405 ALEXANDER ST.

A PATH FORWARD

House of Wolf & Associates Inc | info@houseofwolf.ca

A PATH FORWARD

405 Alexander Street has a complicated history in the city of Whitehorse. Initially dubbed the "Center of Hope" and run by the Salvation Army; the Shelter operated in a non-secular manner with barriers to access that did not serve the community.

In 2019, the Yukon Government assumed responsibility for the Shelter and operations, reducing the threshold to encompass a low-barrier approach to access.

In 2020, the Yukon Government worked with Public Safety Canada to author a Community Safety Plan; however, the concerns regarding safety it attempted to address remains prevalent.

In 2021, the Yukon Government commenced work with the Council of Yukon First Nations to examine the unintended impacts of the low-barrier shelter, and to determine how to best support vulnerable people while increasing the lived and experienced safety of the Whitehorse community as a whole.

In 2022; House of Wolf & Associates Inc. was contracted to gather narratives, identify shared priorities, and lay the groundwork for a multi-stakeholder strategy to move forward.

GRATITUDE

House of Wolf & Associates would like to acknowledge and extend gratitude to the clients of 405 Alexander for sharing their stories and lived experiences; the staff for their strength and resilience; the community residents of Whitehorse for their tenacity and fearless advocacy for the community as whole; the business community for their allyship and support during significant personal impacts; and the First Nations and non-governmental front-line agencies providing life sustaining services to the vulnerable people of Whitehorse. With deep gratitude to the following for making space, sharing their stories, and wholeheartedly being invested in the outcomes of those facing multiple barriers:

- **Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle**
- **Kwanlin Dün First Nation Health Department**
- **Victoria Faulkner Women's Center**
- **Opportunities Yukon**
- **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Society Yukon**
- **Hospice Yukon**
- **Yukon Anti Poverty Coalition**
- **Blood Ties Four Directions Centre**
- **Safe at Home**
- **VOICES/Lived Experience**
- **Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council**
- **Connective**
- **Whitehorse RCMP**
- **Boreal Clinic Allied Health Services**
- **Yukon Tourism**
- **Alpine Bakery**
- **All West Glass**
- **Duffy's Pets & Tanzilla Harness Supply**
- **Whitehorse Residents representatives**
- **Whitehorse Physiotherapy**
- **Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce**
- **City of Whitehorse**
- **Yukon Chamber of Commerce**
- **Council of Yukon First Nation**
- **Ta'an Kwäch'än Council**

We raise our hands.

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SUMMARY

The complexity of the issues surrounding 405 Alexander Street are only brushed on within this report. While intergenerational impacts and trauma, migratory displacement due to systemic geographic discrimination are factors, and broader intersecting levels of oppression have provided the confluence of factors that have resulted in far-reaching safety concerns; it remains that the gathering of vulnerable Yukoner's in Whitehorse has had large-scale safety impacts rippling through the community.

The community is a source of wisdom and direction, and we hold firm in the traditional knowledge that the answers to problems can always be found within the community: to understand the contextual scope, needs, and narratives, we turned to community engagement:

- 405 Alexander Clients: 42 individuals (20 women, 22 men, 18 self-identified as Indigenous, 2 LGBTQ2S+); semi-structured qualitative interviews
- 405 Alexander Staff: 15 individuals; semi-structured qualitative interviews
- Key Partners & Stakeholders - group engagement session, with 16 individuals in attendance; representing 1 local First Nation government; and 13 Non-Governmental Organization partners. In addition, interviews (3.5 hours) with the RCMP occurred to flesh-in details as a key partner agency.
- Business Partners & Neighborhood Residents: 18 individuals representing 8 businesses, as 5 neighborhood residents; through group engagement and interviews
- Interviews with City of Whitehorse, CYFN and Ta'an Kwäch'an council.

The 53 participants involved in the variety of engagement provided 1,694 responses that analyzed first under the Medicine Wheel, then Strength/Weakness/Opportunity/Threat; then, through emergent thematic analysis. The following key narratives were identified and formed the recommendations:

Business Partners & Neighborhood Residents
- Centralization of services - with absence of program services/safety oversight (congregation)
- Exposure to distressing violence/public disorder impacting lived experience of wellness
- Financial impacts

Key Partners & Stakeholders
- Compromised Capacity (staffing & funding)
- Conflicting Needs (funding parameters; managing public perception; level of barrier between low and high)

405 Alexander Staff
- Public scrutiny, level of expectation (public/partners/clients); instability in management/oversight
- Staff capacity (staffing levels), lack of programs/lack of effective and efficient referral to partners

405 Alexander Clients
- Substance Use
- Sober Places & Gathering Spaces
- Treatment/Program Availability
- Housing/Displacement
- Violence & Lack of Trust in Critical Safety Services

The path forward – that increases community wellness, cohesion, and safety, cannot be the sole responsibility of one agency or party; though the operational management of 405 Alexander Street has a central role. This is consistent with the teachings of the Medicine Wheel, as all things are related and interdependent. Whitehorse residents, businesses, Key Partners & Stakeholders, Yukon First Nations governments, the City of Whitehorse, Yukon Government and the Federal Government all have varying levels of responsibility – and control – for safety and wellness outcomes.

Clarity – Purpose, Programs, & Barriers

1. Determine & broadly communicate purpose of 405 Alexander Street, and commensurate levels of barrier for access; while considering whether de-centralization of some aspects of service delivery is appropriate.
2. Provide safe gathering spaces – with special focus for gendered spaces, and sober/sobering places
3. Consider multi stakeholder education/engagement events; including town-halls, community walkthroughs, social media campaigns; etc., to increase cross-demographic sense of community, understanding, and empathy.
4. Increase opportunities for cultural programming within and outside of 405 Alexander Street, with land-based components
5. Consider increasing access to substation therapy programs (including managed alcohol programs)

Increase Visibility, and Access to Justice & Safety services

1. Implement short, mid and long term CPTED recommendations; consider roll out of CPTED in surrounding area
2. Consider the implementation of a Downtown-Whitehorse Community Safety Officer program - via partnership with KDFN and TKC

A Multi-Systems Approach Requires a Multistakeholder Strategy

1. Identify agency of central responsibility to develop, monitor, and report against work plan
2. Implement coordinated case management approach/data management system between Key Partners & Stakeholders to reduce gaps within overlapping systems and increase efficiency and access to intervention programs (e.g. substance use treatment, aftercare) for vulnerable people.
3. Identify and action multi-level partnership between Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwa'chän Council, the City of Whitehorse, and Yukon Government in determining implementation responsibilities
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HISTORY

FOUNDATION

The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, 405 Alexander Street, was originally opened in 2017 under the governance of the Salvation Army – a Christian organization with a high-barrier, non-secular approach to intervention services. The building was funded primarily by the Yukon Government, who contributed $12 million funding dollars to construction, as well as ongoing operational funding. By late 2018, the Salvation Army's approach was identified as incompatible with the needs of the shelter clients, and a joint decision was made for Yukon Government to assume operational responsibility for the facility.

The facility resides on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an Kwäch'an people. Both share ancestry with the Tagish Kwan; the original people who lived and occupied the lands, alongside the headwaters of the Chu Niikwän. Stone tools tell of the Tagish Kwan ancestors residing here just after the last ice age, harvesting salmon and hunting caribou and buffalo. Archeological finds in the Whitehorse area have dated back 5,000 years. The banks of the river were lined with fish camps, lookout points, hunting grounds, burial sites and meeting places. Our values, language and traditions are rooted in this land. While this land was home to the Tagish Kwan, they were also a regular meeting place for people of other First Nations who came to trade with them, including the Tlingit, Kaska, Han, Gwich'in and Tutchone. They welcomed other First Nations from as far away as Atlin and Tagish to the southeast, Little Salmon to the northwest and the Kluane area to the west. Nomadic by necessity, the Tagish Kwan would follow the migratory patters of caribou, moose, elk and other game and fur-bearing animals. Over the centuries, people followed an annual cycle, which took them around the traditional territory to gather foods and access hunting grounds. There was a constant and powerful connection to the land, which was seen as not something human beings owned, but simply what human beings cared for. The old way of acknowledging the Creator meant that people respected and valued all that the environment gave, because every living thing contained a spirit.

CONTACT

Life changed drastically following the implementation of the *Indian Act* of 1876 (more formally, the *Act to Amend and Consolidate the Laws Respecting Indians)*, the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897-98, and the creation of Whitehorse as a centre of commerce. In 1900, at the height of the Klondike Gold Rush, Chief Jim Boss (Kishxóot) of the Ta'an Kwäch'an recognized that his people needed protection for their land and hunting grounds following the influx of settlers. Chief Boss petitioned the Commissioner of the Yukon, William Ogilvie, for a 1,600-acre reserve at Ta'an Män, which he had already surveyed. Instead, a reserve of only 320 acres was granted. Angered by this injustice, in 1902 Chief Boss wrote to the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa, demanding that over-hunting by newcomers be controlled and that his people be compensated for lost land and the impacts on wildlife. This letter contained his famous quote "Tell the King

very hard we want something for our Indians, because they take our land and our game". The only response Chief Boss received was that the police would protect his people and their land. These were the first attempts at land claims negotiations by a Yukon First Nation; and set a proud and brave tradition for the Ta'an Kwäch'an and Kwanlin Dün First Nations to fight for their rights.

We know that this protection did not occur. Instead, traumatic changes devastated Indigenous families and communities, forever altering the fabric of traditional First Nations culture, society, and economies. Residential schools devastated interdependent ties that allowed for the survival of people in the harsh Yukon environment, and severed the grounding ties people held to their land and culture. The damming of the Yukon River eradicated a centuries-long migration of salmon, hampering the ability of the Tagish Kwan to sustain themselves and making them reliant on Indian agents for food and provisions as their traditional hunting and gathering grounds were made off limits due to the boundaries of assigned reserves. In Whitehorse, the Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an Kwäch'an were forcibly moved, further and further, away from the fertile and productive areas of their traditional territories to the outskirts of town, and treated like intruders.

This is not a story unique to the Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an Kwäch'an; rather, it is the ugly, far reaching, and lasting foundation of colonial disorder that Indigenous people across Canada are still navigating. The Tagish Kwan – along with all 14 other First Nations within the Yukon – saw their language, culture, identities, economies, sense of pride, identity, and connection to the land brutally stripped away. The ripples of this intergenerational trauma resound throughout Yukon's First Nations.

ONGOING IMPACT

Every Indigenous person in Canada and in the Yukon, is a survivor; a child of a survivor; the grandchild of a survivor; or all three.

Many children experienced psychological, spiritual, physical, and sexual abuse at the hands of their so-called caregivers in the residential school system.   On an individual level, the long-term impact of residential school experiences has left many former students facing significant psychological challenges. These range from heightened feelings of anger, anxiety, low self-esteem and depression to post-traumatic stress disorder and high rates of suicide, among other comorbidities including substance abuse.   In a national survey conducted between 2008 and 2010, members of First Nations communities identified managing substance use as the number-one challenge for community wellness.

Among policies such as the sixties scoop, land seizures, and disenfranchisement, the residential and day schools had particularly long-lasting effects on First Nations people in Yukon. Non-traditional schooling for First Nations children had started with day schools provided by missionaries around the turn of the twentieth century. The first day schools operated in Forty Mile, Moosehide, Old Crow and Fort Selkirk, which were eventually absorbed into the residential school system. Bishop William Bompas and Bishop Isaac Stringer established the first residential school in the territory in 1911 at Carcross.

There were four residential schools established in the territory and one school in Northern British Columbia for Yukon First Nations children. Each residential

school, Choutla, Whitehorse Baptist and Lower Post, Aklavik and St. Paul's School was operated and staffed by a different religious group with funding from the federal Indian Affairs Branch.

The Choutla Residential School in Carcross was operated by the Anglican Church from 1911 to 1969. Choutla was also known by the early fifties as the Carcross Indian Residential School.

The Whitehorse Baptist School was established in Whitehorse in the 1940's. Due to overcrowding, in 1956, 60 students were transferred to Choutla Residential School.

Aklavik Anglican Indian Residential School was opened in 1927 at Shingle Point. The school was moved to Aklavik in 1934 due to overcrowding.

St. Paul's Indian Residential School was opened in 1920 in Dawson. The school was closed in 1943 and the building was eventually converted into St. Paul's Hostel.

A considerable number of Yukon First Nation's children attended the Lower Post Residential School in British Columbia, run by the Catholic Church until 1975. Lower Post Residential School was established as a result of a merger between two day schools, the Liard and Teslin Lake Catholic Schools, in 1951.

As the Yukon Government began to establish public schools in all the rural communities, there was a gradual movement to close the residential schools and transfer students to the public school system. Old Crow's day school was officially transferred from the federal to the territorial government on September 1, 1963. The remaining schools closed in the late 1970s.

Rural schools were only able to provide kindergarten through grade 7 education; and students wishing to continue their education were required to move to Whitehorse or Dawson. These children resided in school hostels – the Yukon Hall, St. Agnes; and Coudert Hall in Whitehorse; and St. Paul's in Dawson. The Indian Affairs Branch operated and staffed Yukon Hall for about 25 years starting in the early 1960s. Coudert Hall was operated and staffed by the Catholic Church with federal financing and was closed in the late 1960s. In the late 1960s, the Villa Madonna Home, operated by the Order of the Sisters of Providence, housed 12 children. The Ridgeview Home, operated by the Yukon Baptist Missionary Society, housed 20 children.

Residential schools modeled parenting based on punishment, abuse, coercion, and control. With little experience of nurturing family environments from which to draw, generations of residential school Survivors struggle with residual trauma. As adults, many are ill-prepared to nurture their own children. The effects of these chaotic influences can be seen in the high rates of family violence and domestic partner abuse. While Indigenous children represent less than 8 per cent of children under 14 years of age in Canada, they make up more than 52 per cent of children in the care of child welfare authorities.

School hostels represented a continued displacement of vulnerable Indigenous children. In efforts to receive an education, they were removed from their homes, family, culture, and communities. Hostel students were expected to do

chores outside of school hours but did get a full day of school. Children at these schools, first generation survivors of residential schools, continued facing incredible hardship – from racism and discrimination, to predatory adults. In 1971, a child-care worker at Coudert Hall was fired following complaints that he had sexually assaulted students. It was not until 1990 that he was prosecuted and convicted for those assaults.

In her 1991 work, *Impact of Residential Schools and Other Root Causes of Poor Mental Health*, Maggie Hodgson summarizes the cumulative impact of the loss of parenting knowledge and skills across generations:

> **If you subject one generation to that kind of parenting and they become adults and have children; those children become subjected to that treatment and then you subject a third generation to a residential school system the same as the first two generations. You have a whole society affected by isolation, loneliness, sadness, anger, hopelessness and pain.**

The transmission of intergenerational trauma, and the ripples through history that revibrate throughout the core of Whitehorse wherein marginalized people gather, can be understood within sociological, psychological, and physiological models.

The sociocultural model assumes that children learn from their immediate environment and from the people who directly contribute to their development, such as their parents and immediate family members. When children experience abuse, neglect, and stress in their home environments, they are unable to develop appropriate coping skills or strategies to deal with future life stressors. In some communities, multiple families lack the knowledge and skills to support their children's emotional and psychological well-being. When this is the case, it becomes more difficult to redress behaviours that have become the community norm. Negative parenting behaviours are replicated by the next generation, and the cycle of trauma renews. Particularly when geographic isolation and social marginalization limits access to new, external parenting models, that cycle remains unaffected and can impact subsequent generations of children.

In a psychological model of intergenerational transmission, the focus is on the importance of a parent's attachment to their child. Their ability to tune into the needs of their child is critical to the child's development of self-regulation. Early infant brain development can be affected if a child's needs are not attended to in a way that helps them develop a sense of security and trust in their immediate environment. Cognitive delays and negative coping strategies could follow, impacting a child's success in school and other social settings, as well as later in life. Whole communities can be affected if this attachment is disrupted for groups of related individuals, and the cycle of psychological trauma could continue to be perpetrated across generations.

Physiological theories focus on predisposed genetic or biological factors to explain the transmission of trauma across generations. Some recent theories

propose that biological risk factors can include "toxic stress" caused by a child's environment. This type of problem can contribute to actual changes in the child's brain development due to abnormal levels of cortisol, dopamine, or serotonin, which can affect a child's future ability to process stressful conditions. This leads to heightened activity levels and can influence concentration and learning abilities. Children dealing with such conditions are described as having limited abilities to self-soothe or regulate their behaviours while under stress. There are also epigenetic theories that suggest maternal stress can impact a child's in-utero development, ultimately affecting the function of their genes. According to these theories, genetic conditions can predispose an individual's negative response to stress, and these conditions can be passed on to future generations.

Irrespective of the method of transmission, intergenerational trauma has had significant impacts on the outcomes of Indigenous people in the Yukon. High levels of unemployment, a disproportionate number of Indigenous people involved in the justice system, high rates of Indigenous homelessness in the Whitehorse center, and poor housing conditions and access to resources in many remote Indigenous communities all share a root cause: Canada's ugly history of racist policies.

The migration of vulnerable Indigenous people to urban centers, **via the historic and ongoing centralization of services,** must be understood within the context of the intergenerational transmission of trauma; within intersecting levels of oppressive forces. The plight of Indigenous people that find themselves at the center of focus in maladaptive coping within the downtown core are not only survivors of residential schools, but disenfranchisement, the loss of cultural identity, economic and social disparity, as well as geographic, systemic, and institutional racism. The problematic behaviours – intoxication, drug use, sexual activity - surrounding 405 Alexander Street impacting the safety of residents and businesses are maladaptive coping mechanisms and survival-based behaviours.

OUR LADY OF WHITEHORSE INDIAN HOSTEL
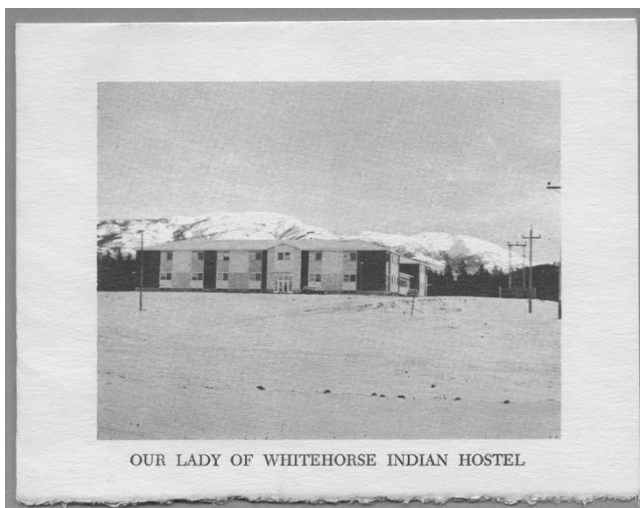
INFORMATION UNDER ANALYSIS – DEMOGRAPHICS OF 405 ALEXANDER STREET

Though little timeline information was available to review, it is clear that the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) was intended for use at 405 Alexander; but the case management modules at the time were not fully implemented. HIFIS is a national information system that helps service providers with their day-today operations and planning activities through easy-to-use software. HIFIS includes features to track and support the management of Housing First activities, and collects data on shelter use to help develop a national portrait of homelessness. In the Whitehorse region, this system would have captured demographic information about vulnerable, precariously housed, or homeless individuals to increase access to peripheral supportive services and streamline case management. At base, this system – if utilized – would also have provided a snapshot of clients facing multiple barriers within Whitehorse at any given time. In the Housing Action Plan for Yukon 2015-2025, HIFIS was earmarked as an option to increase collaboration and effectiveness among housing and/or related service providers (Objective 1.3); and in the 2017 *Safe at Home – A Community-Based Action Plan to **End and Prevent Homelessness in Whitehorse, Yukon*** Report, it was similarly identified in a Key Action to evaluate and ensure it was being utilized for its defined purposes.   Irrespective of whether the tool was identified in 2015 while the Salvation Army had operational control of 405 Alexander; or, if it was intended to roll out with the operational control of Yukon Government, it appears that it was not embraced by operational staff or management.

