the elders wanted home repairs and home upkeep including homemaker and housing association service. One respondent characteristic of many others said "they never repair the door's the screens and the windows. The doors don't close tight and there is a big gap under the door, it is cold and windy in the winter." Some elders emphasised their outdoor space, with two elders (17%) wanting trees and shrubs around their home. Two other respondents (17%) simply indicated they wanted to live near the river.
Elders in Seniors' Facility

Five (44%) elders residing in the seniors' facility do not like the distance to the stores. Three (33%) of elders in the facility worry about their safety. One lady said there is "not much of a safety in this building, especially at night, and sometimes the kids get really bad especially in the winter times but I keep my door locked I don't trust drinkers."

Next, children making noise and bothering them is also important with three (33%) noting that as their primary dislike. Finally, two (22%) of the elders in the seniors' facility did not like all the drinking and noise.

Summary

Five of the twenty-one respondents (24%) would not change anything. Five (24%) indicated the housing authority does not repair their home. Four respondents (19%) feel shopping places are too distant. Three elders (14%) feel unsafe while another three elders (14%) want kids to stop making noise and trouble. Two elders (10%) want the drunks to quieten down. Two other (10%) want to have trees and shrubs around their home while another two (10%) want to live near the river.

5.3.8. What changes would elders make to their homes or suites?

Elders in SFR

Elders living in SFR's, would make fewer changes to their homes than elders living in the seniors' facility. In fact, four (25%) of elders living in SFR's would not change anything to their homes while six (50%) would fix-up their doors, windows, stairs,
basements and undertake regular maintenance, including having trees around their home for privacy. One elder (8%) wants to something done about the drinking problems in town, while another (8%) said the washers consumed too much water.

Elders in Seniors' facility

Elders living in the seniors' facility had more to say about what changes they would make to their homes. Three (25%) elders said they wanted larger suites so they could separate their bedroom from the living room and kitchen. Another three (25%) elders would ensure that their doors and windows had proper screens. Two (22%) of elders did not want hot plates and shared bathroom facilities. They would install real stoves so they could cook properly and have a private bathroom. Two elders (17%) said they needed places to store game meat because "people eat a lot of country food that they get themselves or their children bring. So when the kids work they don't have enough time to hunt." Another elder said "they should have a little warehouses so people shooting moose can store their food in it in the summer and winter." Lastly, one (8%) elder wanted repairs done faster.

In an unrelated question, one elder (11%) in the seniors' facility said he did not like access into his room from the hallway. He wanted access from the outside.

Summary

Seven of the twenty one respondents (33%) want repairs and general maintenance carried out regularly. Four elders (19%) would not change anything. Three elders (14%) want larger suites, separate bathroom facilities and proper screens on the doors and windows. Two elders (9%) want real stoves, not hotplates to cook on.
5.3.9. Where did the elders live before the present home?

All the elders interviewed spent some time in the bush or in log cabins before they moving into their present homes. The pattern that emerges is movement from the bush to log cabins then into government housing, and finally, (for some), the seniors home.

Elders in SFR

Ten of the twelve (83%) elders living in SFR's have moved at least twice. First they lived in the bush, then in log cabins they constructed, then into government rental houses. Four (25%) of the elders lived in log cabins before moving directly into rental housing. One elder (8%) moved directly from the bush to a government home.

Elders in Seniors' Facility

The pattern of movement from home to home is less defined for elders living in the seniors' residence. Four (44%) of the elders lived with brothers or sisters in either log cabins or rental housing, three (33%) lived in the bush, two (11%) lived in log cabins while two (17%) did not live anywhere permanently and travelled from place to place working and living with relatives.

Summary

A minimum of fifteen elders (71%) interviewed have lived in log cabins and the bush before living in government housing. The reasons for moving into rental housing are not clear. One elder said "they had their own place her husband built, it was a one room house 'quite a big house,' " then she was asked to move from "their own place to this place." The main reason for moving was that "this house had running water, but when we
moved into the new unit we had to pay rent and water." One elder living in the seniors home recalls that "before, I lived with my mom and brother and nephew in our own little house my dad built ... then we moved into a little rental house. I took care of mom as she got older, and that was hard ... we use to work so hard tanning hides and making moccasins for money, but they didn't pay the rent."

5.3.10. Why do elders choose to live in seniors homes?

Only elders in the seniors' facility were asked this question.