Where by limited information was provided due to the HFIS not fully implemented more items could have resulted in more information with respect to demographic information that was requested. During staff and client engagement, on-site management was approached regarding access to this valuable demographic information. They explained that while some statistics were kept, they were not digitized, and would require manual data entry and sorting for use.

The only information available at the time of interviews to indicate scale of service usage related to emergency shelter bed utilization – including daily averages of individuals who accessed services; and total number of nights of bed utilization within the month.

Average Individual Clients (emergency shelter beds) - by Month
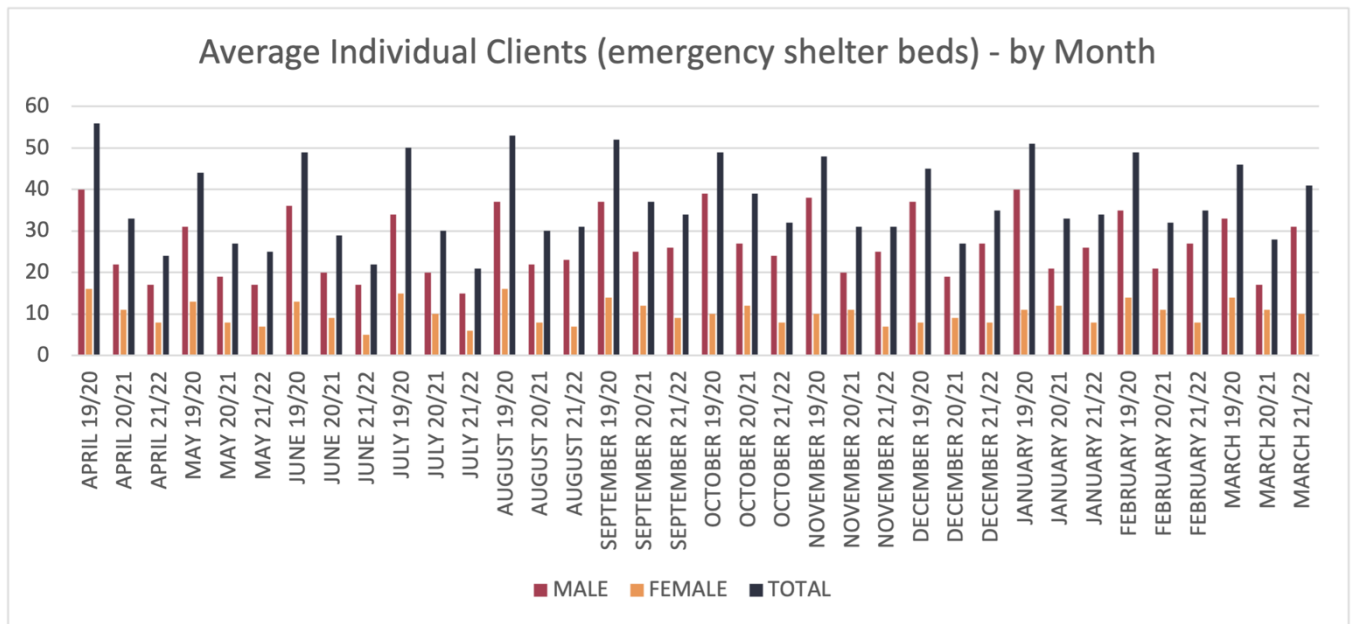
**Note: 2018-19 FY was provided in incomplete format; and only two months with figures – as such, was excluded from trend analysis.*

The proportion of women, and LGBTQ2S+, that utilize the services of 405 Alexander is a self-identified field; as is ethnicity information therefore not easily tracked. Colloquially, and from the information contained within the average daily guest statistics provided, as well as our engagement with the clients of 405 Alexander; it appears that women (or women identifying folk) comprise approximately a third of the population accessing services. With respect to ethnic demographics, while representation proportions are unavailable due to Yukon Government's approach to data gathering, storage, and management; our client snowball sampling method may be extrapolated with some reliability. 41% of client participants identified as First Nations, 65% of whom were from the Yukon Territory. While women, according to daily averages, appear to represent 30% of the client population; within our engagement, they accounted for 46% of the sample.

With respect to trends, we note that average use of shelter beds is trending downwards over the last two years, decreasing by a monthly average of 29% . The number (or proportion) of women (or women identifying folks) proportionally decreased during this time period as well. Analyzing the impact of dynamic variables accounting for the decreased utilization would involve, at least, a regression analysis of "snapshot" precariously housed figures for the City of Whitehorse for commensurate years; as well as examination of detailed compiled end-user statistics from 405 Alexander, both of which are unavailable. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the willingness of people to gather, even within the context of accessing emergency shelter – and barriers in place on gatherings at the shelter for the health and safety of staff and clients – is a further unexplored, and broad, confounding variable. We do note that the monthly trends, with respect to predictable increases, remain stable over the three years examined: emergency shelter bed utilization statistically and predictably decreases (20%) over the spring and summer, and increases in late summer through fall with peaks in October, and January.

THE **COMMUNITY NARRATIVE** LENSE

Between June and July of 2022, House of Wolf & Associates Inc. reached out to the clients of 405 Alexander, as well as staff; and held targeted focus sessions for Key Partners (including representatives of Non-Governmental Agencies providing services to 405 Alexander's clients; as well as representatives from Kw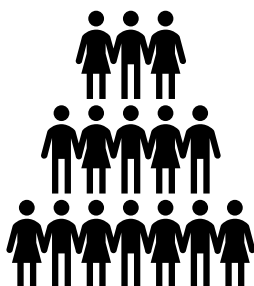anlin Dün First Nation; and Ta'an Kwäch'an Council), and the local Business Community & Neighborhood Residents. Centered within the analysis are the perspectives and trends identified from the clients of 405 Alexander Street: it is their lived experience that is central to understanding the needs within the community, that ripple outwards and impact the lived experiences of safety for businesses and neighborhood residents of Whitehorse.

The format of the engagement for clients and staff was through qualitative narrative interviews. The qualitative or narrative interview was framed by a semi-structured guide; but provided ample opportunity for participants to elaborate, or steer the direction of the interview. These interviews were **semi-structured:** although the particular focus was identified, the questions were open-ended and were not always asked in the exact same way or order to each respondent. The primary goal of the **in-depth interviews** was to hear what respondents thought was important about the topic at hand and to hear it in their own words. The interviews ranged in length from twenty minutes to two hours; were anonymized by the interviewer; transcribed, and subsequently provided to the lead analyst with no identifying information contained therein for emergent trend analysis. This format was chosen to minimize barriers to participation – for clients, we were sensitive to responsivity needs, and wanted to ensure their emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual safety in sharing their experiences and perspectives. Given the low-barrier nature of the 405 Alexander, House of Wolf remained sensitive to varying levels of intoxication, and wanted to ensure that responsive and sensitive approaches to interviews occurred wherein each individual's autonomy and dignity was affirmed. For staff, a group engagement session was not possible, given operational constraints, and to ensure the operations of 405 Alexander remained unencumbered by the work. House of Wolf was very keen to include staff narratives and perspectives, given their exclusion from previous research in the area.

Overall, 42 clients of 405 Alexander (21 men, and 19 women, or women-identifying individuals); and 15 staff participated, providing 1,112 individual responses for analysis. Interviews occurred over 3 days, and 10 hours, with 5 interviewers (30 total hours). Client participants self-identified in response to printed material placed around 405 Alexander; and organic snowballing methods occurred from there. Given the absence of statistical demographic information regarding total number of monthly individuals utilizing services at 405 Alexander, we had difficulty in establishing minimum threshold for validity and reliability – nevertheless, based on supplied monthly averages, a decision was made to err on the side of caution and over sample (e.g. the monthly average individuals representing shelter bed guests for FY20-21 and FY21-22 were

31; 21 male, 10 female). We note that not all participants were actively utilizing shelter-beds; and that 48% reported being daily guests to access meals, and they were homed elsewhere. Similarly, a total staff-count for 405 Alexander was not made available; though provided estimates by on-site management indicated that the total number of frontline staff was 25. Again, House of Wolf decided to over-sample, out of an abundance of caution, to provide generalizable narrative analysis.

The format for engagement with Key Partners, and the Business & Residents communities occurred within group settings. Both groups were solicited for participation by House of Wolf; and organic snowballing again occurred as those contacted brought awareness to their personal network of contacts. One session was held for Key Partners, and two for the Business and Resident community. **These groupings were chosen to minimize the potential for challenges or hostility between parties with divergent needs; and to ensure that clear trends would emerge from dialogue**. We do note that many participants voiced the strong need to have a townhall style engagement session to facilitate dialogue between parties; however, this was beyond the scope of the current work. We highlight this as a need area going forward. The engagement sessions involved thematic small-group diagramming, in response to a series of questions, to elicit perspectives of safety and wellness within the community. Overall, 16 individuals representing 13 NGO's and 1 First Nation government; and 18 individuals representing 8 businesses and 5 neighborhood residents attended these sessions. From these engagements, 582 individual responses have been analyzed for emergent thematic coding.

Interviews were also conducted with representatives of the Business community, and several neighborhood residents to inform the parameters of discussions with groups and clients. The RCMP Whitehorse Detachment also graciously provided interviews to help contextualize, and provide personal experiences, to the datasets interpreted within this report. Subsequent interviews also occurred with City of Whitehorse staff, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and Ta'an Kwäch'an Council to verify and validate emergent theme analysis.

All of the gathered narratives were analyzed first under an Indigenous lens – through the teachings of the medicine wheel, examining the story told within the context of the emotional, spiritual, physical, or mental need presented; followed by a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat Analysis, and finally under emergent theme specificity. Emergent themes are a basic building block of inductive approaches to qualitative social science research and are derived from the lived experience of research participants through the process of coding[1] Emergent theme analysis is the process by which responses are categorized according to these lived experiences; in broader to narrower categories; rather than predetermined trends introduced by the analyst. These were then used to examine and analyze available statistics internally (including what little information was provided by Yukon Government regarding utilization of services at 405 Alexander); and externally, from the RCMP. Previous reports and knowledge regarding needs in the community; including the recent Community Safety Plan (2020) were incorporated to contextualize, and provide a holistic, current snapshot of community needs.

Note:
Indigenous knowledge encompasses three processes: empirical observation, traditional teachings, and revelation. Empirical observation in this context is not based on quantitative inquiry in controlled settings. Rather, Indigenous empirical knowledge is a representation of "converging perspectives from different vantage points over time" in real-life situations and settings[2]. Traditional teachings includes knowledge that has been passed down through generations – that has been safeguarded largely by going underground, being passed by survivors of colonial policies in secret. Traditional

[1] Given, L. M. (2008). Emergent themes. In *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (Vol. 1, pp. 249-249). SAGE Publications, Inc., https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n129

2 Lavallée LF. Practical Application of an Indigenous Research Framework and Two Qualitative Indigenous Research Methods: Sharing Circles and Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods.* March 2009:21-40. doi:10.1177/160940690900800103

teachings survived by being closely guarded; and while they are now necessary to help restore harmony and balance, breaking patterns of secrecy that were adopted to safeguard them is a difficult process for many Nations. Knowledge acquired through revelation, such as dreams, visions, and intuition, is sometimes regarded as spiritual knowledge, which is understood as coming from the spirit world and ancestors. Such knowledge is sometimes called "blood memory" because it is believed that thoughts, beliefs, and actions are conveyed from one's ancestors through the blood. Spiritual knowledge cannot be observed by physical means; therefore, as it cannot be measured or quantified, Indigenous spiritual ways of knowing are often dismissed by Western researchers. Of these three sources of knowledge, one is not seen as more important or more valid than the others in Indigenous society. All are considered equally valid and interconnected. Every effort has been made to incorporate all ways of knowing within this analysis.

The relational nature of Indigenous knowledge keeping acknowledges the interconnectedness of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of individuals with all living things and with the earth, the star world, and the universe. Indigenous knowledge is fluid, nonlinear, and relational. Many Indigenous ways of knowing accept both the physical and the nonphysical realms as reality. In accepting the nonphysical, one must accept that reality cannot always be quantified.

No research is free from bias; from the birth of the topic to the interpretation of the results, the analyst's point of view affects the research[3] An Indigenous Lens approach does not claim to be free of bias or influence – given the interconnected nature of the world. Following from the belief in interconnectedness as outlined above, research cannot possibly be completely objective. Individuals conducting the research are necessarily connected to the individuals being researched, and all concerned are connected to all other living things. Emotions are connected to all mental processes. Every time we think, use reason, and figure, emotion is tied to that process; therefore, it is impossible to be free of emotion and subjectivity in research. The Lead Analyst's research incorporates the values and beliefs of Indigenous communities in its design, methods, and analysis. The interpretation of the Medicine Wheel teachings are from the teachings that Lead Analyst received through the Algonquin, Ojibway, and Cree Nations. These teachings are vast and can take an entire lifetime to understand. The following explanation provided to explain research findings outlines only a small fraction of these teachings.

ANALYSIS

WHOLE GROUP TRENDS

The 53 participants involved in the engagement described above provided 1,694 responses that analyzed under the Emergent Theme coding practice described above. The first level of coding, categorizing responses in accordance with the teachings of the Medicine Wheel.

The medicine wheel is both a symbol and a tool to understand phenomena. It is a circle divided into four quadrants, or segments, which are separate but interconnected. This state of separateness but interconnectedness is sometimes depicted visually with feathers placed between each quadrant and the four quadrants joining in the centre. The colors of the quadrants vary between nations. For instance, the Cree medicine wheel consists of blue, yellow, red, and white, whereas the Ojibway and Algonquin teachings substitute the blue with black.

The circle represents infinite life, whereas the four quadrants can represent teachings such as the four races: black, white, yellow, and red. The teaching here is that all races are equal, all are related, and all are interconnected. The story of one cannot be understood outside of the story of the whole. Another teaching of the medicine wheel concerns health and well-being. Health is the balance between the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual: the four quadrants of the medicine wheel. Health also involves balance with others (family, community), with the environment, and with Mother Earth. Balance is sometimes depicted through interconnecting circles.

The Medicine Wheel teaches us that we have four aspects to ourselves: the physical, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual. Each must be in balance and equally developed in order for us to remain healthy, happy individuals. According to the book "*The Sacred Tree,*" written by Phil Lane, Jr, Judie Bopp, Michael Bopp, Lee Brown and Elders "there are many different ways that this basic concept is expressed: the four grandfathers, the four winds, the four

3 Lavallée LF. Practical Application of an Indigenous Research Framework and Two Qualitative Indigenous Research Methods: Sharing Circles and Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods.* March 2009:21-40. doi:10.1177/160940690900800103

cardinal directions, and many other relationships that can be expressed in sets of four," and "the medicine wheel can be used to help us see or understand things we can't quite see or understand things we can't quite see or understand because they are ideas and not physical objects."

In applying this interconnected analysis to the community and topic at hand – namely, lived experience of safety, and perspectives on community wellness – we identified commonality between all parties: the medicine wheel is out of balance, with significant reported concerns within both Mental and Physical spheres (745, and 559 responses respectively). This was consistent between all 3 groups of participants.

Medicine Wheel - All Groups/Responses (1,694)

Legend: ■ Mental ■ Physical □ spiritual ■ Emotional
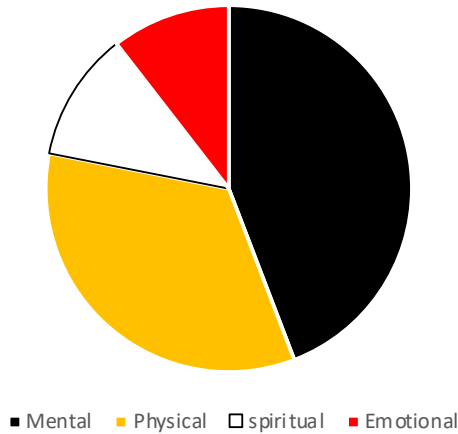
Responses were coded into the Mental category when they encompassed reflections and perspectives on the impacts of interconnected systems – from within 405 Alexander; to peripheral service partners, including treatment centers and detox programs, NGO's, First Nations government services, and formal justice partners such as the RCMP. In one example, a client participant was asked what makes them feel hopeful for their community "*I don't have anything hopeful right now. I'm never anything to hope for right now. I'm just hoping that things will get better. I just heard that CYFN was taking over this program, but maybe it'll be helpful for the First Nations. Hopefully they'll be more counseling and stuff like that. It's so sad to watch everybody just drink to the extent that they're putting themselves [in danger] and not looking after themselves and things like that. It's really sad*" one participant reflected. Within this response, within the first level of analysis, they share their *perceptions* about the social infrastructure available to them, and their peer group*.

Responses coded within the Physical category encompassed responses that directly tied to individuals physical needs, realities, and concerns. In reflecting on their lived experience of safety, and local business owner shared: *"my staff have complained regularly… usually it's people, groups of people drinking, or drugs or whatever, and they'd be hanging out and getting loose or having fun; but my staff would be going to or from their cars, or clients coming in to building.. and people just sort of, come up, and giving them a hard time looking for money and stuff like that. Really it's more uncomfortable stuff.."* reflecting on the experienced safety of his staff and clients interacting with individuals who utilize the 405 Alexander location. Following the first level of categorization; the responses were examined through SWOT analysis – whether the statement reflected on a strength, weakness, opportunity, or threat to the matter under discussion.

2nd Level - Whole Group SWOT Analysis (1,694)

(bar chart: Strength, Opportunity, Weakness, Threat)
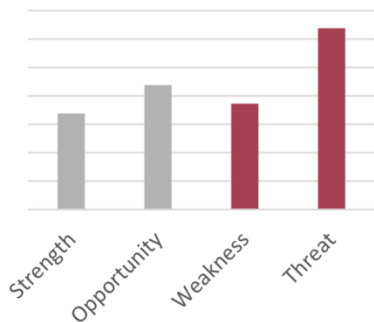
Here again a clear trend was identified – there was a significant pattern in respondents identifying threats and weaknesses within the paradigms of community safety for all three participant groups: 56% of responses indicated a weakness or threat. Within the business owner's response above, the primary level of coding fell within the Physical realm of the Medicine Wheel; the central message was one of a threat to their staff or clients safety and experiences of safety; and in third levels of coding, concerns regarding the congregation – via centralized services – of people engaging in public substance use, loitering, and solicitation.

We note that in examining narratives through an Indigenous lens, and within emergent thematic coding, in line with traditional ways of knowing, all things are related – and there is often significant thematic overlap within responses. For example, contained within this one response during an interview with a staff member, they reflected on factors influencing violence within the community:

"Drug use, drug dealers, we've got a couple of drug dealers living across the street and that makes it harder for sure
[Primary: Physical; Secondary: Threat; Third: Substance Use; Fourth: Crime for Survival].
…A lot of people will say it's the drinking and there is the drinking that will contribute to the unsafe factors but it's also the other things happening in the community [Primary: Mental; Secondary: Threat; Third: Substance Use; Fourth: Access to Resources/Intervention]
…We used to have the Community Safety Officers from Kwanlin Dun come down occasionally and they were great [Primary: Mental; Secondary: Strength; Third: Cultural Representation; Fourth: Access to Resources/Intervention].
… I had them intercept a couple of fights for me out front and they were phenomenal.
[Primary: Physical; Secondary: Strength; Third: Cultural Representation; Fourth: Access to Resources/Intervention].
…I really enjoyed working with them and then covid happened and we don't see them as much as we did the first year …
[Primary: Mental; Secondary: Opportunity; Third: Cultural Representation; Fourth: Access to Resources/Intervention].
… But having a YG security guard here that would not have been beneficial. Someone in a white shirt that sits behind a desk and has no real training would not have been beneficial.
[Primary: Mental; Secondary: Weakness; Third: Violence; Fourth: Access to Resources/Intervention].
… If we could partner with Kwanlin Dun or have some form of Community Safety Officer around here that would help and they're also a great resource to have and have great knowledge. They were a great presence and I wish they would come back,"
Primary: Mental; Secondary: Opportunity; Third: Cultural Representation; Fourth: Access to Resources/Intervention].

Within this staff members response, the primary theme was physical safety and fell within the physical realm of the Medicine Wheel; however, they also shared internal perspectives on efficacy of intervention within their response (mental); they expressed opinions on strengths (cultural interventions), opportunities (leveraging existing program paradigms for access to justice), and weaknesses (traditional western approaches to security), and indicated a need for responsive, culturally appropriate safety interventions for those in crisis.

In examining the impact of the imbalance, we turn to the teaching of the medicine wheel that for health, all aspects of the wheel should be balanced. The reported need and focus on mental and physical aspects of the wheel were significant and focused the subsequent levels of analysis for each participant cohort.

405 ALEXANDER STREET CLIENTS: NARRATIVE TRENDS[4]

Of the 327 responses analyzed, and provided by clients that were categorized as a weakness or threat; clear trends emerged and theme saturation in specificity was reached within the first four levels of coding. Within the third level of analysis, clients identified the need for access to resources as a key weakness within their lived experience,– and often times a direct threat to their safety and wellbeing.

> ## "you're soaking wet, and they don't let you in. … I can't get to my stuff! They are charging 60 bucks for locker. The food Is not being used effectively. … like I just can't put up with this. You know and that's why I'm staying in the tent, [even though] my clothes [are dirty and] I'm hungry."
>
> - *405 Alexander Street, Woman/LGBTQ2S+ Client – reflecting on barriers*

101 individual responses; from 32 of the 42 clients interviewed, indicated that access to resources was compromised– from emergency shelter and safety/crisis interventions, through hygiene and bathroom access, availability of housing programs, availability of detox beds, and access to treatment and programming. These were consistent across genders within the client cohort.

Violence & trust in critical safety services:

"*You should have security here*" one participant noted; later explaining that they had been assaulted on no fewer than five occasions while utilizing emergency shelter space. **31 individual participants raised violence, bullying, and harassment as issues.**

Word Cloud – Four levels of Thematic Coding by frequency of mention with the 405 Alexander St. Client cohort

"…There are people that come around here that are violent and angry and abusing drugs and alcohol. They're trying to get their friends to come down here and start a gang. They beat people up, one day last week there were 12 fights outside. I was scared, I didn't go out the front at all and stayed in the back where there are cameras. There are times when it gets really really bad and it's the same people beating people up and turning people against each other. It is getting better but there are times when I'm scared, I've even told the workers people are supposed to be coming here, people who need the services, we're supposed to feel safe and I don't feel safe."

In discussing access to crisis intervention when they have concerns for their safety, another participant shared their fears in involving RCMP: "*When you call the RCMP you expect the help you need and not getting hauled off. No, I call [the CSOs]*". Concerningly, 14 of 18 Indigenous people interviewed within this cohort expressed fears, perceptions of discrimination, and mistreatment by the RCMP*: "No, I wouldn't call the RCMP. Past experiences and I don't feel safe with them. They tried to beat me up in the past. In cells four of them try to beat me up."* **We are not suggesting or**

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[4] *Views expressed by participants are solely those of the individual, not of CYFN, Connective or House of Wolf & Associates.*

substantiating that the RCMP are purposefully discriminating against or mistreating homeless Indigenous individuals within Whitehorse; we are capturing the stories and perspectives of vulnerable community members. Perception is as damaging in impact as reality. We highlight that this perspective presents as a serious barrier that is damaging to the overall accessibility of critical safety services for an already disproportionately vulnerable group.

RCMP Occurrence Reports – Violence

Violence in any form is harmful to a person's mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. It is particularly damaging to those having already suffered trauma and living in addiction and poverty. In reviewing RCMP provided statistics and analyzing national trends, we note that violence is trending downward, as according to the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics the Violent Crime Severity Index: it declined nationally by 3.6% in 2020. **At the same time however, it rose 9.9% in the Yukon Territory. These statistics are corroborated by the Mayor's Report that stipulates in 2019 and 2020 Crimes against Persons, Crimes against Property, and other Criminal Code violations were increasing in Whitehorse. A fact the residents at 405 Alexander St know very well as Assaults consistently represent the third highest call type to the Shelter. During a 6 month-period, 54 calls were for Assaults; 4 Assaults with a weapon; 2 Assault Police; and 4 Sexual Assaults.**

On one of these occurrences,
"Whitehorse RCMP responded to a call of an Intoxicated, aggressive male at the WES. Members attended and located a male intoxicated inside shelter, yelling at staff. The male was combative with RCMP and a CEW (Taser) was used to safely arrest him and remove him from the WES."

On a separate occurrence,
"RCMP were called to a fight at WES. One male sustained facial injuries, but did not want to cooperate with RCMP."

These incidents highlight not only the violence occurring at 405 Alexander St, but also the mistrust and anger some feel towards the RCMP. After the confirmation of 215 unmarked graves of First Nation children at the Kamloops Residential School in BC, the Mayor's Report notes this news *"was deeply felt in Yukon and at Whitehorse Detachment, where several Residential Schools were in operation and many individuals, families, and communities have been impacted by the trauma of the Residential School program."*

While the RCMP state they have acknowledged their role in the Residential School program, and specifically in the Yukon with respect to delivering children to school, the impact and trauma of Residential Schools continues to be felt daily in the community and is seen in the fractured relationship the community has with the RCMP. Notwithstanding the potential authenticity of the RCMP's attempts to be approachable and build public trust, the Yukon's Indigenous community continues to struggle with the traumatic aftermath of the Residential School program and broken relationship with the RCMP. **The statistics reveal that Assaults at 405 Alexander St are most often cleared by the victim/complainant requesting no further action be taken. This area requires a meaningful exploration of the victim's reasons; mistrust of the RCMP and fear of their attacker are two potential reasons, and redressing these issues requires different approaches.**

Similarly, acquisitive offending complaints within and around 405 Alexander Street were made by 33 of 42 participants – who reported being victimized by other clients. *"Things get stolen out of our own lockers. Why do we even have a locker? They got locks. Yes, but people go into those lockers without the other people behind the desk looking to see if that's the right name. I know a friend of mine, her wallet got stolen $1,800 cash, two bottles, and five packs of smokes. [Another friend's] phone's got stolen out of her locker and they have no way of chasing. They got cameras all over the place. I said why can't you guys just look at the cameras? Like why even have cameras if you guys are going to be like that? How many people got punched out in that foyer and nothing's been done about that."*

We note that in reviewing RCMP occurrence reports, there were no complaints made to the RCMP regarding the lateral violence via acquisitive offending that occurs between clients; suggesting that this area remains a significant need, and potential barrier, for the lived experience of safety within the facility.

Substance use, precarious housing and displacement, treatment/program availability, and harm reduction:

28 of 42 individuals voluntarily acknowledged during their interviews being actively under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Substance use – either their own, or the community's – was raised by each participant as a direct threat to their physical or mental wellbeing by risking overdose or dangerous alcohol detox, or a weakness to their experience of safety by increase violence within and around 405 Alexander Street. *"A lot of people fight here. Finding somebody dead in the bathroom because of drugs. That's what I worry about. You know, I've seen some girls and they're just fucked right up. Like holy shit"* one woman reflected. Those indicating their own struggles with substances reported varying levels of motivation towards change, treatment or sobriety. 11 of 42 individuals indicated that services were made available to them in the realm of substance use treatment that they declined. One participant noted that they were sent out of territory to access residential substance abuse treatment; however, upon return, struggled to manage their sobriety after returning to the shelter to see friends and socialize. At the time of the interview, they were again homeless, unemployed, and struggling with their addiction to alcohol: *"I never drank for like, maybe like, all three years. Then, it got to me and I thought 'man, I lost my job', through alcohol. I went to grade 9 and I skipped all the way. Then I went to ABE and I got accepted for equipment operator and then they took my license away again. I was drinking again. They're trying to put me in detox – no"*. Concerningly, 19 participants – just under half of the sample – indicated that they had attempted to access substance use treatment (primarily detox), but were turned away due to bed space and staffing constraints.

Sober Places & Gathering Spaces

Common among narratives within the client cohort was the draw to 405 Alexander as a place to gather: if not specifically to access shelter resources, then to socialize. Once at the facility, few supervised, structured, or engagement activities are available. 29 participants indicated that there was an absence of recreational or cultural activities or engagements available in the facility and surrounding area. One participant highlighted this phenomenon, and its impact on individuals attempting to control their substance use: *"It's scary because of the drugs and alcohol that are here. I've been sober for 26 years, and I've been always working on myself. And I've always been trying to help other people try to learn how to stay sober and get on with their life. I've been here over a year. I've seen two elders go through detox treatment, and ended up back here. They started drinking. That just breaks my heart. People want to stay sober. After care, that's what we need. What we really need is a place for after they get out of treatment.."* Other participants shared attempts to access cultural programming being cancelled, delayed, or discontinued due to covid – and recreational opportunities being few. The importance of recreational opportunities cannot be understated in a holistic wellness and intervention model; as demonstrated by one participant sharing that the highlight of their week was being able to play bingo.

30 participants raised concerns regarding housing, affordability, and displacement. Hotels have been providing interim housing solutions in the off-season for years; however, with COVID-19 restrictions easing and travel recommencing throughout the region, precariously housed individuals are being priced out of accommodations – often in shockingly abrupt ways. One woman impacted shared *"I'm living in a tent. I was at the Riverview [and] they come into our room. They came straight in. We had half an hour to get to out, somebody stole my new tote, because we had our door open and it had all my clothes in there. They stole the whole thing and our food."* When individuals also have pets, the displacement from hotels restricts their ability to access emergency shelters and results in their movement to tent encampments.

Participants that reported having housing noted that due to cost of living and fixed incomes, they faced significant food security concerns and accessed meal programs through the shelter; which also exposed them to violence, disorder, and substance use that compromised their ability to maintain their sobriety *"My husband and I get just enough to manage to make it through. Plus we are borrowing money but we have to pay that back which is you know is stressful. We go to the food bank. I can choose you know, for us to eat, and we eat here. Unfortunately. When we*

[try to stay sober], it's hard. I get every kind of food I can. We will be staying in an RV soon and get the hell out of this. We will still come down here for lunch."

Given capacity constraints in accessing treatment beds, cyclical displacement of vulnerable people, the low-barrier and centralized services approach to management of 405 Alexander Street, and the commensurate lack of structured programming or recreational opportunities; the need to meet clients where they are at was evident throughout the narrative analysis. Access to harm reduction supplies and services was affirmed by 52% of client respondents.
"…Some people aren't ready to quit on their terms. I think you should let people do it when they're ready to. People tell me to quit and I tell them I'll quit when I'm ready to and I'm not ready to right now."

Gender based risk:

In further examining thematic specificity relating to threats and weaknesses in access; we noted that clear trends emerged that had significant gendered analysis implications. Women, and women identifying clients were more likely to indicate concerns regarding violence, sexual violence; access to places that were safe or sober to gather for social connection, unmet needs in mental health and trauma treatment; and the need for simple dignity in accessing hygiene facilities (bathrooms) – particularly after hours.
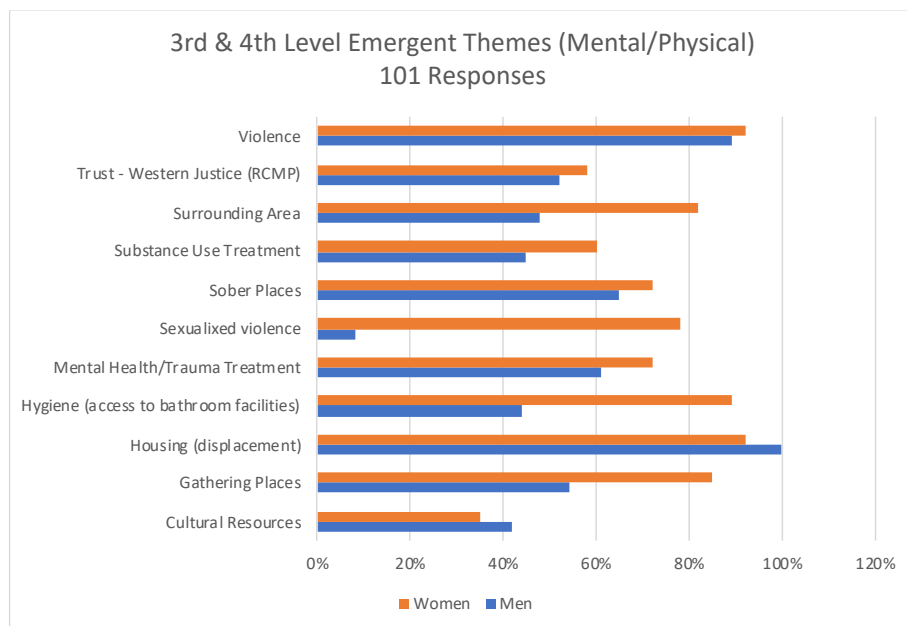

Figure 2: Emergent Theme Analysis; Client Cohort; Gendered Differences. Note that proportions indicate number of occurrences in narrative by individual participants, differentiated by gender, wherein the response was coded as a strength or weakness within the mental/physical realms.

When asked if they felt the services, as they presently exist within 405 Alexander were adequate, a woman noted

"Sometimes, sometimes not. When they used to let everyone stay here and now they don't, it's the Whitehorse emergency shelter. You can't even come here to eat after 4, they should open it for everyone for dinner too because not everyone can make it to the family hotel. They kicked me for 9 days but that was my fault. I would've preferred to help plant flowers and help with the gardening, like a probationary things."

While this client did not share the circumstances of her temporary ban from the Shelter – the impact of such exclusion on a homeless Indigenous woman, made more vulnerable by addiction and desperation, is incredibly dangerous. This client shared that because she struggles with her sobriety, while she was open to Detox there were no beds available; and she could not access the Women's emergency shelter given her ongoing substance use. She was effectively forced to navigate precarious and dangerous circumstances for places to sleep, exponentially increasing her risk of violent or sexual victimization.

Women, and women identifying participants, disproportionately – at a 40% increase - cited the indignity of being denied toilet facilities after 4:30PM. *"And at night someone has to pee or take a shit and they're not allowed inside so people pissing and shitting right outside. Not because they're bored, because it's after hours. …For someone to have to defecate outside is hard. That can be changed. Escort them to the bathroom. "*

Of the 19 women/women identifying participants within the client cohort; 16 indicated that they had concerns for their safety within, and around, 405 Alexander. *"No, I don't feel safe here… I hang around with my boyfriend and stay with him because I feel safe around him"* one woman noted when explaining her decision to reside in a tent,

instead of the shelter. Another participant reflected on the link between alcohol use and violence:
"I don't [feel safe], I don't know if the others do. There's always drama drinking".

Another explained "***I don't like it here. [The staff] don't see [outside], but they're [the men] grabbing at me. They grab my breasts and butt; and it scares me. I got nowhere to go, and they kick me out at night [if I'm not staying in the shelter]. It's scary. I wish they would let me stay***"

> *Indigenous women and girls experience increased vulnerability to gender-based violence due to specific barriers to safety; in fact, the rate of self-reported sexual assault among indigenous women is almost three times as high as the rate among non-indigenous women. While there are high rates of violence at 405 Alexander St, the gendered violence experienced by women is particularly distressing. In one such occurrence in November 2020, staff reported to the RCMP that a woman was sexually assaulted by a male while she was unconscious. A few months later, a female was assaulted in the alley behind 405 Alexander St; A male was identified at the Shelter the next day, arrested and charged with Sexual Assault. These are only a few examples of the terrifying lived experiences of women at 405 Alexander St*

Narrative Strengths & Opportunities identified:

Strengths & Opportunities - 405 Alexander Clients

■ mental □ physical ■ spiritual ■ emotional
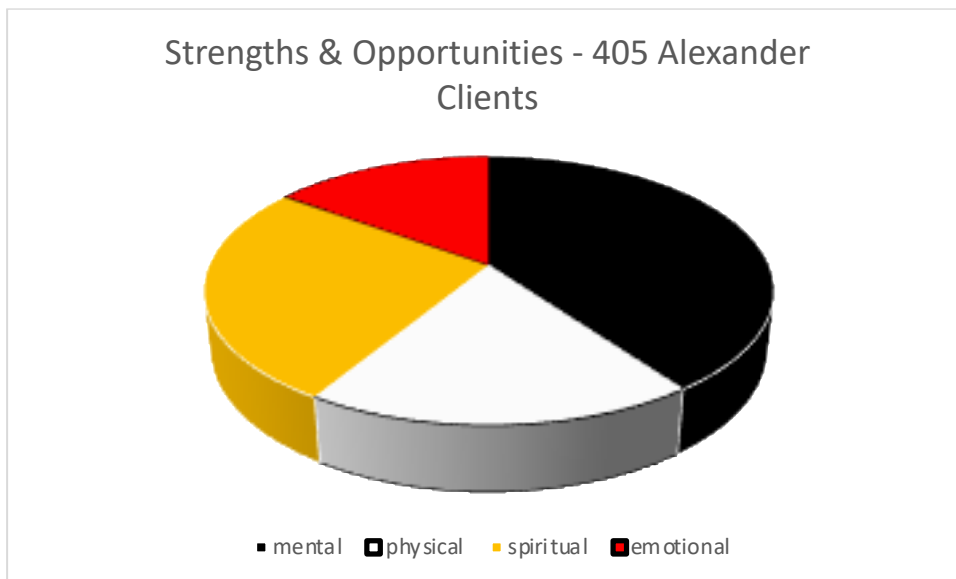
Within the narrative analysis, 320 individual responses were classified as strengths, and 415 as opportunities.

Clients consistently identified staff at 405 Alexander – the relationships they had developed with them – as a strength of the services available within the facility: *"I stay in contact with all of the workers here. Sometimes they'll come up to me and talk to me and let me know they care and I like that".*

Another client noted that these relationships help link to available resources: *"There's a lot of good staff members, easy to talk to. If I have a problem I can approach them, no problem with that. … They offer services you just got to talk to staff and they'll point you in the right direction,"* helping bridge individuals facing barriers to available services. The human approach was affirmed by another client, who was adamant in making the interviewer understand ***"We just want dignity and respect; we're people. We just need a little help. I don't know how to put it simpler than that."***

In emergent theme analysis; we saw that primary strengths within the client population related to **connection to place, a strong sense of community, and relationships**. Access to cultural resources – such as "Colleen's" often quoted beading and crafting programs that were available sporradically over the years; and on-the-land opportuntiies within KDFN programming; were mentioned consistently in the narrative analysis with high levels of importance attributed by clients (87% of strengths within Spiritual realm).   Responses identified as opportunities closely mirrored these emergent themes; in addition to clients identifying **stable housing** as a primary physical opportunity to increase experiences of lived wellness *"Once a person..has their own space and they can get away from everything, I bet you 9 times out of 10 people cut down on the boozing and the anger and stuff like that. Because they have some place to go to get away from everyone and all the problems and the have the space to deal with their problems."*
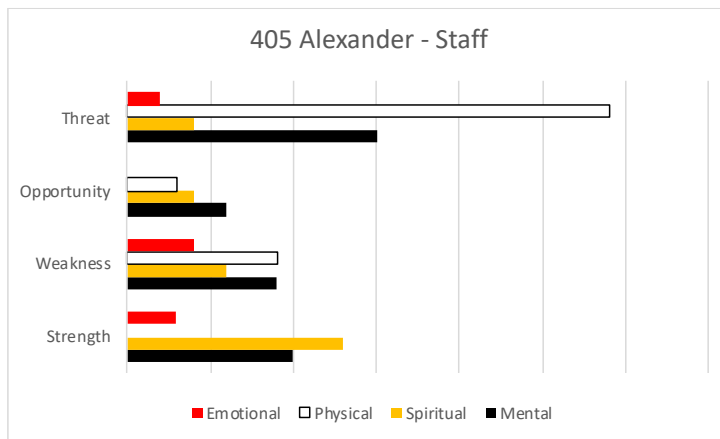
405 ALEXANDER STREET STAFF: NARRATIVE TRENDS [5]

The front-line staff at 405 Alexander Street are the heart of operations – their commitment to their clients and community was palpable throughout the engagement process.