Elders in Seniors' Facility

Elders often cited more than one reason for deciding to live in the seniors' facility, they are as follows. Four (44%) elders indicated they had no choice. Six (67%) elders said they moved into the facility because they wanted to remain close to family and friends in town, three (33%) cited the low rent charges. Two (22%) moved in because of the company. One (11%) elder moved into the facility because it is quiet another (11%) because of overcrowding in his previous home.

5.3.11 Where do the elders interviewed prefer to live?

Elders in SFR

Three respondents (25%) want to live near the river or in the bush while another three (25%) would prefer to stay just where they are. Two elders (17%) want to continue living in Fort Providence. Two others (17%), desire their own homes. four respondents,
each representing eight percent of the elders living in SFR's responded with single answers; living with family, living in a smaller home, unsure and in a multiple-unit residence.

Elders in Seniors' Facility

Three (33%) elders said they would prefer to stay in the facility because "they treat us good here, "it is home." Two (22%) respondents, indicated they want to live in the bush. Six respondents provided single frequency items. Each response represents (11%) of the elders in the seniors' facility. The responses are, "in town in a house," in their own house, "alone in a peaceful place," "closer to the river," "with someone," and last, unsure of where else to live.

Summary

The combined results indicate that the most preferred alternatives to their present homes. Eight (38%) would preferably live in the bush. Seven respondents (33%) would prefer to live in places they owned. Four (19%) of respondents prefer to live in a single family residence. Three (14%) would continue living in the seniors' facility. One responded (5%) would live near the river.

5.3.12. What are elders greatest living expenses?

Elders in SFR

For elders living in SFR's the most frequently cited living expense is food, with eleven (92%) respondents claiming it as a significant expense. Following food, rent is the
next most frequently cited cost with six (50%) respondents mentioning it. Power (42%), gasoline (25%), alcohol (17%), tobacco (8%) and school supplies (8%), in that order are noted as significant expenses.

Elders in seniors Facility

Nine (100%) respondents in the seniors' facility cite food as a major expense. Second, clothing is claimed as a significant expense by six (67%) of the elders. The third most cited expenses are rent, alcohol and tobacco. Each of the preceding is cited by three (33%) elders as a significant response. The least cited expenses are craft supplies (22%), and gasoline with one respondent (11%).

Summary

The items most frequently cited by the twenty-one respondents in order of occurrence are, groceries (20), rent (9), clothing (6), power (5) and alcohol (5), gasoline (4) and tobacco (4) and last, school and craft supplies (3).

5.3.13. Do elders have difficulty doing things in their homes?

Elders in SFR

Three (25%) elders claim walking, and climbing stairs that are too steep or lacking railings, as difficult activities. Two elders (17%) have trouble walking around in the winter time. One elder (17%) feared falling down the stairs into his basement again, and wanted a door at the foot of the stairs. One elder (17%) indicated that physical weakness made doing things difficult, while another said his poor eyesight made going outside alone hard.

The elders contacted do have difficulty preforming activities either in their homes or
around town. However, Five of the twelve (42%) respondents in SFR had no problems at all. This compares with

Elders in Seniors’ Facility

Four (44%) elders in the seniors’ facility that had no difficulty preforming daily activities. Two elders (22%) remarked they had problems with stairs. Two elder (22%) mentioned their his bones hurt in the winter, another elder (11%) stated his hip and bones ached in the winter.

Summary

Cumulatively, nine (43%) of all respondents have no difficulties preforming tasks in their homes or around town. Five elders (24%) had problems with stairs. Four elders (19%) had more difficulty performing activities in the winter because their bones ached more intensely, and their arthritis seemed more severe. Three elders (15%) claimed that they either felt physically weak, had poor eyesight, or feared falling down their basement stairs.

5.3.14. Are times better or worse for elders now?

This question was added to the guided interview list later in the survey. Only four elders in the seniors’ facility had an opportunity to respond to the question. Therefore, for practical purposes, there is only a summary.
Summary

Twelve of the possible twenty-one (57%) respondents had an opportunity to respond to the question. Eight of the twelve (67%) claim that things are better now, because "before you had to cut your own wood for heat, and before you needed candles for light, now you just have light switches." Also, "living off the land was hard work, getting even a bag of flour was tough . . . you had to trap and it was hard to get food." One elder added, "it was tough before, there were no doctors and it was hard getting food for families, and now it is better. Yet another said, "in the old days elders had it pretty tough. They had to live in tents all year. It is easier for elders now because of all the services it wasn't like that in the old days."