"I know I've saved lives. I know by the fact that I'm here and the decisions I've made about bringing people in; how I've talked to them, how I've gotten them to go to sleep. It has saved lives. And so it doesn't get much better than that…"

Staff were identified as a strength in the client narrative; and their passion for their work, the wellbeing and safety of their clients, and the emotional strength and resilience that they bring to their work was clearly demonstrated throughout the dataset. **In an analysis of strengths within this narrative data set; staff belief in their mission, the relationships they build in supporting vulnerable clients – and one another – was very clearly reflected.**

In examining the first two levels of trend analysis, we again see an unbalanced wheel; though for staff, spiritual and mental responses heavily dominated the data set (69%); however, in further examination over the third and fourth levels of narrative analysis, we see mirrored trends with the client cohort. In essence, what presented as physical concerns for the clients of 405 Alexander Street, presented as mental and spiritual threats and weaknesses for staff. **The strain between need and availability of resources; the consistent exposure to violence, trauma, and suffering; compounded by publicity and public scrutiny with respect to 405 Alexander Street and its surrounding areas are a significant concern for staff capital, wellbeing – and retention.**

405 Alexander - Staff

Legend: Emotional, Physical, Spiritual, Mental

The mental, spiritual, and emotional struggle that staff experience in being unable to meet the extraordinary, and often public, expectations placed on them, presented as a significant threat within the narrative. 14 of 15 staff raised issues in this realm: 13 of 15 highlighted concerns regarding pressures on the facility in light of housing displacement, substance use rates within the community, treatment and recreational/cultural program availability – coupled with instability in governance and direction:

"It's very difficult to attain any goals as we're always uncertain if we'll have jobs, who'll be running the place is always an underlying uncertainty. I don't put this on any person but this place has very little oversight and I feel we are tremendously under supported. I could deal in a day with 8 people who are suicidal, I could deal with 3 people being sexually assaulted, I deal with folks who are coming literally bleeding, vomiting, having been assaulted through violence, I also see people sitting in urine, feces from their inabilities to get enough support for their addictions, substance use. I see people who have no housing who have children, I see people waiting on housing lists for 6 months to a year. I see people overdosing, I've been in many overdose situations, I've seen at least 45 people in the community die since being here with very little support for clients or staff when that happens."

Investing into staff wellbeing – as well as training, staffing levels, and effective partnerships with other service providers to ease and share the burden of expectation on 405 Alexander Street staff, is a primary unspoken need within this cohort.

Housing Crisis & Displacement; Substance use, Treatment/Program availability & Harm Reduction;

"As we know [a] primary need is short term housing and unfortunately, we don't have an answer. Right now, we are the only answer."

Staff presented as keenly aware of the impossibility – and complexity – of the housing crisis within Whitehorse; and 12 staff members discussed the displacement of an estimated 200 people as hotels increased rates for peak tourist seasons. All 12 staff members that focused on housing program availability noted wait lists, and both soft and physical infrastructure design (and operational management) and physical planning problems that impacted efficacy of programs. In referencing the Challenge Cornerstone building, one staff member noted "…*From what I hear from clients it's already problematic. There's already a lot of partying happening in the building. They're going to have one sober floor but not enforcing it. There seems to be so much potential for things but it seems to be very misguided. To have a new housing opportunity right beside a detox centre becoming a party house is just baffling to me and I see these kind of things all over the city. What are we going to call it? Bad city planning? Corruption? Housing Crisis? It's so many things and I think there are some poor planning, some of it's a bit insidious. When we see problems arising in Whitehorse we're slow to fix them. Having a school across from a sex shop across from a liquor store across from the shelter is all really poor planning."*

Staff presented as acutely aware that they were often the final, and only, viable option to intervene with people in crisis who require housing: *"…Right now …the shelter is the be all, end all, because people have been to other organization. And through no fault of their own because of the complexity of their mental health they have exhausted all the resources, [other organizations] put their hands up 'this person's difficult, we don't want to deal with them'. The shelter's the last resort,* **we have individuals who have been barred from detox,"** one staff member explained, highlighting the frustration with inefficiencies within overlapping systems, and being left as the final intervention when people's access to treatment via other avenues are blocked. Another staff member lamented the over-reliance on the shelter as housing by a variety of other communities when they send citizens to access services in Whitehorse; sharing the example of a client in their 80's who was sent to Whitehorse to access medical treatment on a bus with the intention of staying at the shelter. They had mobility and hearing issues, and upon arrival, fell into active substance use, and failed to both access their medical intervention – and return home.

"More supports, we need more supports. With only one treatment centre and one detox centre it's hard. There's no beds half the time at detox. **With treatment they go to do the program and they end up here or around the area because there's no housing or this is where their friends or family are***."*

Yukon News recently covered this phenomenon, noting from interviews with Safe at Home's Executive Director that there are no places for people to be housed in sober environments; even after completing detox or treatment; unless they access private accommodations through the open market system. The cost of the private housing system is out of reach for those collecting social assistance – often the financial reality for those stabilizing following active addiction (Crawford, L., [2022, June 11]. Yukon News.)

Sober Places & Gathering Spaces

Staff also highlighted that the facility is a draw for individuals to connect and socialize with others; which compromises people's steps in early sobriety. Due to the nature of the building's low barrier approach, many people engage in substance use – within, and surrounding, the facility. Those attempting to reduce or control their consumption of drugs or alcohol face an uphill battle: their need to connect with others, socialize, and engage in community brings them in close physical and emotional proximity with those actively consuming substances, compromising their sobriety. One staff noted that an individual had been providing the bulk of cultural and

recreational programming; however, staff shortages due to COVID-19, as well as the low-level of staffing, highly complicates this as it removes a necessary resource off the front line in the operational management of the shelter. Another staff reminisced about the times before COVID – when a dedicated staff person managed recreational/social programming, and would take clients out on the land, or to Lumel Studios – and how popular that was with the clients. According to this staff person, the impact of COVID-19 cannot be understated; though neither can the instability in staffing at the front-line and management level in diminishing the availability of this style of resource to provide safer gathering spaces for clients. All 15 staff commented on the need for continued harm-reduction approaches; one noting that people were often dropped in front of the doors while experiencing overdose as the surrounding community knew that staff within the building were trained to administer naloxone.

9 staff noted the difficulty in managing client's safety as it relates to predatory practices of drug dealers who see the Shelter's draw as a ripe economic opportunity. *"Staff can't look out for 60 to 100 people a day. We don't have eyes in the back of our head."*

Violence, Critical Safety Services and Gendered Risk:

All 15 staff presented as concerned about the level of emotional, physical, and sexual violence within the building – as well as the significant barrier this introduces to people in accessing critical safety services. One staff member reflected *"Some of these guys are traumatized, we lost one guy this spring, he slept on the streets and the elements got him, he died of exposure because he chose not to come here. To get him to sleep in a room with other people it was traumatizing. His exact words were 'no one's going to corn hole me'. "* When asked directly, none of the 15 staff interviewed indicated they believed their clients felt safe while accessing services. 13 of 15 specifically cited gendered risk – and the lack of space for women, or women who were the primary caretakers of children, to access safe services. Further, it was noted by 8 staff members that they believed women were also less likely to access services via the shelter due to fears of further criminalization or stigmatization, especially in circumstances where they were the primary caregivers for children.

Staff intervening in violent situations was also noted as dangerous – as 3 of 15 staff members reported being assaulted within the workplace by clients under the influence. Calling in outside help via police was affirmed; however, with mixed results: 9 of 15 staff members shared that the response by Whitehorse RCMP was inconsistent. *"**Sometimes we're calling the RCMP a hundred times a day**. Depends on the day and how you react to the situation. If you don't handle it the right way then something's going to happen so there's a possibility that anything could happen. I know a few times we have an aggressive people throwing punches and we call the RCMP and they don't come. I get they have higher priorities but I have 15 people out here in danger including my staff. If they don't feel it's a threat coming from their point of view versus ours its disturbing, first of all they're letting it happen while we're reaching out for help. How much longer do we have to contain the situation? We don't know because the level of violence is not taken seriously. But we could be putting up with someone throwing punches or wanting to commit suicide, number of things, sometimes it's tough"* one staff member explained. The need for proactive, culturally sensitive and on-site interventions was consistently affirmed, with 10 of 15 staff members referencing KDFN's Community Safety Officer program as a model they believed should be emulated.

"There are people who'll come in here who are young and naive and people will prey on them and get them onto drugs and alcohol. I see them going through each other's pockets sometimes. This is just what I'm seeing and you put a stop to it but how many of them are missing? A lot of that happens in these spaces. "

RCMP Occurrence Reports – Calls for Service

For the purposes of this report, Quarterly and Year in Review "Chief's/Mayor's Policing Reports" were analyzed covering the time-period from January 1, 2019 to March 31, 2022. While each one consistently provided calls for service totals and some notable occurrences, the information contained within the reports has already been processed by the author; this complicates the ability to provide a complete data analysis and compromises analysis integrity. While full source data was not available for review, Whitehorse RCMP provided some additional calls for service and occurrence data related to 405 Alexander St. The following calls for service information is based on the Mayor's Reports of total calls for service to the Whitehorse RCMP Detachment.

The Whitehorse Detachment serves almost 80% of the Yukon's population and while the geographical boundaries are vast, most calls for service occur in the downtown core where 405 Alexander St is located. In 2020 alone, over 1,300 calls for service were from the Shelter itself with hundreds of related calls being generated in the immediate area at different addresses, and frequently involving the same individuals. Comparative calls for service data for 405
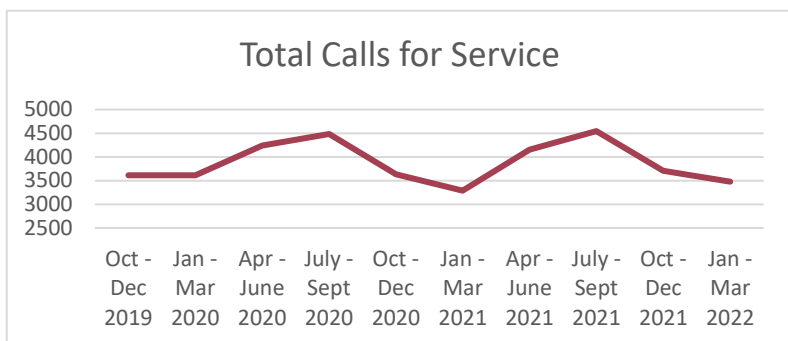
Alexander St and the downtown core was available for July 2021 to March 2022 and indicated that **405 Alexander St consistently represents 10% or more of all calls in the downtown core; a disproportionate number of requests for police attendance at a single location compared to the population in the area**.

Calls for service in all policing areas generally rise in the spring, peak in the summer months, and decline to their lowest points in winter as evidenced in the total calls for service for the Whitehorse Detachment. This pattern coincides with community activity levels, as more people are active in the warmer months. Calls at 405 Alexander St were also following this trend until a marked departure in July 2021 onward due to a COVID-19 outbreak that saw
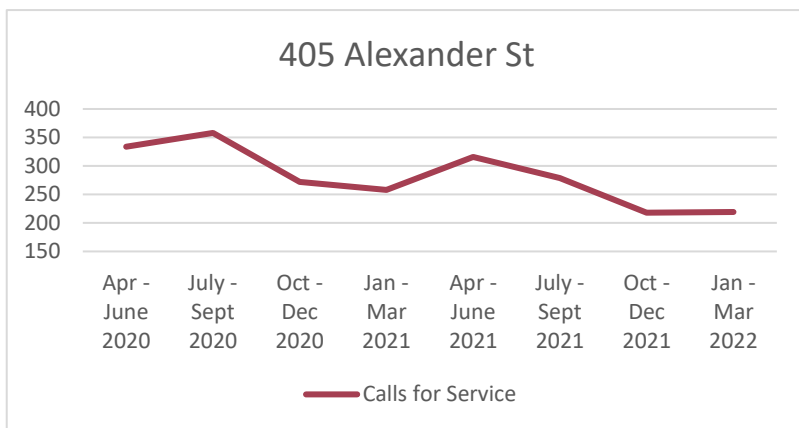
services reduced. During this time, it is reported that calls for service jumped at the Self-Isolation facility residents were accommodated at; leading to the conclusion, the issues experienced by the residents of 405 Alexander St continued to require police intervention and were only displaced due to the outbreak. Currently, 405 Alexander St remains a focused area for calls for service and actual reported crime demonstrating the vulnerability of residents due to trauma, addiction, and poverty.

The following chart illustrates the call types at 405 Alexander St for a three-year period covering April 1, 2019, to March 31, 2022.

By far the highest call type is consistently Causing a disturbance; defined as being in or near a public place and fighting, screaming, shouting, swearing, or using insulting or obscene language; being drunk or impeding/obstructing others. Mischief, which is the damaging of property is second, and thirdly is Assaults (all-except sexual).

3-year summary calls for service

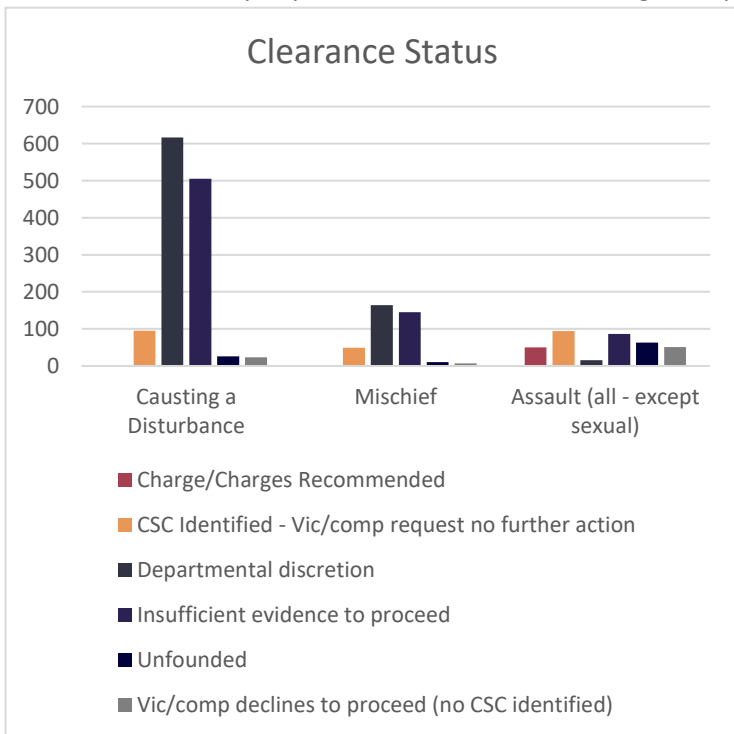| Call type	
Causing a disturbance 42.7%	
Mischief 12.7%	
Assault (All - except sexual) 12.1%	
Assist public or other agencies 5.4%	
Breach/Fail to comply with conditions 4.2%	
Mental Health Act - Other Activities 4.2%	
Uttering threats (All) 3.8%	
Theft/Fraud (All) 3.5%	
Liquor Act (Provincial/Territorial) 2.9%	
Check Wellbeing 2.7%	
Other Provincial/Territorial Statutes 0.9%	
False Alarms/Abandoned 911 0.9%	
Other - Non Criminal 0.9 %	
Other - Criminal Code 0.8%	
Sexual Assault 0.6%	
Operation while impaired (alcohol) 0.6%	
Drugs Possession/Trafficking 0.6%	
Firearms/Weapons 0.4%	

■ 2021 ■ 2020 ■ 2019

In reviewing the clearance status of these calls, an interesting pattern emerges. Cause disturbance and Mischief were most often cleared by departmental discretion, while Assaults were least often cleared this way.

When cleared by departmental discretion, a chargeable person is known, however, police decide not to lay a charge; for example, the person is given a warning, caution, or referral to a community-based program (not diversion). It appears the RCMP are less likely to pursue charges for these offences at 405 Alexander St, notwithstanding their ability to do so. Whereas when the offence involves violence towards another person, the occurrence is most often cleared by the victim requesting no further action be taken. In these cases, it is the victim/complainant electing not to pursue charges. Therefore, when the situation involves a person's physical safety, the RCMP are least likely to use their own discretion not to pursue charges.

Clearance Status

(Bar chart showing clearance status for Causing a Disturbance, Mischief, and Assault (all - except sexual))

- ■ Charge/Charges Recommended
- ■ CSC Identified - Vic/comp request no further action
- ■ Departmental discretion
- ■ Insufficient evidence to proceed
- ■ Unfounded
- ■ Vic/comp declines to proceed (no CSC identified)

Interestingly, drug related offences account for less than one percent of all calls to 405 Alexander St while during this time Whitehorse was experiencing an increase in drug related violations.

Illegal drugs or substance use are not new to Canada or the Yukon Territory. However, the opioid crises have had devastating effects on individuals and families, particularly those from vulnerable populations struggling with mental health, trauma, and addiction. In 2017, approximately 11 lives were lost each day because of opioid overdoses. Many occurrences in Whitehorse are indicative of the increase in the mid-level drug trade that targets some of the Yukon's most vulnerable persons.

The following chart compares Drug Enforcement Violation group offences in Whitehorse from April 1- September 30 for 2019 and 2020.

These statistics reveal a marked increase in all drug violation groups from 2019 to 2020. Trafficking increased by 29%; Production increased by 100%; Possession increased by 65%; and other drug related enforcement violations increased by a staggering 360%.
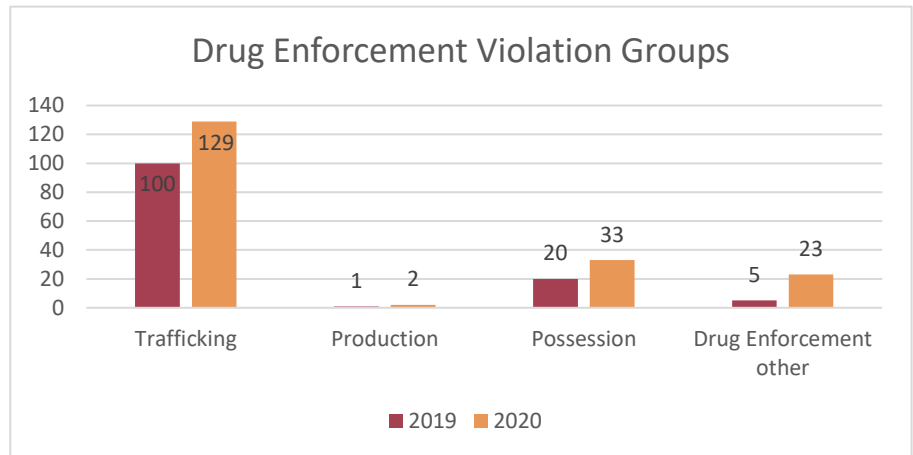
The experiences of the residents at 405 Alexander St reveals the damaging effects of the drug trade and the opioid crisis. During a six-month period from October 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021, there were 25 well-being checks, many of them for opioid overdoses where the RCMP arrived before EMS and administered Naloxone (Narcan). This situation highlights the fact that while drug offences were increasing throughout Whitehorse, they remain a small part of the criminal offending at 405 Alexander. Instead, it is the downstream negative effects of the drug trade that affects the lives of the residents.

In fact, drug, and liquor related offences together account for only 4.1% of all calls to 405 Alexander St. These statistics are a very mis-leading representation of the volume of substance use present. Drugs and alcohol lower inhibitions and while they are not prevalent in the specific violations recorded, they are a factor in many of the occurrences at the Shelter. **Police data indicates that over the three-year period reviewed, drugs and/or alcohol were involved in 40.1% of occurrences**, indicating they play a much higher role in residents' behaviours than the occurrence type alone suggests.

KEY PARTNER & STAKEHOLDER NARRATIVE TRENDS:

Key Partners & Stakeholders - Medicine Wheel

■ Mental ☐ Spiritual ■ Physical ■ Emotional
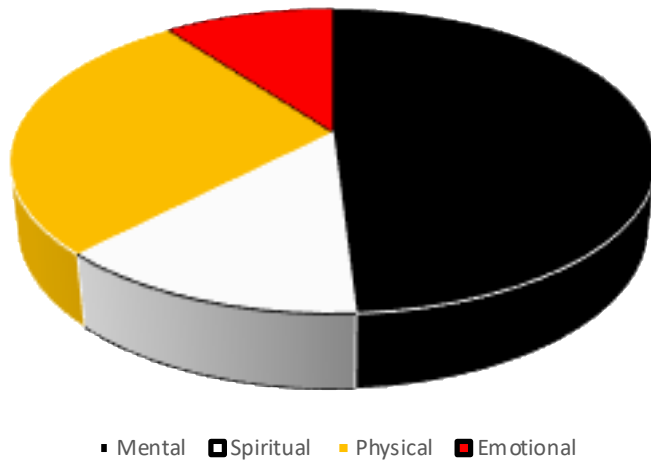
The key partners & stakeholders cohort engaged in thematic diagramming within the context of perspectives on safety and wellness within the community. One engagement session was held (3.5 hours), with 16 individuals in attendance; representing 1 local First Nation government; and 13 Non-Governmental Organization partners. In addition, interviews (3.5 hours) with the RCMP occurred to flesh-in details as a key partner agency.

Within this group, the primary responses were coded within the Mental realm of the Medicine wheel (49%); with Physical needs coming in second (28%). As a byproduct of the nature of the engagement, participants were asked to brainstorm responses to a series of questions, and categorize them within small groups into the first level of emergent themes; following which, they were analyzed based on their presentation of a strength (20%), weakness (19%), opportunity (23%), or threat (37%); and finally, in the third level of analysis saturation in emergent theme was reached.

Within the dataset, the responses heavily (56.9%) skewed towards weaknesses and threats, and similar to the whole group analysis, within the mental and physical realms. In examining participant supplied themes, we see continuations of trends from the client, and staff, cohorts.

Participant Identified Themes - Weaknesses & Threats

■ Threat ■ Weakness
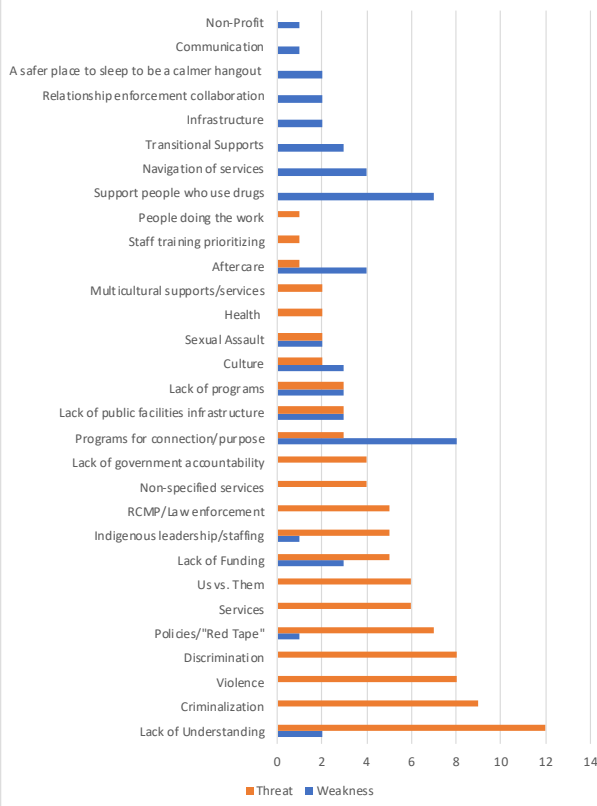
Key partners indicated – in their own categorical analysis – that key threats included **lack of understanding**. More specifically, managing expectations, not using or implementing existing plans, and ignorance regarding procedures for each service provider for the 405 Alexander Street demographic client presented as tangible threats. **Specifically, they identified that a lack of understanding regarding the history of Indigenous people in Canada, and the Yukon – including the transmission of intergenerational trauma, was a significant public perception barrier.** *This is similar to Clients identifying Access to Resources as a key mental and physical barrier. There was noted overlap in analysis from the key themes that inefficiencies (and red tape) within the system resulted in the 405 Alexander Staff's experiences of being the last-stop for Whitehorse's most vulnerable people.*

Like the previous two cohorts, all individual participants within this cohort raised violence as a key issue within the demographic; with special concern for sexualized and gender based violence (13 respondents; 72% of responses coded within the broader violence category also identified sexualized and gender based violence as a key threat).

These two factors, in subsequent layered analysis and input from the RCMP, have intersecting levels of oppression and exposure to risk for women. In a hypothetical example, in circumstances where a woman is victimized within her home, and access intervention – when the aggressor cannot be located, and it is not safe for her to remain within the home; few options exist for her immediate safety. If she is under the influence, she is unable to access resources through the women's shelter; and she may refuse, given the reputation of 405 Alexander, to access emergency shelter resources. Few options remain within this scenario for the RCMP; and appear to result in inflated short term incarceration (Adult Processing Unit) figures for Women – and particularly indigenous women – within Whitehorse. We note that this is a rock-and-hard place situation for attending officers, wherein the mandate to protect the safety of vulnerable women clashes with the availability of resources, resulting in the systemic discriminatory impact on vulnerable women.

> *We note that the RCMP Whitehorse Detachment indicated they were conducting an internal report on the demographic use and gendered implications of the Arrest Processing Unit, and while this report was unavailable for review and inclusion – should be sourced, and included as an addendum once completed.*

The Key Partner/Stakeholder cohort further identified the criminalization of survival based behaviours and discrimination as direct threats to this population – insofar as they present as mental barriers to at-risk individuals in seeking harm reduction, intervention or crisis services. One participant noted that *"…women… are less likely, when they have children, and addiction, or other barriers… to access or feel safe coming in to access services at [405 Alexander]".*

With respect to key weaknesses in participant identified themes; the group identified the lack of programs available to individuals for connection and purpose – *paralleling the client's identification of lack of gathering spaces/sober places; and staff's laments regarding lack of programming*. They further noted that weaknesses in programs (and accessibility), and gaps in aftercare, were key contributors to the dysfunction and safety issues that are prevalent in the downtown core area surrounding 405 Alexander Street.
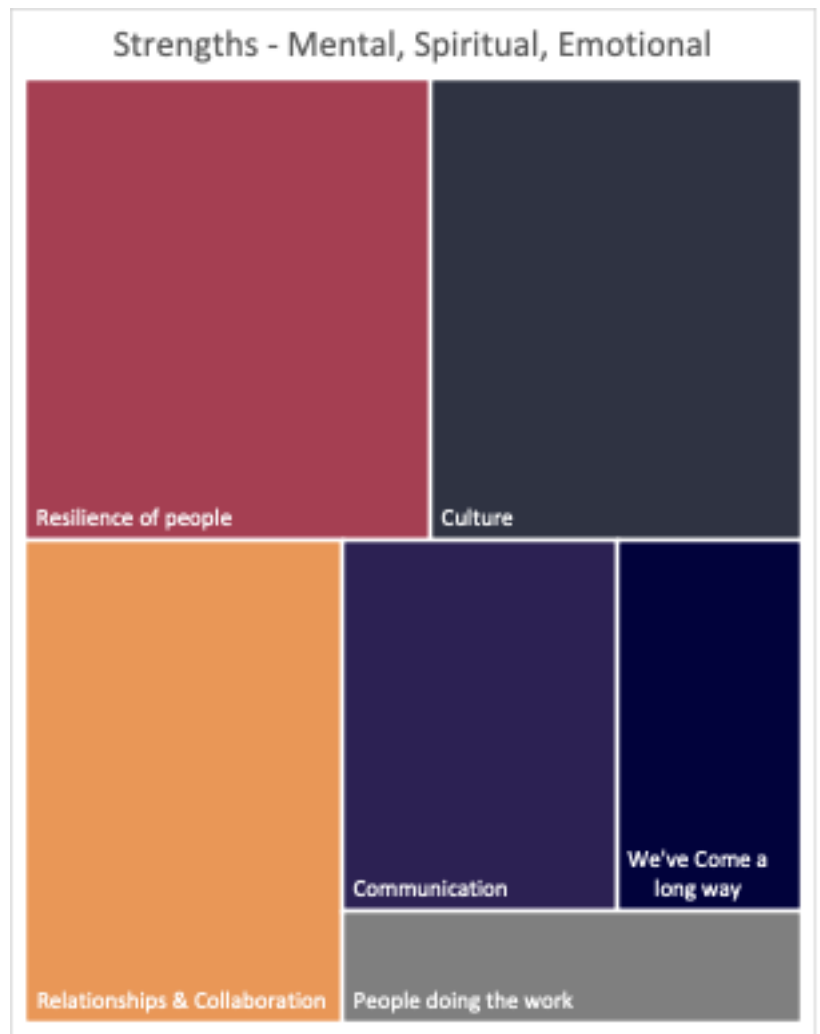
In the subsequent levels of analysis; we note that participant responses – within their own identified themes, had several layers of categorical specificity. Within the Mental and Physical realms; primarily in threats and weaknesses, we highlight that key partners providing services to the client demographic of 405 Alexander Street identified the same key narrative trends from the Clients, and Staff, cohort – through a slightly different lens. Contextualized within the key Client & Staff identified themes of Sober Places/Spaces; Housing Crisis & Displacement; Substance use, Treatment/Program availability & Harm Reduction; and the Staff identified theme of divergent expectations and internal capacity, two key subgroups emerged from the Key Partner & Stakeholder subgroup:

- *Compromised capacity* 72% of coded responses; and *Conflicting Needs*; 64% of coded responses
    - Funding concerns resulted in patchwork and inconsistent access to programs ("*Throwing minimal money at NGO's and expecting them to solve [everything]"*), which impacted program availability, as well as staff retention and capacity (*"staff turnover creates safety issues for users"*)
    - The lack of Indigenous representation in front-line and management positions; and availability of cultural programs was identified as a key weakness in current service provision by 12 of 16 participants within the cohort. Similarly, a key barrier identified was the difficulty and confusion for the key partner group in identifying responsibilities that Yukon's First Nations hold to supporting their citizens that are marginalized or facing multiple barriers within the downtown core.
    - Political red tape (*"..too many steps for approval [in operationalizing programs]"*), redundancy in service provision due to funding partner parameters *("The funding environment forces competition because of multiple similar services…[this leads] to duplicated services"*), and inefficiency between overlapping service providers (*"…[we have] fragmented systems"*) were identified as a significant threat to trust in governance by end-users and between service providers, and a barrier to efficient access to services ("*Lack of trust in institutions…" "…lack of trust and too many disconnects"*)
    - Lack of safe gathering spaces for women, gender-diverse folks, and those leaving substance use treatment programming to support their recovery (*"[we need] safe spaces for women and gender diverse folks…" "…[people are looking for] belonging and connection and casual conversation" "…[we need] place[s] to be a calmer hang out"*)

- o Affordable Housing shortages; management of all-social or low-barrier housing within centralized delivery models; displacement as hotels increase prices during tourist season (*"…hotels evicting people with no notice"*); environmental infrastructure planning issues (*"…liquor off sales right next to the shelter"*); and climate-related impacts (*"…landslides… and nowhere safe for people to camp"*) were noted as significant variables increasing the risks to vulnerable people (*"…homelessness increases risk for sexual assault"*), and to the increasing congregation within the Whitehorse downtown core.
- o Striking balance between low barrier approaches and the needs of the population for similar programs with emotional, physical, and spiritual protection was highlighted by service providers; as was the pressure of managing optics around low-barrier services (*"…risk/liability optics trumps people's [needs],"*). Similarly, a middle ground between low and high-barrier spaces; including sobering houses to fill the gap between detox, the shelter, and the Arrest Processing Unit.

In examining **strengths and opportunities**; we note that similar trends emerged; wherein human capital and relationships were the primary thematic category (resilience of people; relationships & collaboration; people doing the work; 74% of overall responses) within participant identified grouping.

A revitalization and appreciation of **Indigenous culture** was also highlighted by the key stakeholders as a significant strength; as well as the largest opportunity for impactful development to increase the lived experience of safety – via access to meaningful resources – for the vulnerable people of Whitehorse. Further, **communication** was highlighted as an opportunity: to build cohesion, bridge gaps in service provision between stakeholders, and combat frustration-based public perceptions of the survival based behaviours of 405 Alexander Street clients.

Strengths - Mental, Spiritual, Emotional

Resilience of people

Culture

Relationships & Collaboration

Communication

We've Come a long way

People doing the work

BUSINESS COMMUNITY & WHITEHORSE RESIDENTS NARRATIVE TRENDS:

Two sessions were provided to facilitate access to the Business Community within Whitehorse; and were also opened up to Neighborhood Residents. Overall, 18 individuals representing 8 businesses attended, as did 5 neighborhood residents. We note that due to staffing instability, the Whitehorse Residents Association was not notified in a timely manner of engagement services; nevertheless, 5 neighborhood residents were included within the context of this cohort (within group sessions and interviews). We note that within their specific subgroup, **a strong desire for cross-stakeholder engagement** was made known; but was beyond the scope of the current work. We suggest that while we feel their concerns and perspectives were adequately captured; a need to feel heard by key partners, stakeholders, and 405 Alexander Street management remains a consequential unmet need.

Business & Neighborhood Residents 1st & 2nd level coding
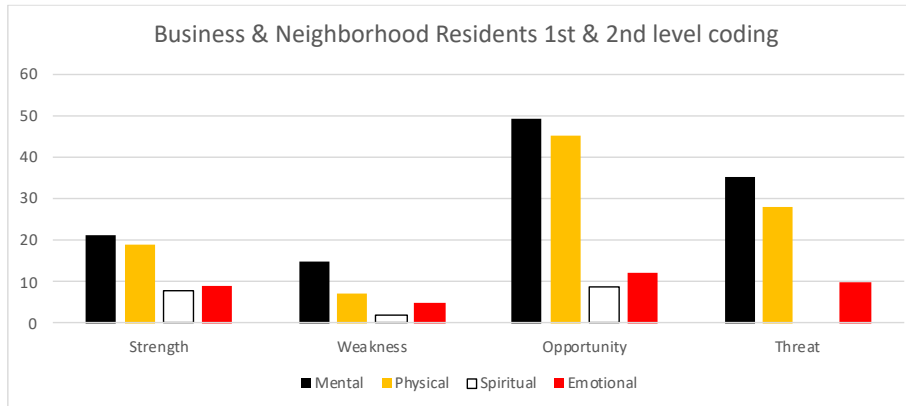
Similar to the Key Partners & Stakeholders group, the format of this engagement resulted in participants – within small groups – providing, and coding, their own responses. Following which, an analysis within the lens of the Medicine Wheel (1st level), Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (2nd level), and Emergent Thematic Analysis took place (3rd level). Theme saturation was reached within the first level of emergent thematic analysis.

Like other groups, primary responses were analyzed within the teachings of the Medicine Wheel, and fell primarily in the mental and physical realm (85%); though divergently, this cohort was 34 % more likely than other groups to identify opportunities and strengths.

Victimization; social disorder; fear; and financial impacts

Businesses and residents presented with consistent – and strong – concerns regarding their lived experience as a result of the disorder within the Whitehorse core area surrounding 405 Alexander Street.

- o **Every respondent raised the issue; and 20% of total responses specifically focused on the visible symptoms of disorder:** public intoxication, drug and alcohol paraphernalia as litter, human feces, public sex acts, and violence. Residents shared stories of being unable to walk their children to school as a result of public sex acts and open drug use and intoxication; and business owners shared stories of having to clear needles and human feces from their entranceways prior to opening their storefronts. One business owner shared watching a visibly intoxicated individual attempt to evade capture by police, who sprinted across several lanes of traffic – and then directly over the fence, and through, the elementary school playground wherein children were playing during a break.
- o **26% of respondents indicated experienced victimization** – through vandalism, property theft, and threats. In an interview, a resident shared *"Do you know what it's like to not be able to open your windows? I can't even open my windows at night, to get a breeze. If it's not hearing people partying, drinking, or fighting, it's that they're going to come in – they broke into my neighbors place."* A business owner shared that *"…[they have] no respect for others property environment, stealing, trespassing, relieve themselves everywhere on private property. Swearing, noise, drinking 24 hours… folks come in [to my business] but they're not clients."*
- o **48% of respondents indicated that they experienced fear and anxiety** with respect to the behaviours of individuals congregating around 405 Alexander; some even to the extent that they have changed their personal routines *("…I changed my daily route to avoid the area, even though it's*

the most direct way to walk to work."); others indicated that they had, or were seriously considering, moving their businesses due to the stress and anxiety experienced by themselves, and/or their staff and clients. One business clarified, *"…they're not always problematic, but they just sit around, and then they drink too much, and then they get angry, and do stupid things*," when reflecting on the perception that the individuals **congregating** around 405 Alexander Street are dangerous; though they added that they understood people's uncertainty: *"…you never know, and I know how my staff feel, when they're being approached by really drunk people and bugged for cigarettes or change."*

- o **16 of 18 business owners specifically indicated financial impacts**; and neighborhood residents indicated they were also financially impacted by the crime and disorder surrounding 405 Alexander Street. "*One business closed…*" one local business owner shared; "*I think a few others aren't far behind – people don't want to come in, the groups of drunk people scare them away."* Among discussion were the financial impacts of dealing with vandalism and theft; the loss in revenue; and decreasing property values which were concerned shared by impacted neighborhood residents as well.

RCMP Statistical Analysis

The Crime Severity Index (CSI) measures changes in the level of severity of crime in Canada and is based on the level of seriousness; established by actual sentences handed down by the courts in all provinces and territories. The most serious crimes are assigned higher weights and as a result, have a greater impact on changes in the index. In 2020, the CSI declined nationally by 8%, mainly because of lower rates for B&E (-16%), Theft Under (-20%), Robbery (-18%), and Shoplifting (-36%). **In the Yukon however, the CSI increased by 1.1%. During this time, Whitehorse saw a sharp increase in property crime, especially commercial and residential Break & Enters, Thefts, and Shoplifting.**

The following chart illustrates the increase in acquisitive offending for one 3-month period year to year.

Property Crime Occurrences	Q3 - 2020	Q3 - 2021
Break and Enter (Res/Bus/Oth/MV)	29	37
Other Theft Over $5000	4	3
Other Theft Under $5000	100	111
Possession of Property obtained by crime	3	4
Theft of Motor Vehicle	24	21
Shoplifting	31	60
Total	191	236

These statistics reveal a total increase of 24% in property related occurrences over the previous year. Shoplifting alone increased by an astonishing 94%. These numbers reflect a marked increase in offending for material gain and the trend did not slow down.

The following chart illustrates the increase in acquisitive offending for the next 3-month period.

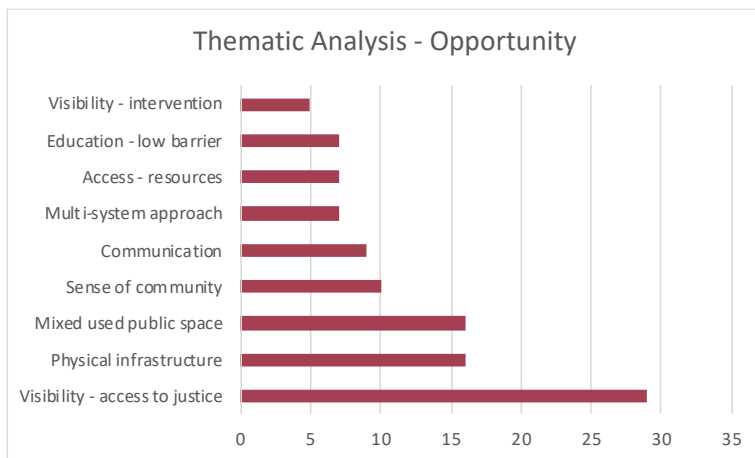| Property Crime Occurrences	Q4 - 2020	Q4 - 2021
Break and Enter (Res/Bus/Oth/MV)	15	41
Other Theft Over $5000	3	4
Other Theft Under $5000	72	113
Possession of Property obtained by crime	2	6
Theft of Motor Vehicle	16	26
Shoplifting	59	65
Total	167	255

The numbers reveal a total increase of 53% in property related occurrences over the previous year. Shoplifting increased by 10% while Other Theft under $5000 increased by a staggering 57%. The statistics indicate while many parts of Canada were experiencing decreases in Property Crime offences, the narrative in Whitehorse was vastly different.