In an unrelated question, one elder living in the seniors' facility commented that "things was better before because we were on the land. Instead, we are all in one place, in town, few people live in the bush any more."

Two elders (17%) remarked that life was better before because, "it was good in the bush, everything is expensive now, if you don't have money you can't buy anything." Also, life was "better in the bush because you did everything on your own. Now with free services we get lazy. Everything is provided for you, in the bush everybody pushes their own load." Also, it was "better in the bush, you did everything your own . . . now it is hard for elders to do anything because there is no more work for elders . . . The future will be tougher because less people go into the bush, they just walk around town." Two elders (17%) could see both bad and good in today's life, they say things are good because, "elders now have heated houses and money . . . living off the land was hard work . . . today elders watch a lot of TV, not much to do, sit here alone."
5.3.15. If elders had one wish?

This question was added to the guided interview list latter on in the survey. Only five elders in the seniors' facility and eight elders in SFR had an opportunity to respond to the question. Therefore, for practical purposes, there is only a summary.

Summary

Thirteen of a possible twenty-one respondents (62%) were asked this question. Five of nine (56%) respondents lived in the seniors home. Eight of twelve (67%) elders living in SFR's responded.

Two elders (25%) living in SFR's wished for new homes. One elder (13%) wished that the housing association politics get cleaned up, "especially who decides who gets new homes." One elder (13%) wished she could "live in the bush, to turn back the clock if she could." Last, one elder (13%) wished that "elders that know each other keep visiting each other." Three elders (38%) indicated, "don't know, that is pretty hard."

Two elders (40%) in the seniors home wish they "could get out more into the bush - outside, away from town." One elder (20%) wished to live with children if he had them. One elder (20%) said "they should take us to Hay River so we can shop were it's cheap." Last, one elder (20%) wished he was thirty years younger because "it is hard to grow old . . . you feel it in different ways. Now cold and heat really bother me."

5.4. Study Implications

In light of the existing issues and problems identified in the literature review this thesis asks whether sufficient housing options for independent elderly natives exist in the
N.W.T. The results of the Fort Providence study suggest some answers. The following pages explain those answers, and their planning implications for elders and the N.W.T. Housing Corporation. Table VI summarizes elders' most frequently cited needs and concerns to determine which programs, if any, currently accommodate them. To facilitate table VI, the programs offered to elders by the N.W.T.H.C. are cited as:

- Senior Citizens Home Repair Program - 1
- Home Improvement Program - 2
- Emergency Repair Program - 3
- Residential Rehabilitation Program - 4
- Home Ownership Program - 5
- Northern Territorial Rental Purchase Program - 6
- Access, Owner Build Program - 7
- Public Housing Program - 8
- Level One Seniors units - 9
- Alternative Housing Program - 10
- Access, Lease to Purchase Program - 11
- Access, Maintenance Program - 12
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✓, Indicates that the N.W.T.H.C. housing program identified in the column is capable of meeting the specific need identified by the elders.
Table VI, CONTINUED

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Source: Author's interviews with elders in Fort Providence, July 1993.

Table VI graphically summarizes and compares elders' needs and concerns with the range of N.W.T.H.C. housing programs that elders are eligible for. As table VI shows, most of the needs and issues raised by the elders cannot be effectively dealt with within the context of existing N.W.T.H.C. housing programs. Further, the rehabilitation, improvement, maintenance and repair programs require that the elders own their own homes, and as the interviews show, all the elders interviewed live in either the seniors' facility or in public rental housing. Therefore four of a possible twelve programs automatically exclude almost all the elders in Fort Providence.

The conclusions alluded to in Table VI are more fully developed in the following pages, but it is important to note that needs and concerns identified by the elders relate
more to the social and cultural circumstances of their lives, rather than the physical quality of their homes, and range of housing options open to them.

In light of the literature review in section 3.3, and the issues and concerns expressed by the elders, it becomes apparent the elders have few practical, realistic housing options available to them. For example, as previously noted, all the elders interviewed are not eligible for rehabilitation, improvement, maintenance and repair programs. Further, programs designed to encourage home ownership are beyond the financial ability of most elders as shown in section 3.3. Thus, almost all the elders in Fort Providence have three practical housing alternatives: live public rental housing, live in the seniors' facility, or live in Alternative housing.

Given elders needs and concerns as identified in Table V1 and section 5.3.10., living in the seniors' facility is not a practical or acceptable solution for many elders. Alternative housing is a new N.W.T.H.C. program, so its desirability and effectiveness unknown. This leaves public rental housing. Based on the foregoing discussion, elders have housing options, but they are limited and constrained by economic, cultural and social factors. Therefore, in practical terms, elders have two and perhaps three housing alternatives.

5.4.1. Elders

The Fort Providence elders still pursue traditional lifestyles that include, living on the land, caring for their children, eating country foods and being fiercely independent. They also live in a modern rapidly changing world that includes modern homes, nuclear families, alcohol problems, elder abuse, loneliness and government dependency.

The main implication that emerges for elders is that they must take greater control
of their lives, and adapt to a changing world on their terms. To accomplish this elders must articulate their concerns and become more active in the local organizations that affect their lives.

A second finding is that elders love their communities, as shown by the elders' responses summarized in sections 5.4.3, 5.4.4 and 5.4.6, and do not want to leave them because they have a strong attachment to their friends, family and the land. To facilitate elders staying in the community until they need hospitalization, innovative elders' housing and care solutions should be developed in close consultation with the community and the elders.

A third finding resulting from the Fort Providence case, is that elders really have clearly defined needs that current housing programs are not addressing, as shown by the elders' answers to question two, four and seven and summarized in sections 5.4.4. and 5.4.6 through to 5.4.8 inclusive. Elders want places in the bush, or in bush like surroundings, safety, comfort, respect and a sense of belonging. Although housing cannot address all these basic needs it can help. To that end, homes and lots should be designed, located and made available to elders based on what their requirements, needs and wants. To achieve this goal, more responsibility for housing should be transferred to the community. Only then can the unique and specific needs of individuals be respected and met in ways that are sensitive to both the community and its elderly inhabitants.

A forth finding concerns the criteria used to differentiate elders from non-elders. The literature does not give a clear indication of when elderhood begins. However, based on elders functional distinctions, elderhood was thought to begin earlier, with age fifty-five selected as a cut-off. This however is not consistent with the information presented 5.3.1. The reasons for these differences are unclear, but some inferences can be made.
Traditionally elderhood began when elders roles in the community changed from being providers to those of teaching and guiding. This role transition has not occurred as noted by elders comments concerning the "right way to live" and "teaching the old ways." Elders are therefore struggling to define what elderhood is, and what defines it. The result of not having traditional indicators of elderhood has resulted in the economic distinctions becoming more important. With elders becoming important economic assets to families, the arrival of the old age pension has increasingly denoted the entry into elderhood.

5.4.2. Elders and Their Family

Not all elders live in overcrowded, extended family households. Many live with their spouses and one or two children or grandchildren as summarized in section 5.4.1. Also, support and care for the elder is not always available from the extended family. Often, because elders have steady incomes, they end up caring for, and sometimes being abused by their family.

The main family implication of the Fort Providence case study is that elders are not always the ones taken care of by family, but the ones supplying the care as shown by responses to question eleven, section 5.4.12. The homes they rent in their names, and the incomes they receive do not only serve their needs but also those of others. Policy makers must recognize the economic and social importance of elders to the family, even if they do not all live together under one roof when making decisions that affect elders, and ultimately their families.

Another finding arising from the Fort Providence case is that extended families still play an important role in supporting and taking care of their elders as shown by the
responses to questions one, two and seven, summarized in sections 5.4.3., 5.4.4 and 5.4.8. Elders reported that their children provided country foods, visits, company and a sense of purpose. Respecting the elders attachment to their families is vital. Therefore, seniors' residences should not be seen as an acceptable housing alternative to housing shortages, overcrowding or inappropriate shelter. Instead, seniors that want to live with their family should have the opportunity to do so. Elders that choose to live in elders facilities should not feel excluded or old. Many elders in the facility were not old. The simply needed accommodation suited to their lifestyle. Unfortunately, that type of housing does not exist in Fort Providence, but it should. T

5.4.3. Elders and the Community

The chief community implication is that more attention should be given to the physical and social needs of elders. For example, elders prize living close to the river and enjoy having a place where they can meet and socialize as shown by the responses given to question two, nine and ten summarized in sections 5.4.4, 5.4.10 and 5.4.11. Through joint efforts of the Band and Hamlet councils, initiatives that respect elders desires are possible. Examples include, having elders on the community planning committee, reserving seats on both councils for respected elders, developing a plan to make community buildings accessible, providing space in the community hall for elders to socialize, providing a safe pathway down to the river and reserving river front lands for use by elders.