Strengths

Overwhelmingly, participants identified **Visibility** as a key emergent theme. City services and key stakeholder interventions, that provided visible results, as a strength. This was particularly true wherein the physical environment was improved in some manner, increasing to experiences of safety. Bloodties cleanups of drug paraphernalia, bylaw patrols, and visibility of policy services were all hailed as effective interventions that increased the wellbeing of the community. Similarly, advisory boards and groups – such as the Community Safety Committee, Community Advisory Board, and non-profit outreach to businesses and residents were all praised – insofar as they increased visibility of services and plans being rolled out, helping individuals feel informed about shared goals and progress against them.

In third-level thematic analysis, an interesting and optimistic phenomenon became apparent: while business owners and neighborhood residents have very significant, tangible and intangible impacts on their wellbeing and safety due to their proximity to 405 Alexander Street; they presented as equally concerned about the wellbeing of individuals within the client demographic – their access to resources, and ability to access help, crisis intervention, and supportive services. During a group discussion, a participant raised frustrations with the shelter existing and suggested that the individuals should be moved out of Whitehorse – and the other participants quickly, and respectfully, disagreed and steered the conversation to **joint responsibility**. Organically, the individual with this view point was exposed, through group process, to education surrounding the complexity and plight of marginalized people within the Yukon. **While as a whole, business owners and neighborhood residents were frustrated by their lived experiences; they were simultaneously deeply invested in the outcomes and wellbeing of marginalized people.** One business owner in close proximity to the 405 Alexander street facility shared that they would like to develop a social enterprise, and expose people to their trade – as they and their partner never had children, they believed this could be part of their legacy to the city of Whitehorse. Emotionally, they shared that they recognized their privilege as settlers, and saw this as reciprocity for the opportunity the territory gave to them. A significant strength within this cohort was the **sense of community**, and willingness to contribute to the wellbeing of all Whitehorse residents and visitors.

Opportunities

Thematic Analysis - Opportunity

Category	Value
Visibility - intervention	~5
Education - low barrier	~7
Access - resources	~7
Multi-system approach	~7
Communication	~9
Sense of community	~10
Mixed used public space	~16
Physical infrastructure	~16
Visibility - access to justice	~29

(Axis: 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35)

In examining narrative trends categorized as opportunities from this cohorts perspective; key pieces that increase experiences of lived and perceived safety involved increasing the **visibility and access to justice resources** – 29 responses flagged increasing security surrounding the area as a key area for growth; 24 of which referenced the successful Community Safety Officer model. The participants overwhelmingly viewed the work of the RCMP favorably – and referenced recent initiatives such as the online reporting of property crime as ways that the RCMP is attempting to meet safety needs within the community; but were cognizant that RCMP resources were overburdened in attempting to manage social disorder, "*…having Yukon Government Community Safety Officers… in 'hot spots' identified by businesses and the community, [to discourage] crime and disorder and help vulnerable people*". Having 24/7 security was referenced 28 times within the responses.   Closely related to increasing access to justice, the cohort identified increasing the **visibility and accessibility of interventions** for marginalized people; and also, for greater community understanding.

Participants indicated that **increasing opportunities to build community** – through mixed use public spaces, communication, and education, were valuable and underutilized avenues. Participants identified **physical infrastructure and mixed use public spaces** as key opportunities – from city planning and sanitation/cleanliness services, to encouraging mixed-demographic space sharing. Participants raised city planning as an opportunity for growth and improvement; noting that liquor off sales in close proximity to a low barrier shelter, across from an elementary school was poor foresight. Interestingly, during theme verification interviews and research regarding zoning criteria within the City of Whitehorse; the zoning bylaw allowing for the 405 Alexander Street facility (and other interventions for marginalized people) was passed in 2012; and the liquor-off sales predates the facility's opening. The zoning change appears to have been passed in good faith – with respect to decreasing "red tape" barriers for supportive services; however, the unintended impact has also created issues surrounding incongruent or conflicting services existing within close proximity, creating social issues (such as the off-sales, elementary school, and daycare being within sight and sound of 405 Alexander Street). While the City of Whitehorse does not have a health and social department, and instead partners with and supports others in housing ventures (e.g.: Yukon Government and NGO's), revisiting the bylaw to determine whether parameters should be instituted – such as exclusions regarding proximity to liquor stores, etc., may in fact be a useful avenue of exploration, and a tool in purposeful city planning. In line with this, we note that embedded within such responses were suggestions that **services are decentralized** (32%), to minimize congregation of vulnerable people; and encourage mixed demographic use spaces to influence social expectations within these spaces.

LOW BARRIER & HARM REDUCTION APPROACHES

As noted, the 405 Alexander Street has been operating since 2017, initially under the operation of the Salvation Army, who took a high barrier approach to service access for people facing homelessness. Based on research in the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter 2020-2021 Community Safety Plan report, service users found the high barrier approach restrictive and based in colonial non-secular ideology. The reinforcement of colonial approaches is traumatic and damaging to members of the Whitehorse community, not only Indigenous service users of 405 Alexander Street. After these complaints were received, the Yukon Government moved to directly providing services through the Health and Social Services department at 405 Alexander Street, temporarily. In an attempt to address the previous complaints, the Yukon Government took a low barrier approach to service access. Taking a low barrier approach to service provision includes meeting people where they are at regardless of substance use, identification, etc., providing supplies for harm reduction, and identifying and supportively responding to cognitive or developmental limitations, and not using them as a reason to refuse essential services.

This low barrier approach has ensured that people have been able to sleep somewhere, when they have had no other choice, which is important in the often-challenging climate in the Yukon. Decreased barriers to access of 405 Alexander Street, the worsening housing crisis in the Yukon and exponential population growth over the past five years has seen usage of the facility grow. This has increased safety concerns, both within the shelter and the surrounding neighborhood.

Looking forward to a new transition in management, it is important to learn from the experiences at the 405 Alexander Street and consider how a low barrier approach can also ensure safety of everyone using the shelter, and people and businesses in the surrounding area. Below are some areas to be consider in future operations:

1. Barriers have a place, but their purpose and creation needs to be analyzed.
2. Apply an Indigenous lens to harm reduction.
3. Building capacity to fill the gap between 405 Alexander Street staff and RCMP/EMS
4. 405 Alexander Street has many purposes to many people

Barriers to service are generally conceived negatively; however, barriers are necessary for the safety of all users within a space. While it has been the recent objective of 405 Alexander Street to be low barrier, and not no barrier; the execution of this has come with mixed results for the broader community. There is a nuanced difference between a low, and no, barrier approach. Differentiating service access as low barrier from no barrier is a challenge many service providers face. It is important to consider the difference between intentional, organizational barriers (such as an expectation of sobriety) and systemic barriers (such as lack of safe spaces for LGBTQ2S+ or accessibility for people with disabilities). There are zero "no" barrier spaces in society, however, there are places and spaces where barriers are hard to enforce or are not fit for purpose. Privately run hotel accommodations with no mandate or oversight can have barriers that lack transparency, are hard to define and are challenging to enforce, even if low in nature. This can cause group congregate settings in these hotels to lack control and most importantly safety. This example is apt for the purposes of a discussion of 405 Alexander Street. While there was a mandate and policy in place, instability in management and oversight, low levels of staffing made more critical by the impacts of COVID-19, and lack of structure or expectation for individuals within the space (e.g.: programming, engagement), impacted the nature of disorder within and surrounding the facility.

Oppenheimer Park in Vancouver is another example of a setting where the barriers in place did not fit the needs of a homeless community. The residents of the park had a form of societal structure with leaders and representatives; however, they were not able to stabilize and protect the people who stayed there, or the surrounding community, from violence. These examples demonstrate the importance of transparent, fit for purpose barriers that are

implemented with a person-centered approach that increase the lived experience of safety and overall wellness of as many individuals as possible.

How, and why barriers are put in place needs to be communicated and accessible, and also elicit buy in from those accessing the space. Effective barriers are monitored not only by staff, but by other users of the space. It is also important to consider how barriers, real or perceived, impact all people in our community. Within the context of 405 Alexander Street, the reputation amongst clients (of violence, drug use, and minimal staff intervention) presents as a perceived barrier for individuals that are female, female identifying, disabled, or LGBTQ2S+ to be safe in entering or accessing services.

Barriers to service are often put in place in the name of protection of staff from violence, or spread of infection, as demonstrated in the COVID 19 pandemic. Staff feeling safe is crucial to recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction, as mentioned in Whitehorse Emergency Shelter 2020-2021 Community Safety Report. The aforementioned report, however, failed to include the narratives of staff. While such policies are necessary for Occupational Health and Safety; as identified within the 405 Alexander Street staff narrative, the preference is for increased and extensive staff training over physical barriers. Staff should receive extensive training, including Non-violent crisis intervention, Naloxone, and First Nations 101 so they can enter the space with tools necessary to manage it safely, provided adequate staffing levels are met (including the use of partnerships and multi-system approaches, such as a reflexive and responsive Community Safety Officer program). Staff training is also needed in understanding person-first language and crisis intervention to be able to manage the complex interactions at 405 Alexander Street. Additionally, for this training to be utilized in a good way, the Mission, Values and Vision of any organization running the shelter need to align with this approach. This will encourage a staff culture that protects physical, emotional, and cultural safety of all services users of the 405 Alexander. This approach should also include forums and avenues for all voices. Conversations including the operating agency, Council of Yukon First Nations, peers/service users/individuals with lived experience and key community advocates need to happen in a constructive way. These conversations should be focused on specifically identifying the parameters for services to be provided, what the repercussions are for erring away from these parameters and when/how they should be reviewed. With the buy in from all different parties then the guidelines will be more valued, responsive and reduce harm.

Harm reduction is an important part of a low barrier model. Harm reduction aims to reduce the harms associated with a variety of activities which can include IV drug use to consensual sex, by providing clean needles, condoms, providing safe spaces to discuss use, and education to name a few. Included in a harm reduction model is increasing access to and expanding substitution therapies – from opiate agonist therapies, through managed alcohol programs. How these harm reduction is organized and made accessible in and around the 405 Alexander Street is something many programs struggle with. Ensuring people are not reusing needles, that sexual acts are consensual and private, and that open consumption of alcohol is minimized to prevent triggers to others and attempt to reduce overall volume of consumption will be where a low barrier approach defines itself from no barrier.

One possible way to reconsider harm reduction in this environment is to take a decolonizing approach. At minimum, promoting a First Nations, strengths-based, people-centred, destigmatized harm reduction approach based on dignity, self-determination, empathy, love, compassion, lateral kindness, culture and traditions, and relationships, is necessary in design of operational structures. The First Nations Health Authority in British Columbia provides many resources on how to decolonize the harm reduction approach by importantly considering substance use as a social and health issue as opposed to a moral one. Affirming this approach in the Yukon, being led by the Yukon First Nations, may aide in defining the low barrier approach in the 405 Alexander Street to a variety of stakeholders. The Yukon saw the highest per capita deaths from toxic drugs in the country earlier this year. Through Indigenous leadership and support we can deconstruct the stigma around substance use within 405 Alexander Street and could not only see harms reduced for those participating in those activities but also the other service users and surrounding community.

Taking a low barrier approach, and ensuring individuals safety, and safety of others in and around the shelter, requires a multitude of supports, from health intervention to de-escalation of violent behaviours. The main people providing frontline support are 405 Alexander staff, NGO service providers and RCMP/EMS, and this is not sufficient. In Vancouver, Coast Mental Health operate a street outreach team who wear high visibility clothing and focus on areas

where individuals are sleeping or staying, not only in the downtown east side, but a variety of locations. They offer supports and help direct people to their services, they are visibly present and taking a harm reduction approach. Additionally, the City of Vancouver dedicated funds specifically to cleaning in the downtown east side. While the attempt at improving the hygiene conditions and increasing safety through principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design was sound; the execution involved the forcible removal of homeless individuals worldly possessions – which, as a practice, was not only damaging, but further stigmatizing. The City of Whitehorse could learn from this experience and provide further funding for cleaning and hygiene services in the downtown core, while considering the dignity and needs of users of these places and spaces.

There is a need to build capacity to provide supports outside of the shelter to keep the area clean, but also to help people, and intervene in de-escalation or crime prevention. It is important to apply an Indigenous lens when considering how this capacity could be built, to avoid replication of observation and the management of the marginalized population. Several recommendations within the enclosed CPTED appendix can be actioned through a low-barrier, incentivized employment opportunity involving those in the shelter community. The need for safety services – that are dynamic, culturally responsive, sensitive, and accessible is clear. The format and administration of this service should remain under the purview of CYFN; and lean on best practices within Indigenous Community Safety Officer design. Low barrier programming designed and delivered in conjunction with the 405 Alexander community members would provide purpose, connection, structure, and recreational outlets for clients. All members of the community can be included in this capacity building, and it is important for transparency and accountability – and maintaining social license increasing mixed-demographic use spaces.

The 405 Alexander Street building currently contains permanent and temporary housing options, a food program, and health services drop in. People visit every day for a variety of reasons. Centralization of these supports, in one building, combined with the low barrier approach, can cause conflict for service users. As an example, individuals on the path to sobriety may witness open alcohol or substance use, youth could be at higher risk of unsafe interactions and LGBTQ2S+ may feel at risk of violence, as is outlined above. The Carnegie Centre in Vancouver on the corner of Hastings and Main Street is a good example of a mixed used facility. It has a public library, cultural programming, food program, sports and recreation and spaces for people to spend time. The space is used by a variety of people and has full time security on each floor, hired by the city. In application within Whitehorse, CYFN would be well served at examining successful examples of Indigenous peace keeping within the territory – wherein the personnel are trained in a wide variety of supports from naloxone to cultural competency. With respect to Carnegie, in addition to this space there are similar services in a one block radius, specifically for people who identify as women, LGBTQ2S+, peoples who use substances, immigrants etc. It is not to say there is a safe space for everyone, but the variety of services means that there is not only the option of the Carnegie Centre to access services, food, and warmth. Centralization of services has an important role for people facing poverty, particularly in cold climates such as Whitehorse. However, the conflict arising from the different objectives of people using the space, means some people will choose not to access those services and therefore be further marginalized, if there are no alternatives.

PREVIOUS REPORT

Shifting from a high-barrier and non-secular approach in Shelter operations to a low-barrier paradigm was courageous and necessary to provide immediate and emergency interventions to vulnerable people in crisis; however, has had unintended and far-reaching impacts on the community at large. Whereas a low-barrier approach increases the ability of vulnerable people to access services irrespective of their current presentation – be it intoxication, drug use, or behaviour – it has resulted in a gathering place for people facing multiple barriers, wherein drug use, intoxication, violence, and gendered violence rates are high.

In 2020, the Yukon Government leveraged the services of Public Safety Canada in accessing a *Community Safety Plan*. A contracted federal worker partnered with a Yukoner identified by the Yukon Government Justice Department to infuse 'local knowledge' and assist with engagement efforts in this process.

A Core Group was comprised of Yukon Government's Health & Social Services as well as Justice; Community Services; the City of Whitehorse, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'an Council, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, Safe at Home, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, the RCMP, and the Downton Residents Association. The representatives from these entities (e.g.: directors, front line staff, etc), were not specified. The Core Group met over two sessions; of the initially planned seven; though one-to-one opportunities for engagement were indicated as an option within the report to increase access. In the subsequent Core group session, additional NGO's, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and two individuals with lived experience were added. The individuals with lived experience were not shelter guests. Some outreach occurred with non-Core group stakeholders – such as NGO's, and shelter clients (7). Shelter staff were not included.

The report culminated in four identified high-level priorities; with additional goals and actions identified. Many of these goals were quite high level, and commensurate strategic or work plans identifying avenues of responsibility were not developed – and as such, were difficult to measure with respect to progress.

Priority A.   Ensuring the safety of shelter clients, drop-in guests and staff
  Goals: Priority A- 1.   Assess the extent to which the Shelter's design accommodates a low-barrier approach
      Key Action A1.1.   Complete a CPTED assessment
      Key Action A1.2.   Female, female-identifying, and LGBTQ2S+ clients have additional safety requirements, explore creation of women-only spaces in the Shelter
      Update: both Key Actions are being undertaken within the scope of this report.

  Goals: Priority A- 2.   Ensure that the Shelter has sufficient and appropriate guidelines and processes in place related to occupational health and safety
      Key Action A2.1.   Partner with appropriate agency to assess onsite safety and to inform the development of a suite of safety policies, procedures, processes, and communication protocols
      Key Action A2.2.   Promote and distribute behavioural expectations and boundary protocols to ensure staff, clients, guests and service providers are maintaining the Shelter user's safety protocols and policies
      Key Action A2.3.   Develop and test an emergency response plan to ensure effective safety prevention and mitigation protocols and policies
      Update: Some work has been undertaken by YG Health & Social Services to consolidate policies and procedures for staff safety (e.g.: parameters for intervention; guidelines regarding ability of staff to intervene in conflicts occurring within sight, but off property). Interviews with Shelter staff indicate that consistent behavioural expectations are communicated to Shelter clients. Given the Passover of the Shelter's operations to Connective; the operational health and safety responsibilities will shift, and require review, following

consolidation of operational procedures. This action item remains relevant, though ongoing.

Goals: Priority A- 3. Strengthen the ability to determine who is in the Shelter at any given point in time, and better understand the complexity of shelter guests

  Key Action A3.1. Review and communicate the Shelter's intake and access procedures.
  Update: Given the Passover of the Shelter's operations to Connective, this action item remains relevant – however, we highlight that clarification of whom the Shelter's new intake and access procedures are communicated to should include, at minimum, the stakeholders associated with the engagement sessions in this report: local partner NGO's, Key First Nations partners (KDFN & Ta'an Kwäch'an Council); and an educational and information strategy created for the Whitehorse Resident's Association and Chambers of Commerce. Key in the analyzed narrative across these groups was a desire for role clarification, understanding of operations, and greater transparency with respect to program availability and usage of the space.

Priority B. Enhancing the Shelter's strategic and operational governance

Goals: Priority B- 1. Ensure mechanisms are in place to guide and monitor the implementation of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter Community Safety Plan

  Key Action B1.1. Identify, resource and support an Implementation Group to oversee the implementation of approved recommendations.
  Update: It is unclear whether this implementation group was convened; and there has been little information compiled regarding the monitoring of progress against these priorities, goals, and key actions. Given the shift in operational management, this key action is no longer relevant; however, the priority identified in increasing operational governance by having an oversight body increase communication amongst impacted stakeholders remains relevant and substantiated by narrative analysis.

Goals: Priority B- 2. Work with Health & Social Services to clarify the Shelter's mission, scope, operational parameters and future plans re: Shelter oversight and administration

  Key Action B2.1. Develop a policy that clarifies the meaning and implications of 'low barrier' and 'harm reduction' within the context of the shelter

  Key Action B2.2. Explore the development of formalized partnership agreements between Health & Social Services, the Shelter, and eternal service providers to clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations
  Update: A discussion surrounding both low barrier and harm reduction, as directed by narrative analysis, takes place within the body of this report. Formalized partnerships with external service providers were hampered by COVID-19 and restrictions around shared space and gathering; however, also did not resume deliberation with the lifting of restrictions. A strong theme from the narrative analysis within the scope of this report indicated a desire between partner NGO's to work collaboratively and streamline both access and delivery of services, to reduce redundancies and maximize the impact of multi-system approaches.

Goals: Priority B- 3. Ensure the Shelter has the requisite financial and operational capacity to effectively operate the Shelter (including having sustainable staffing levels), monitor and manage client and staff safety, and provide on-site core programming that meets the needs of clients.

  Key Action B3.1. Conduct an organizational capacity and needs assessment to identify, using usage rate growth estimates and demographics, (1) the viability of external service providers providing services within the shelter, and (2) the optimal level and qualifications of staff at the facility.

Key Action B3.2.   Explore ways to expand recreational and other programming offered through partners and volunteers.
UPDATE: An organizational capacity and needs assessment has not been completed; nor could it have been facilitated given the failure of Yukon Government to employ statistical data management and analysis tools. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted early attempts to expand recreational programming; and with the easing of restrictions, this has not recommenced. Both actions remain relevant, and necessary, for action.