Presently, Fort Providence has little control over its housing. The N.W.T.H.C. through the Housing association control the delivery, type and number of homes based on corporate policy established in yellowknife and Ottawa. The general implication of this
finding is that Fort Providence must regain control of its' future. With respect to housing, it must have the ability to direct its' own housing programs. This includes design, allocation and construction of homes. It involves trust by government that Fort Providence can do it, and faith in its' ability to govern itself in a way that fits its' traditional and modern life.

5.4.4. Elders and the Housing Association

The main implication to emerge from the case study with respect to the Housing Association is that it needs to be more responsive to the needs of its clients as indicated by the elders' responses to questions two, five and seven, sections 5.4.4, 5.4.7 and 5.4.8. This includes, the timely maintenance and repair of homes, the provision of appropriate accommodation for elders in the seniors' facility and, addressing the safety, noise and drinking problems in the seniors' facility.

To help make the Association more responsive to its clients it can, organize an elders advisory committee, reserve seats for elders on the association board, review security in the seniors' facility, have public meetings to increase awareness of elders' housing options, establish a plan to repair and upgrade senior's homes in consultation with the seniors themselves and lastly, act as an advocate for seniors' housing needs whenever possible.

5.4.5. Elders and the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation

The main N.W.T.H.C. policy implication of the case study is that there are insufficient housing options for elders. Elders really only have three viable housing options. One,
remain in rental/public housing, and hope for upgrades and repairs. Two, live in the seniors' residence. Three, live in the 'bush.'

Policy alternatives that the N.W.T.H.C. can pursue include; adopting flexible building codes and regulations that allow for housing designs that are reflective of traditional Slavey lifestyles; exploring the possibility of alternative elders' housing such as, modified duplex's, small single family homes with an extra bedroom for visitors, and home sharing; providing one floor rental homes without any stairs; designing and constructing some rental homes specific to elders needs; and allocating more resources to the home repair/upgrade programs.

5.4.6. Community Planning and Elders

The main community planning implication of the Fort Providence case is that planning with and for elders must involve an appreciation of traditional Slavey cultural values, and a sensitivity to the needs of seniors in a modern urban environment. From the standpoint of an elder in a modern urban environment, planners can ensure elders have easy walking access to the nursing station, church, shopping and important gathering places as shown to the answers given to questions five, seven, ten and twelve summarized in sections 5.4.7, 5.4.8, 5.4.11 and 5.4.13. From the traditional standpoint community planners must respect the elders' love of the land. This includes making sure elders can see the river, that their building lots are large enough to retain many trees, and that the elders are consulted when decisions concerning matters that effect them arise. Because elders are not a vocal group, community planners should make a sustained effort to listen and learn from the elders.
5.5. Conclusion

Becoming a chronologically old elder is a new phenomenon in native culture. Housing old elders, in urban environments, while great cultural changes are happening are problems yet unresolved. The results of the Fort Providence research have been presented, and the implications originating from the case discussed. The following chapter ties together the literature review that explores the issues and problems associated with becoming an elder with the findings of the case study and discusses the implications of the findings for planning in the N.W.T.
6.0. Introduction

This final chapter explores the implications of the Fort Providence study. The findings of the Fort Providence study are examined in light of the literature review, the N.W.T.H.C., the G.N.W.T., the elders of the N.W.T. and finally the government of Canada.

6.1. Government of the Northwest Territories

Government has, and continues to strongly affect the lives of elders in the N.W.T. An implication arising from the Fort Providence study is that a dependency engrained by over fifty years of direct government intervention exists in the provision of housing for native peoples. But this dependency affects the physical provision of housing itself not the social and cultural basis of the elder's roles in the home.

The literature review in chapter three, section 3.1 and 3.2 shows how the development of government housing policy in the N.W.T. compelled elders into urban environments and into housing that was not of their choosing. The elders in turn have indicated that they prefer the physical benefits of their improved housing as summarized in section 5.3.7 through to section 5.3.11., implying that government housing programs have succeeded in making elders lives better.

Culturally, the role of elders has declined, as described in the literature review in sections 2.2.1. and 2.2.2. The elders interviewed concur with the literature review indicating they are less important in the community and the family then they use to be.
These views are summarized in 5.3.3., 5.3.5., 5.3.8. and 5.3.12. These findings are however contrasted by the fact that elders still independently maintain residency patterns that include living in the bush. The literature is silent about where elders prefer to live. In fact, the literature would have one believe that elders live only in seniors' facilities or in bungalows. That is only partially true. Elders live both in Fort Providence, either in the seniors’ facility or bungalows, and "out on the land" in tents or cabins. The roles of elders has declined but cultural patterns of going to live on the land persist as shown by the findings outlined in sections 5.3.4., 5.3.6., and 5.3.11. This implies that where elders interact with others in the community their role is declining, but independently, elders are still trying to pursue traditional living patterns of living on the land in tents or in cabins.

The government of the N.W.T has also affected how elders are defined. The literature review, sections 2.1.1., 2.1.2., and 2.1.3. outlines three ways elders can be defined. The findings of the study, section, 5.3.3., indicate that elders tend to associate elderhood more with "Western" economically based criteria of age than with cultural or functional criteria.

In summary, the government of the N.W.T. has encouraged elders to move into urban areas into modern homes. Associated with these moves has been a decline in the roles of elders in the family and the community. However, cultural patterns reflecting what type of housing elders prefer is reflected in their housing choices. Elders have in fact adopted the best of both worlds. Living in bungalows or the seniors' facility when it suits them, and living on the land when they want to pursue traditional cultural lifestyles. Further, how elders perceive themselves has also changed. Increasingly elders define elderhood using economic age based criteria instead of functional or cultural criteria.
6.2. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation

The N.W.T.H.C. has many programs for elders as described in section 3.3., but elders are not concerned with, or are unaware of many of these programs, as described in sections 5.3.6. through to 5.3.8. In fact, most elders are happy with the housing they have, as summarized in section 5.3.4.

What has emerged since the N.W.T.H.C. became involved in elders' housing in the N.W.T. is the seniors' facility. The literature review summarizing the history of elders housing in section 3.1. shows that prior to 1970 no seniors' facility existed in the N.W.T. and that all elders lived with relatives. The literature does not explain what type of elders live in seniors' facilities or why they choose to live there. The study findings indicate that seniors' facilities accommodate a specific type of elder as shown in appendix A, and section 5.3.1. Generally these elders are single, male, not married, separated, divorced, and without immediate family in the community. Reasons cited for living in the residence are summarized in sections 5.3.5, 5.3.9, and 5.3.10. All have reference to being single, and having no immediate relatives in Fort Providence.

The literature review also reveals little about elders' housing preferences in the N.W.T. and even less about elders' housing concerns. Section 3.2 of the literature review shows that numerous policy reviews of elders housing consistently reveal problems relating to the upkeep of homes. The study findings summarized in section 5.3.4., 5.3.7, 5.3.8, concur with the literature review and reveal an additional concern that the literature review is silent on. Elders expressed concern that if they left the rental or public homes their children would have no place to live. Because the homes are in the elders names, when elders die or choose to move away, the homes revert to the general community housing stock for reallocation to another family.
On the positive side, as the case study indicates, elders, for the most part, favour their existing residences, as shown by responses to question five and seven, sections 5.4.7. and 5.4.8., but dislike the social problems that exist within them. This issue extends beyond housing and touches upon the massive cultural and social changes native people have experienced in the last fifty years. To what extent social problems contribute to elders' housing dissatisfaction throughout the N.W.T. is unknown.

In summary, the N.W.T.H.C has many elders' programs but few elders know about them, or are eligible for them, given the very low levels of home ownership as shown on Table IV. For the most part elders are happy with their homes but would like to see them maintained better and social problems within them reduced. Also, the last twenty years have seen the appearance of the seniors' facility in the north and with it the emergence of the single elder.

6.3. The elder

The words "elder," "senior," and "old aged" have diverse and sometimes conflicting meanings as shown by the responses generated to question thirteen. From a practical standpoint, there is no agreed upon definition of elder, and in many ways this works to the elders' benefit. The grey areas have allowed Fort Providence to decide who an elder is, and what care elders need, as shown by the diversity of ages that are represented in the seniors' facility that the local Housing Association operates.

Section 2.2 of the literature review indicates that the roles of the elder in the community and the home have diminished. The Fort Providence study confirms this. Sections 5.3.3., through to 5.3.11. indicate that elders show consistent concern about
their loss of importance in their families and the community. However, this finding runs counter to the dominant myths surrounding the long-term care of elderly. The literature in section 2.3 identifies four dominant myths. These myths reveal the dominant perceptions that most Canadians have regarding the long-term care of elderly people. These myths have little relevance in the Fort Providence as elucidated in almost all of section 5.3., indicating that although elders' roles have changed, the cultural value of the elder to the family and the community has not. This is reflected in the level of home-care elders receive from their family and how dependent elders are on their children for care and attention.