Goals: Priority B- 4. Ensure staff are trained and supported to meet the unique and diverse needs of clients
Key Action B4.1.   Conduct a review of existing or required human resources policies, with particular focus on policies that foster staff retention, engagement, and participation. Explore the need for cultural and operational training, psychological support for staff and appropriate standards of service (for example, caseloads, staffing levels, and gender and Indigenous/non-Indigenous balance in staff representation).
Key Action B4.2.   In concert with B4.1, establish a set of guidelines that outline behavioural and boundary expectations for staff and clients.
UPDATE: Given the operational handover, if this work was completed by Yukon Government; it will require at minimum revisitation by Connective. These action items remain relevant and necessary.

Goals: Priority B- 5. Develop and support the engagement of Shelter clients and those with lived experience to ensure clients have a voice in matters affecting Shelter operations and programming
Key Action B5.1.   Continue to support the Guest Advisory Committee (TOR, Outreach Strategy to other clients, etc.) and explore ways to collect feedback from other client groups not represented on the committee, such as drop-in guests
UPDATE: Information regarding the Guest Advisory Committee – their Terms of Reference, Outreach Strategy, or purpose, were unavailable. Increasing engagement with Key Partners, Stakeholders, Neighborhood and Business Communities is a significant growth area for future management of 405 Alexander Street; and both key action items should be revived.

Goals: Priority B- 6. Ensure the availability of quality and timely information and statistics needed to support operation and strategic decision-making
Key Action B6.1.   Develop or enhance data collection, management, and use strategy to provide information needed for operational planning, data identification of trends and needed supports, to enhance accountability. Data needs include client demographics, daily and monthly Shelter attendance, program and food program usage rate, and general assessment of client needs.
UPDATE: As noted, limited collection took place that is not readily available for analysis. This is a significant need area to ensure operational efficiency of 405 Alexander Street; to streamline services, reduce redundancy, and increase the efficacy and reach of many partner NGO's. This key action should be a significant priority for implementation.

Priority C.   Creating a safe and harmonious neighborhood for Shelter clients, and neighboring residents and businesses
Goals: Priority C- 1. Explore ways to build constructive relationship between neighboring residents, businesses, and shelter guests
Key Action C1.1.   Plan for and host an early summer community BBQ event
Key Action C1.2.   Develop a communication and media strategy to inform and educate the local community about the Shelter's mission and programs, as well as to communicate positive news stories and successes

Update: While both Key Action items are relevant and remain in need of implementation; key trends in narrative analysis from all parties outside of 405 Alexander indicate a need for townhall style engagement between affected parties. While communication outward from CYFN & Connective is necessary; bidirectional and ongoing feedback and dialogue has been highlighted as a need area to improve relations with the surrounding community.

Goals: Priority C- 2. Explore the feasibility of expanding the security services provided to a number of Yukon Government buildings to include the Shelter in order to reduce behaviours that may be adversely impacting local residents and businesses

Key Action C2.1. Analyze the potential to expand Yukon Government's Security Services to include the Shelter and review with appropriate departments

Key Action C2.2. Identify and develop strategic partnerships with the Yukon Government's Security Services, the Municipal Bylaw services and other key stakeholders

Update: The use of traditional western security guards will be unlikely to achieve the intended goals of CYFN, Connective, and the community at large in providing accessible, visible, and culturally appropriate interventions to marginalized people. CYFN is encouraged to explore the implementation of a Community Safety Officer program for the Whitehorse downtown core area.

Goals: Priority C- 3. Explore how to effectively monitor and address ongoing health and safety concerns around the Shelter's perimeter

Key Action C3.1. Explore the feasibility of implementing a community program that provides a uniformed presence in and around the shelter and leverage the experiences of KDFN to assist, given their developed expertise

Key Action C3.2. Explore the feasibility of supporting a neighbourhood watch-type program in the area of the Shelter

Key Action C3.3. Explore the idea of creating a point of contact to enable individuals to report incidents, and negative behaviours, impacting local residents, Shelter guests, and businesses.

Update: Community engagement in the shared responsibility of safety remains a relevant avenue for exploration; however, given the current state of frustration and need within the resident and business community, we suggest that relying on volunteer-based safety services will tax existing social license and negatively impact perspectives on the operational efficacy of the shelter.

Priority D.   **Ensuring that clients can access culturally-based programs, services, and other supports that identify and remove barriers to wellness, healing, education, employability, self-sufficiency, and cultural and community inclusion.**

Goals: Priority D- 1.   Continue to develop partnerships with Yukon First Nations and NGOs with a social-service related mandate to enhance the ability of clients to access supports, both within and outside the Shelter

Key Action D1.1. Enhance partnership with KDFN and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council to ensure Indigenous clients can access cultural, recreational, and on-the-land activities that promote healing, wellness, and the ongoing opportunity to engage in healthy activities.

Key Action D1.2. Coordinate plans between the Shelter's efforts with other existing plans and strategies (such as Safe at Home) that have been developed in response to the needs of vulnerable people at risk

Key Action D1.3. Develop and expand formal partnerships to expedite intake procedures, clarify understandings of client needs (particularly in terms of gaps) and develop a fluid client referral process

Update: Given the operational handover, if this work was completed by Yukon Government; it will require at minimum revisitation by Connective. These action items remain relevant and necessary.:

Goals: Priority D- 2.Develop mechanisms to ensure clients can access needed programs and supports

    Key Action D2.1.   Continue with client directed case management plans.

        UPDATE: Given the operational handover, if this work was completed by Yukon Government; it will require at minimum revisitation by Connective. We <u>strongly encourage </u>leveraging HIFIS software tools to minimize opportunities for redundancy and gaps in service provision to vulnerable people, and to streamline case management between service providers.

        These action items remain relevant and necessary.

A PATH FORWARD

RECOMMENDATIONS

The complexity of the issues surrounding 405 Alexander Street are only brushed on within this report. While intergenerational impacts and trauma, migratory displacement due to systemic geographic discrimination are factors, and broader intersecting levels of oppression have created the phenomenon; it remains that the gathering of vulnerable Yukoner's in Whitehorse has had large-scale safety impacts rippling through the community. The path forward – that increases community wellness, cohesion, and safety, cannot be the sole responsibility of one agency or party; though the operational management of 405 Alexander Street has a central role. This is consistent with the teachings of the Medicine Wheel, as all things are related and interdependent.   Whitehorse residents, businesses, Yukon First Nations governments, the City of Whitehorse, Yukon Government and the Federal Government all have varying levels of responsibility – and control – for safety and wellness outcomes.

CLARITY – PURPOSE, PROGRAMS, & BARRIERS

CYFN and the operational management organization must **come to a focused decision on the level, and style, of barrier for the facility**; and clearly communicate this, as well as central purpose and programs, to clients and the community at large.

- **Communication** was raised by Key Partners & Stakeholders as a barrier to effective multi-system approaches; and by Business Partners and Neighborhood residents as a threat to understanding, and a sense of community. Improving and increasing visibility, transparency and messaging regarding the facility's central purpose, programs, and parameters will meet needs identified within the narrative for these two cohorts; and may decrease the perception – real or suggested – that the facility is a gathering place for substance use.

We note that within this decision, operational consideration should be given to **providing safe gathering spaces** (including safe gendered gathering spaces), and sober places; in concert with low-barrier places. Building on and increasing healthy interrelationships is a return to Indigenous strengths and teachings, it is important that we create opportunities for people to connect with and support one another, and for community members to have opportunities to connect with their culture, whether or not they are using substances.

- All cohort groups identified the significant and pressing need for safe places to gather
    - 19/42 clients, and 15/15 staff identified this need: to decrease perceived barriers for women and women identifying folks and provide safe spaces; to decrease exposure to substance use following treatment; to meet needs for connection and community.
    - 42% of Key Partner & Stakeholder group responses were coded within this need category, specific in addressing gendered risk within the population
    - 22% of Business Partners & Neighborhood Residents identified this need; to minimize or eliminate public congregation, and increase access to supportive or harm reduction resources

405 Alexander Street provides services to a client population that is estimated to be 41% Indigenous – and, potentially higher, as this figure was extrapolated through the participant sample, rather than statistics gathered by Yukon Government. Given the suspected Indigenous client demographics, the Council of Yukon First Nation was leveraged by Yukon Government for the oversight of operational management. Specific and focused attention to increase opportunities for cultural engagement are paramount. We know that culture is medicine, and that including people who may be using substances in cultural activities expands the options that we have to build connections with people who use substances, and in turn, offers opportunities for people who use substances to connect with their cultures. In the narrative analysis, the lack of cultural programming – and wish for it – was raised by 82% of Indigenous respondents. Land-based healing initiatives are one way to increase access to cultural activities, and would rely on Council of Yukon First Nation's ability to leverage opportunities with local First Nations in access to lands and resources. Access to activities such as food gathering, camp maintenance, medicine walks, and/or ceremonial activities would allow people opportunity to build connection with the land through culture.

Operational consideration should be given to increasing access to substitution therapy programs. These can replace dangerous illicit substances with prescribed pharmaceutical alternatives, providing a less harmful means of consumption – and lowering the survival-based maladaptive behaviours that have been disrupting the community. Similarly, managed alcohol programs can help people experiencing high levels of alcohol use and dependence, including use of non-beverage alcohol, by regularly prescribing specific quantities (doses) of alcohol where the quality is known in a supportive environment. By replacing non-beverage alcohol and helping people stabilize their drinking patterns, managed alcohol programs can reduce some of the harms of alcohol consumption. These programs can be designed in a culturally safe manner. For example, the PHS Community Services Society's managed alcohol program in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside offers Elder visits, smudging and other Indigenous cultural activities such as singing, drumming and talking circles

DE-CENTRALIZE SERVICES TO ENCOURAGE MULTI-USE SPACES

Increasing access to programs – emergency shelter services, harm reduction, substitution programs, substance use treatment and aftercare, recreation, and cultural engagement– is necessary in meeting the needs of clients captured within this narrative analysis; however, whether all of these activities should occur within 405 Alexander Street depends on staffing levels at the facility, successful execution and harmony of multi-system partnerships (e.g.: key partner stakeholders, such as Bloodties, operating safe consumption sites – reducing the requirement for the facility to facilitate consumption; increased visibility and presence of safety service, such as Community Safety Officers, etc.)

- Unstructured large-group congregation was raised as a threat for all four cohort groups; from decreasing success of attempts at recovery, to increasing the potential for violence, crime, and disorder.
- De-centralizing services, or providing service hubs throughout Whitehorse in proximity to affordable or social housing and other resources, may decrease, through soft and hard infrastructure design, opportunities for unstructured large-group congregation. This would require forethought in city planning and broader infrastructure design – and potentially revisiting zoning exclusions;

however, may serve the overall community well in increasing mixed-demographic use spaces.

INCREASE VISIBILITY AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE & SAFETY SERVICES

Barriers to critical safety services, in the perception of mistrust with the RCMP were cited throughout the client narrative analysis; and the overwhelming expectations placed on them by staff, Key Partners and Stakeholders, and the Business and Neighborhood Residents Community outstrips that which the Whitehorse Detachment can reasonably be expected to provide. **Visibility** was a key opportunity for the broader community impacted by the 405 Alexander Street facility; increasing the visibility, through a culturally appropriate and reflexive intervention proven within Indigenous communities in the Yukon, is a logical and appropriate investment.

Community Safety Officers are a program design that leverages traditional knowledge and relationship building in forming a supportive, crisis intervention for Indigenous peoples. Like other programs aimed at encouraging changes for Indigenous people, its success within communities comes from a grounding in the realities of the space; and it is primarily and foundationally delivered by Indigenous people, or someone that vulnerable people or people in crisis can easily relate to or know personally due to their presence within communities. These professionals execute multiple roles – and act as a liaison between vulnerable people, Key Partner and Stakeholder service providers, the community, Safer Communities and Neighborhoods' (SCAN), the City of Whitehorse Bylaw Department, as well as the RCMP. Their role is one of direct support. It enshrines the provision of crime prevention and reduction strategies that are proactive and responsive to community nuances and needs, and is practiced in a trauma-informed, culturally sensitive paradigm. Implementing the Community Safety Officers will offer the stakeholders, including the City of Whitehorse, the RCMP and the Yukon Territorial Government invaluable insight into the community's risk and protective factors, and an expertise in program development and implementation. Ultimately, involving CYFN in the execution this program will create safety in the community, and foster a positive relationship between the clients of 405 Alexander Street, and stakeholders.

A MULTI-SYSTEMS APPROACH REQUIRES A MULTISTAKEHOLDER STRATEGY

The success of the operational management change of 405 Alexander Street, in meeting the safety needs of the entire community, requires a strategic and multi-stakeholder plan to action. At minimum, this would include:
-   Identification of a central "responsibility" agency to move a strategic work plan forward, and identify avenues of control and responsibility as well as monitoring, and reporting, of progress against key deliverables (e.g.: HIFIS adoption, CPTED short, mid, and long-term improvements)
-   Multi-level partnerships between Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwa'chän Council, the City of Whitehorse, and Yukon Government in determining funding responsibilities.
-   Ongoing Input in city planning, licensing, and zoning to encourage mixed-used spaces and incorporate 1st and 2nd generation principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (e.g.: incorporating low-income and social

housing within market housing developments; public space and recreation planning, etc.)
- Long-term communication and transparency strategies to report to stakeholders progress against strategic plan.

APPENDIX A:
CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

The CPTED report is a component of the overall Community Wellness Strategy created for the Whitehorse Community Shelter to assist in guiding the shelter-users, business owners, and residents on their healing path. The following report is one aspect of a holistic review, as well as a grounding in the community's reality; and is not intended to be a stand-alone document. Interventions in the physical infrastructure of the community are intended to decrease the opportunity for criminal subcultures, and antisocial activities such as the illegal distribution of substances. The recommendations presented below align with a cultural priority of creating a safe, unified community where everyone experiences health, safety, and wellness. The impacts of CPTED's short, medium, and long-term recommendations encourage a sense of community pride in ownership, citizen engagement in wellness and healing, and community involvement in positive self-determination.

WHAT IS CPTED?

CPTED (sep-ted) is primarily a theory of criminality that speaks to the occurrence or suppression of crime and deviance in a specific area or place, such as a subdivision or neighborhood. CPTED is commonly described by, and founded on the "Broken Window Theory'' — I.e., a physically damaged community inspires more deterioration and crime. It is premised on the theory that proper design and effective use of the *physical* environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime, as well as improvement in the quality of life for citizens. Successfully executed, it also helps to return a sense of pride to the area or neighborhood, while reducing the likelihood of recurrence as citizens buy into and personally invest in healthier lifestyles and neighborhoods.

CPTED is a practical strategy to mitigate opportunities for criminal and unwelcome behavior. It is based on the idea that it is possible to use the design of environments to lessen or prevent the incidence of crime against people and property while creating attractive and active environments that foster a sense of place. At its core, CPTED theory accepts that people take behavioral cues from their environment; and therefore, it is possible to influence behavior through the design and management of our environment. When CPTED is properly applied, pride in the community is fostered, citizens and visitors are safer, while the environment is also perceived as such.

CPTED rejects the idea that safe and secure environments can only be achieved through "target hardening" — I.e., impregnable private property with high walls/fencing, security cameras, barring windows, etc. This approach alienates and isolates the public realm making it an increasingly hostile place to live. Instead, CPTED embraces the "village"

model, including high levels of pedestrian activity, social interaction, and increased "eyes on the street," which are considered essential to achieving community safety. A primary concept of CPTED is that crimes against people and property are less likely to occur with observers present. Through creating active, safe, secure and attractive public spaces, it is possible to prevent crime without having to resort to fortifying buildings and enclosing communities. Ultimately, CPTED can be described in broad terms as bringing the community together, rather than isolating it.

According to the "Broken Window" theory, individuals are influenced by their environment, including their behavior. If an environment shows signs of neglect or vandalism people are inclined to engage in unwelcomed or criminal behavior. Research states individuals are inclined to litter, steal, or trespass when the environment displays this behavior from others. Conversely, by enhancing and maintaining the physical appearance of the environment it is possible to encourage users of the area to respect their surroundings. Well-used and cared for public spaces encourage citizen engagement, citizen reinvestment in the community, and of course: fosters community pride.

PRINCIPLES OF CPTED

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design contains *three* main principles: including **Natural Surveillance**, **Natural Access Control**, **Territorial Reinforcement**.

NATURAL SURVEILLANCE

A design strategy that is purposed to keep intruders and undesired activity under observation. It is based on the premise that a person inclined to engage in criminality can be prevented from acting, under the vision of others. Surveillance includes clear sightlines and/or optimizing lighting. Natural Surveillance can be complimented by mechanical forms of surveillance — E.g., security cameras; however, this is a last resort in areas where natural surveillance is not likely or possible.

Natural Surveillance is central to CPTED. It is enhanced by "active surveillance," including the community safety officers, and radar cameras; while "informal surveillance," refers to the natural occurrence of members of the community providing oversight over their neighborhood as they go about their everyday lives. There is an importance of balancing land use uses, activity generators, and designing buildings and open spaces to allow people to casually observe activities in their environment. It is beneficial to locate activity generators adjacent to public spaces and orient public areas (buildings, parks, etc) to provide opportunities to overlook. By ensuring the direct and indirect presence of people, potential criminal or unwelcomed behavior is deterred and people feel safer in their environment. This principle involves putting "eyes on the street" by encouraging pedestrian passage through a space and providing the opportunity for overlook from adjacent buildings and spaces.

NATURAL ACCESS CONTROL

A design concept that is directed at decreasing the opportunity for crime. It holds that when there are clearly defined boundaries (E.g., fences, signage, and clear indicators of investment), people will naturally show their deference to the implicit rules, and will influence their movements as well as behavior. Natural access control can be complemented by mechanical forms of access control such as locks and alarms as well as through organized forms such as security patrols. Again, mechanical and organized forms of access control should be emphasized where natural forms are limited.

Natural access control allows people to move with confidence and ease through the urban environment. Legibility means that people know where they are and how to get where they are going. It means that the environment can be easily read and understood and it is simple to identify the appropriate/ desirable routes to take. Access control reinforces legibility to create clear design cues regarding what is accessible to the public, and what is not. This allows

users of the space to have more assurance as they navigate the urban environment in search of the services they seek. It also helps to mitigate the risk of getting lost or disoriented in a new setting, and reduces the chance that a person will stumble unexpectedly into a private space, or one where their safety might be at risk.

TERRITORIAL REINFORCEMENT

Is a design concept that realizes that physical design can create an area of influence or proprietorship that is noticeable to the potential offender. In other words, community pride can deter an offender. It includes signs, timely maintenance, and areas that encourage activity or use by citizens and visitors, among others. Territorial reinforcement is grounded on the premise that people are naturally territorial of spaces they perceive are theirs; fostering a sense of ownership in citizens is important to creating a culture of wellness, safety, investment, and inclusivity.

Clear transitions between public, semi-public, semi-private and private space help to define the way we inhabit our environment. Clearly defined territory also helps to foster a sense of ownership over outdoor spaces CPTED strategies are most successful when people take ownership of the environment and feel empowered to respond to situations in a way that will enhance the safety and security of the community. People typically protect territory that they perceive as their own, and have respect for the territory of others. However, the design should define spaces in a way that does not eliminate the potential for natural surveillance. A filtered view between a public and private space will protect a person's sense of privacy while still allowing for the natural surveillance that is the cornerstone of the CPTED approach.