Another finding arising from the research is that elders have a very strong attachment to their communities and surrounding countryside as summarized in section 5.4.3. As a result, the elders' independence is not expressed only in the community or the home. It extends into the "bush." Hence, when working with elders one speaks of the entire community system that includes the land and the animals that live upon it. The implication of this broad reference to 'place' is that housing for elders forms part an integral system. Understanding the relationships in the system is fundamental to helping elders maintain and enhance their independence.

In summary, the diverse, often conflicting meanings of elder have permitted the locally operated Housing Association to develop its own criteria of elderhood that is satisfactory with the community. Elders have expressed concern that their roles as teachers and advisors is diminishing. This is true, but the value the community and the family places on the elder does not appear to have diminished. Last, elders have a very strong attachment to the places they live, and this takes on broad dimensions, extending from the home to the entire hunting region surrounding the community.
6.4. Community Planning in the N.W.T.

Community Planning in the N.W.T. has a decidedly physical bent, but as the literature in sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2. shows, the social aspects of planning are also important. The physical aspect of community planning for elders in small northern communities involves planning for two types of elders - those in seniors' facilities and those living in single family homes. Both groups have common needs as well as needs specific to their place of residence.

The Fort Providence study shows how both the physical and social aspects of planning can be improved. The literature examines the location of land uses, the diversity of land uses and the processes of planning itself. It is silent about the basic physical aspects of elders lives. For instance, do elders enjoy having trees around their homes? Is noise a significant problem? Do they enjoy having a special place to meet? The Fort Providence study showed that elders living in the seniors' facility were satisfied with its physical characteristics, including location, accessibility and views, as indicated in sections 5.3.3, 5.3.7, 5.3.8, 5.3.11 and 5.3.13. The elders living in single family homes are less content. The elders consistently said, in sections 5.3.4., 5.3.7., and 5.3.11., that they wanted to live closer to the river, have larger lots and vegetation around their homes to give them more privacy and the "feeling that they are in the bush."

The literature review in sections 2.4.1. and 2.4.2. indicates that community planning also affects the social lives of elders, but is vague about what planners can actually do. The elders in Fort Providence indicated that social problems in the home and in community made their lives more difficult as summarized in sections 5.3.3, 5.3.5, and 5.3.7. Elders indicated that they disliked socializing that included alcohol because it was noisy and disruptive. The elders also said that they wanted to have more contact with
friends and family. How community planning can address the social issues raised by the elders in Fort Providence is uncertain.

6.5. General Implications for the North

Section 2.5 of the literature review shows that the population of the north is growing rapidly while the number of elders is growing slowly but steadily, and that a general housing crisis is resulting. Also, the growth in the elder population is not concentrated in a small geographic area, it is spread throughout the N.W.T. in approximately seventy small communities. Planners must address these two significant challenges when planning for elders' housing. The findings of the study however run contrary to the general conditions described in the literature review. The Fort Providence study showed that there were two vacancies (13%) in the seniors' facility and that the average density in single family homes was three and one-half persons (Appendix C).

The implication of this finding for Fort Providence is that elders are not living in overcrowded homes and that options for relocation into the seniors' facility exist. The implication for the north is that there are places where crisis housing conditions do not exist, and that elders are in fact housed well in some communities. This however implies that resources are not being allocated according to need, or that need is changing rapidly.

The Fort Providence study, section 5.3.1 also shows that elders are reluctant to leave their homes and communities. Therefore, as elders get older and are no longer capable of independent living they must either be taken care of by family, or moved into care facilities away from their home and community. The Fort Providence study (Appendix C) shows that most elders continue to be taken care by family and that only those elders
without family in the community live in the seniors’ facility. The implication of this finding is that home-care by extended families is critical to the long-term care of elders in the N.W.T. and that housing design, policy and programs should help elders stay with their families; and that seniors’ homes are not acceptable alternatives for elders that have family in a community.

### 6.6 General Implications for the Government of Canada

Since the Federal Government's intervention into the North in the mid 1950's, it has attempted to provided adequate shelter for native people in the N.W.T. Today many elders' housing programs are funded and designed, in part, by the Federal Government through the C.M.H.C. A finding of the Fort Providence case study is that elders find existing housing alternatives and programs adequate, albeit requiring improvement. On a broader scale, understanding why the same programs do well in some places, and poorly in others, could lead to improvements in program delivery and design.

### 7.0. The Future of Elders' Housing

With housing program cuts a reality, and more on the way, the future effectiveness of elders' housing programs is uncertain. It would appear that the future of elders' housing and the life of elders is a difficult one, but that is not necessarily the case. Certainly, program cuts will affect the extent and type of housing available to elders, but it will also provide opportunities for communities and elders. The opportunities are not immediately economic or housing related, but have more to do with community economic development.
(hereafter cited C.E.D.) in general.

As noted by the elders, the physical quality of their homes is one part of their housing satisfaction. The other two involve social and cultural factors, such as the location of homes and the respect and interest shown to elders. Housing programs currently satisfy the physical components of elders' lives. The philosophy and ideas embodied in C.E.D. contribute to the overall satisfaction of elders with their housing, encompassing the physical, social and cultural elements of elders' lives.

What this means, in practical terms, is the development of institutions and practices at the local and territorial levels to meet local needs in a way that are sensitive, culturally relevant, empowering and sustainable. This is but the first step to addressing the real, complex, and deep-rooted issues associated with elders housing in Fort Providence and the N.W.T in general. The C.E.D. literature provides abundant opportunities for positive action that will improve elders housing as government takes a lesser role in the delivery of elders' housing. Although this thesis does not review C.E.D. literature, individuals and communities concerned with the overall improvement of elders housing, in light of government cut-backs and the issues and concerns raised by the elders, should carefully consider what it offers.
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APPENDIX A

GUIDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Interviews questions with Fort Providence Elders:

Name:
Date:
Age: Sex:
Marital Status: (m) (s) (w) (D)
Length of Residency:
Live alone or with others:
Number of residents:
Address:

1. Are you happy living in Fort Providence?
2. What would make you happier about living in Fort Providence?
3. Do many elders live alone?
4. Where do elders prefer to live?
5. What do you like about living here?
   Services
   Design of the building/house
   Location
   Other people living here
   Security
   Family
   Rent - if applicable
   Suite - if applicable

6. Is there anything you do not like about living here?
   Services
   Design of the building/house
   Location
   Common area
   Rent - if applicable
   Suite - if applicable
   Smoke house
   Other

7. Is there anything about your suite or house you would change if you had a chance?
   Space
   Storage
   Design - windows, access, space, etc...
   Services - water, garbage, sewage, wood, electric.

8. Where did you live before you moved into this house/elders complex
9. **Why do you choose to live here?**
   Rent
   Services
   To be close to family.
   Friends
   Location
   Common Areas
   Had no choice
   Security
   For health reasons
   Other reasons.

10. **Where would you prefer to live?**

11. **On what do you spend most of your money - top three?**

12. **Do you have trouble doing things in your home or in town?** (access)
   - open/close door
   - walk stairs
   - get to toilet
   - move from one room to another
   - open close curtains, windows
   - operate light switches
   - walking around town
   - getting into buildings

13. **When Does one become an elder?**

14. **Are things better now or before for elders?**

15. **If you had a wish about housing what would it be?**
APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION
Title of the Project: Housing Independent Native Elders in Small Northern Communities.

Investigator: Luciano Azzolini, School of Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1W5

Project Supervisors:
This research project is part of a Masters thesis that is required to graduate from the University of British Columbia, School of Community and Regional Planning. My advisors are Peter Boothroyd and Alan Artibise. Their respective phone numbers are; (604) 822-4155, and (604) 822-3276.

Purpose of the Project:
The primary purpose of this thesis is to document and evaluate the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Seniors'/elders housing programs. Secondly, this thesis attempts to find out how community planning can and does affect the housing of independent native elders.

The evaluation is based on a series of interviews with the Fort Providence native elders, Fort Providence Band and Hamlet councils', the Fort Providence local housing authority, the N.W.T.H.C., community planners, health and social services staff and architects and non-governmental persons interested in elders housing.

Confidentiality and Follow-up
The interviews are strictly confidential. Further, any information obtained from an organization's files or other recorded sources of information remains strictly private and confidential.

The Thesis is scheduled for completion in late August. After that, copies are available from the Fort Providence band and Hamlet offices, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, Community Planning Division in Yellowknife and the N.W.T.H.C., also in Yellowknife. If you want additional information or simply want to contact me, please feel free to call or write me at the above address.