CPTED PLANNING GUIDELINES:

For future infrastructure, housing, and space planning purposes, CYFN is encouraged to consider the following recommendations to ensure 405 Alexander Street's footprint is in keeping with the spirit of this report:

NATURAL SURVEILLANCE:

- Locate activity generators and/ or seating and opportunities for overlook around corners to create opportunities for natural surveillance of open spaces, plazas, parks, or important pedestrian thoroughfares
- Orient buildings, homes, and developments to overlook public, semi-private, and shared open space to allow informal, natural surveillance
- Enhance building design at street level to create an attractive, comfortable and safe interface
- Ensure a compatible mix of uses that attracts people through the day and night (E.g., children's play spaces, sacred gathering spaces, recreational areas, encouraging commercial and community use such as community craft markets, etc.)
- Provide clear sight lines at intersections and between key public places and adjacent uses — avoid blind spots
- Incorporate and locate lighting to allow surveillance, particularly around building entrances and parking facilities — ensure lighting design provides even light, avoiding shadows and glare
- In areas where crime is likely to occur, landscape with low ground cover, or high canopied trees — the trunk should be free of branches to a height of 2 meters

NATURAL ACCESS CONTROL:

- Ensure important services (I.e., bus stops, subdivision signage, etc.) and signs are thoughtfully located and clearly visible
- Create local landmarks by drawing attention to existing man-made or natural features such as waterfronts, public spaces, unlicensed art, heritage sites, or important civic buildings. Locate these at terminating vistas, preserve sightlines and/ or reference them in the design of the neighborhood.

- Support wayfinding with clearly legible signage, annotated maps and strategically located information centers
- Use access control measure such as low, visually permeable fencing to deter illegitimate users from semi-private or private outdoor spaces
- Use footpaths, pavement, gates, lighting and landscaping to clearly guide the public to and from entrances and exits
- Use gates, fences, walls, landscaping and lighting to discourage public access to or from spaces that are not meant for public use (I.e., private outdoor spaces and unmonitored/ poorly overlooked areas)
- Avoid narrow pedestrian pathways between or behind development unless appropriate levels of overlook can be maintained

TERRITORIAL REINFORCEMENT:

- Create public art installations celebrating local First Nation history and culture; install interpretive sites that provide information on the art installations as well as the lands, history, and teachings
- Organize public spaces into a hierarchy of visually defined zones by using devices such as material changes, landscape features, grade changes, low fences/ walls, or seating to delineate boundaries — avoid ambiguous land uses or spaces
- In development additions with multiple users. Tenants (multi-family, office, retail, etc.), cluster individual entrances and/ or windows around principal entries, courtyards or common areas
- Relate exterior spaces immediately adjacent to buildings to establish territory — E.g., low walls, landscaping and paying patterns to clearly define the space around a unit entry as belonging to the residents of that unit
- Create a strong hierarchy of approaches and avoid providing too many ways to enter buildings or private areas. Ensure entrances and exits to the space are clearly marked

CPTED RETROFIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations within the body of this report are broken down into short, medium, and long-term phases for implementation. The rationale between the division of tasks is to ensure that the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter achieves an immediate impact that builds momentum, while preparing for the more complex or time consuming upgrades. Small changes will have a large effect almost immediately; when implemented in keeping with the recommendations of the Community Safety Plan and Community Assessment.

In all recommendations, investment into education, involvement, and opportunity is strongly encouraged. For example, when addressing the "clean up" components of the short-term recommendations; public notification, education, and incentives for participation are strongly encouraged to secure the social license necessary for long-term change.

Generally, increasing the opportunity for natural surveillance falls under this category and comprises the bulk of the short-term recommendations. This includes addressing areas that have inadequate lines of sight due to overgrowth; as well as areas where refuse has been dumped. These create dark and neglected spaces where anything could be happening with no witnesses, even though these are in reasonably populated areas of community. Undertaking a clearing of garbage, underbrush and willows so that residents, pedestrians and security guards are able to see who is traveling through those areas at any given time is a quick, cost-effective, and important way to increase the sense that areas are cared for, and to encourage healthy use by citizens.

Mid-term recommendations will address important upgrades to improve natural access control; however, will involve the community's planning department in installing and maintaining lighting, fences, signage, and speed-bumps.

Long-term recommendations involve projects that will provide territorial reinforcement, strategies to increase the usage of public lands and spaces, as well as encourage citizen investment and pride. Throughout the report, long-term recommendations of commissioned public art pieces are included. Further, they provide an opportunity for the community to showcase its artists, history, culture, and teachings.

URGENCY OF INCLUSIVE APPROACH FOR SHELTERS:

The recommendations offered for the 405 Alexander Street Facility are made through the concept of CPTED in conjunction with concerns voiced by local business owners, residents, shelter staff, and the perspective of shelter users. The following recommendations are intended to create an integrative and safe location for all who frequent this area. Although the location of the facility has created a complicated situation with other parties involved, the needs of clients and staff must be forefront in the consideration, as their positive mental wellbeing will translate to positive changes in the environment. Along with CPTED, the following concepts must also be integrated into evaluation; User-centered Design; Respect and Dignity; Safety and Security; Health and Wellness; Sustainability, Durability, and Resiliency; Integration with Community; and Flexibility. Partnered with CPTED, these concepts work to create an inclusive space.

- **Considerations for Inclusivity:**

    - Support for differences in culture, gender, race, disability, sexual identity, life experiences, and other identities
    - Non-gendered signage in all sections of building
    - Recognition of what users experience on a daily business — I.e., stress, mental illness, addiction, previous physical or psychological injury, etc.,
    - Accommodation of all physical disabilities — E.g., auditory, physical, mental, and visual — including simple and clear signage, wheelchair accessibility, automatic doors — for example

SECTION I: 405 ALEXANDER STREET

The immediate impact area is the facility itself, and the one block area surrounding the site that includes commercial and residential buildings

- Businesses include(s); All West Glass, Alpine Bakery, Big Bear Donair/ Offsales, Coldwell Banker, Duffy's Pet Shop, Hendrik's Barbershop
- Residential/ Private housing are also situated in the immediate impact zone
- Certain components in the evaluation of the Emergency Shelter require short, medium, and long-term recommendations that need momentum from small-scale initiatives in order to achieve long-term success

Note: *analysis is found only in short-term, while medium and long-term contain only recommendations — with the exception of Territorial Reinforcement*

SHORT TERM

GATHERING

Analysis:
Users of the Emergency Shelter frequently gather outside the front entrance to the building, and the immediate areas surrounding the site (Image 1)

(Image 1)

Notes:

- Substance use is something shelter clients self-disclosed, including alcohol, narcotics, nicotine, etc.

- 405 Alexander is a location where individuals can access facilities (toiletries, showers, etc.), are fed, clothed, and sheltered from conditions; however, it is also a location for users to exchange substances, consume, and congregate in a location with people who are familiar, or are in a similar situation
  - Note: Users of the shelter are predominantly Indigenous — originating from different communities throughout the North, and the rest of Canada
  - There is significant intergenerational trauma in many users of 405 Alexander Street, which must be considered in the implementation of programs, services, and mitigation

- Besides offering meals to users, there is currently no programming to incentivize a positive use of time in between meals
- Currently, 405 Alexander Street is a hub that frequenters gather in between meals due to the elevated rates of substance use amongst users, partnered with a lack of programming that satisfies cultural needs, and general boredom
  - The result is an influx of refuse/debris, and congregation that creates anxiety amongst residents, bystanders, and business owners in the area, as well as an unsafe and dynamic environment that facilitates negative behaviors in the users of the facility

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Short term mitigation of gathering can be achieved through increasing access, and the number of facilities available to users

- Including;

    - Portable Washrooms — considering that the facility doors are locked at 4:30 pm, portable washrooms would provide facilities to those who do not stay at 405 Alexander Street overnight, and those who gather in the day
        - Reports of human waste in a nearby construction site, and surrounding commercial and residential areas, as well as the smell of urine in areas around the site justify the need for at least two portable washrooms

- Creating ownership of the area that users typically gather can assist in the decentralization process
    - This can include installing plants in already existing planter boxes (image 2) — partnered with artist paintings to combat graffiti

(Image 2)

- Considering that the facility demographic is predominantly Indigenous, programming must be implemented to satisfy cultural needs that are missing from the current shelter environment
    - Traditional practices should be the forefront of the programming,
    - including;
        - Beading
        - Smudging
        - Sweat lodge excursion program
        - Drum making workshop, and drum lessons
        - Traditional food workshop, teaching the importance of cultural practices as well as nutrition
    - Programming can be evolved over the physical implementation process

GRAFFITI

Analysis:

- Graffiti can be found on most surfaces in front of the 405 Alexander Street building;
    - Including the benches around the front entrance, building siding, planter boxes, and physical landscape (E.g., rocks) on the immediate site (Image 3 & 4)

(I m a g e   3)

(I m a g e   4)

- Instead of viewing graffiti as a problem in itself, the content should also be evaluated in respect to maintenance — graffiti can often display the psychological and sociological state of the area
    - The content of graffiti (on benches and planter boxes) is mostly names, small sketches (E.g., flowers, hearts, etc.,), images and quotes, with little profanity
    - This not only points towards the problem of boredom that users face, but also elucidates a level of respect held for the site — placing names, quotes, and wholesome images in the area that users frequent can be a method of claiming ownership to the area (Image 5)

(I m a g e   5)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- An artist program should be implemented to replace current graffiti with local, and relevant art pieces
  - Previous murals around Whitehorse are generally untouched after beautification process (E.g., Image 5)
  - In addition, artists can cover all existing graffiti on front benches with a blank colour, and allow users of WES who are interested to participate in the beautification process — users can write their name, draw appropriate images, as well as learn from local artists (Image 6)

(Image 6)

- Note: notice lack of graffiti around/ covering mural
- Other sections, such as planter boxes, electrical boxes, and landscape should be conducted strictly by artists to create boundaries on what can, and should be marked
- Graffiti on 405 Alexander Street building itself must be repainted within 24-48 hours of tagging
  - Swift action displays care for the site, reinforcing ownership, which in turn will foster respect from users (Image 7)

(Image 7)

MAINTENANCE:

Analysis:

- Issue:
    - Through evaluation of the site it is clear that as a result of frequent gathering, partnered with substance use of many residents at 405 Alexander Street, there is an elevated amount of refuse (garbage, lubricant packets, etc.), discarded drug paraphernalia (pipes, empty ziplock bags), empty alcohol/ narcotics containers, cigarette butts, human waste, as well as biohazardous materials such as needles and condoms (Images 8 & 9)

(Image 8)

(Image 9)

- *note*
    - Refuse is less severe in the immediate perimeter of WES — E.g., cigarette butts, empty bottles, and non-biohazardous material such as tissue paper, etc., (Images 10 & 11)

(Image 10)

(Image 11)

    - Severe waste — E.g., condoms, pipes, narcotics containers, etc., — are frequent in the periphery impact areas discussed in section 2

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Multiple cigarette ashtrays are required around the entirety of the site
  - There are currently little to no designated ashtrays around the site — besides improvised coffee tins (Image 11)
  - It is recommended to install outdoor ashtrays — several by the front entrance, all four corners of the building, the back staff entrance, and in outdoor resident seating area
  - Ashtrays should have easy open lids to discourage smashing of property to access cigarette butts

(Image 11)

- A general - *weekly* - cleanup program is required in the general vicinity of 405 Alexander Street
  - Weekly maintenance includes cleaning up all non-biohazardous material/ debris — I.e., cans, bottles, improperly discarded cigarette butts, etc., (Image 12)
  - Biohazardous material — I.e., needles, narcotic containers, condoms, etc., must be properly discarded — recommend to collaborate with Blood Ties to safely remove hazardous material (Image 13)
  - Consistent maintenance of the area will display to users of the facility that the site is properly cared for, which will incentivize frequenters to use facilities — however, facilities and maintenance need to be

(Image 12)

(Image 13)

established for a psychological shift to ensue

- More garbage and recycling bins are required around the perimeter of the site
    - Will increase likelihood of usage and cleanliness, while making weekly maintenance easier (Image 14)

(Image 14)

- Recommended to implement signage indicating where to discard trash, cigarette butts, etc.,
    - A swift installation of garbage cans, recycling bins and ashtrays partnered with regular maintenance and signage will display a commitment to keeping the area clean, and thus, trickle down to the clients of 405 Alexander Street

- A general maintenance program must also include bi-weekly landscaping to upkeep the visual appeal of the area (Image 15)

(Image 15)

- Entrapment spot behind 405 Alexander Street must be maintained and then blocked off   (Image 16)

(Image 16)

NATURAL ACCESS CONTROL

Analysis:

- The facility currently has target hardening tactics in place to ensure the security of staff — I.e., security cameras, timed locks that follow program scheduling, alarm systems, etc., (Image 17)
- The main goal of Natural Access Control is to limit target hardening, while maximizing visibility and clarity in the use of the site in order to create an integrative and secure space
    - However, 405 Alexander Street is an exception to this concept, considering its' purpose of housing vulnerable people — and the competing considerations of providing static safety for clients, staff, and the public; therefore, target hardening can be considered in this context

(Image 17)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 405 Alexander currently follows a key design strategy of limiting access to the site to two entrances
    - "Choke point" entrances are also complimented by security systems to monitor who enters or leaves the site

- Wayfinding of site can be increased through signage to clearly display new name of property
    - Current signage above front entrance displays "405 Alexander Street" which does not represent the purpose of the building to bystanders
    - Hiding the purpose of the site may be problematic as it affirms the stigma of shelter users, which

creates further isolation (Image 18)

(Image 18)

- Signage:
  - Is required to direct users or visitors of the site towards the entrance
  - Can also be used to establish borders between private and public land
    - *Note: any signage must be large, clear, with neutral background colours, and bright, vibrant colours to highlight the point of the sign*
  - Should be placed on the corner of Alexander and Fourth Ave.; between Duffy's and site, in the back to highlight residential units, and between Coldwell Banker and site

TRAFFIC CALMING

Analysis

- The intersection of Alexander St. and Fourth Ave. high pedestrian usage due to the gathering of WES users
- Issue:
  - Pedestrians frequently and sporadically cross the intersections, block/congest vehicle traffic, and present a dangerous situation in respect to accidents

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In the short term, removable speed bumps can be installed on the intersection of Alexander St. and Fourth Ave., to lower vehicle speeds (Image 23)

(Image 23)

MID-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

NATURAL ACCESS CONTROL

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Amend facility access practices to provide client's after-hours ability to congregate in the designated spaces behind the facility (that have monitoring and other risk reduction practices already in place). (Image 24)
- Consider removing visibility-limiting fencing, and installing new, visbility perimeter fencing to provide access control and territorial reinforcement, while removing hidden spaces for substance use, trafficking, and sexual

activity.

**We note that this is a mid-term recommendation to allow for the facility's new operator to shift soft-infrastructure and provide better access to spaces, so as to not simply displace the behaviours. Further, social license from the overall community will be necessary, given the perspectives captured within neighborhood resident responses indicating a wish to move the problematic behaviour and individuals engaging in it/decrease their visibility.

(Image 24)

NATURAL SURVEILLANCE

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Eventually, a seating area that is not situated near the front entrance must be installed
  - 405 Alexander has a lack of space, therefore, the prospect of expanding the outdoor seating area located at the back of the building should be considered in the process of transfer of operational responsibility to Connective (Image 25)

(Image 25)

  - The seating area can be accessible from the outside, with a sign-in process similar to the front entrance
  - This will provide the opportunity for monitored substance intake as a component of harm reduction that is not directly interacting with neighbors and businesses

- Additions to current outdoor lighting are needed:
  - Lighting covers need to be installed in order to maximize coverage, and visibility
  - Lighting must be added to areas that are not illuminated with the addition of lighting covers (image 26)

(Image 26)

  - Any light additions must consist of <4000 Kelvin LED lighting, with 90 degree covers.
  - Note: LED lighting above 4000 Kelvin creates a blue light that can contribute to insomnia in surrounding residential units, as well as create light pollution (wasted energy)

TRAFFIC CALMING

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pedestrian crossing signage must be installed — E.g., solar powered, illuminated pedestrian crossing sign that is activated by a button
  - Partnered with signage that states pedestrians must activate sign to cross

LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

GATHERING

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Community Garden — would provide frequenters of the site the opportunity to participate in the food process that is relied upon
  - Can teach sustainable food security, the processes of growing, the importance of nutrition, as well as provide assistance to staff in the process
  - Note: *the Food Bank near 405 Alexander Street has a garden specified to combat food insecurity, and therefore, they could provide insights on the resources needed to implement the program*

TERRITORIAL REINFORCEMENT

Analysis

- Besides the visual differences between the building design of 405 Alexander Street and surrounding establishments, there are no physical attributes to distinguish between property lines (Image 27)

(Image 27)

- Physically displaying signs of ownership sends a "hands off" message to areas outside of facility limits
    - Note: Alpine Bakery sets an example of this concept (Image 28)
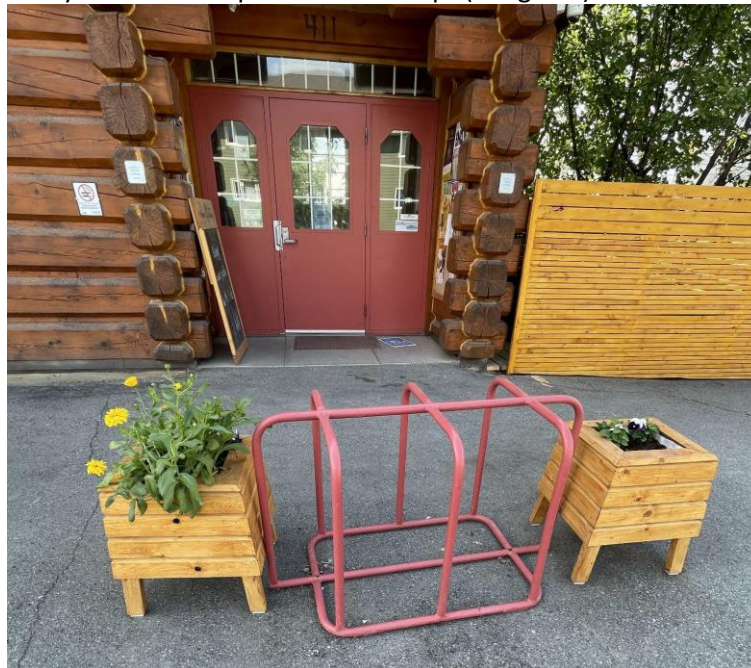
(Image 28)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Indications of ownership – planter boxes, signs, seating, etc., should be encouraged for local businesses to implement, to establish where business properties begin, in order to influence guidelines of behavioural expectation in respect usage; to encourage mixed-demographic use; and to beautify the area while conveying pride in ownership and community.
    - Can be strengthened by Community Safety Officer program

- Add more planter boxes and landscaping, generally throughout site, and in front of businesses to establish ownership
    - If planter box are in front of business, artist program can be incorporated to further beautify spaces and prevent graffiti
    - Note: refer to image 28

- All areas of "low usage" in areas of high public visibility should be utilized in conjunction with Natural Surveillance principle
  - Abandoned building adjacent to 405 Alexander Street should eventually be demolished, per approval from owner, and the City of Whitehorse is encouraged to consider how the space can be developed for mixed-demographic use public areas
    - E.g., public park, dog park, or a possible location for community garden (Image 29)

(Image 29)

TRAFFIC CALMING

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Eventually, the intersection of Alexander St. and Fourth Ave., can become fully pedestrian oriented through the installation of elevated pedestrian crosswalks
  - Elevated crosswalks serve several purposes;
    1) Providing accessible crossing that emphasizes pedestrian safety
    2) Elevation doubles as a speed hump for traffic calming
    3) Can be decorated or painted to create a visually appealing area — partnered with art installation around general area
    4) Assists in calming traffic congestion due to random pedestrian crossing, especially if crossing lights are installed prior to

(Image 30 - E.g., elevated crosswalk)

SECTION II: 3RD AVE & 6TH AVE

Analysis

- Through an evaluation of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, it is determined that refuse and garbage — ranging from low level garbage such as bottles, cans, etc., to dangerous, and bio hazardous material such as needles, pipes, condoms and empty narcotic containers, is impacting the nearby businesses and residents

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Immediate Action Required:**
- Along Alexander St., towards Fifth and Sixth Ave., contains a large amount of refuse/debris that has spread from WES
  - Recommended, as part of WES general - weekly - cleanup program to incorporate a bi-weekly clean up of the periphery impact zone (Image 31)

(Image 31)

  - Low severity refuse includes general garbage, which diminishes the visual appeal of the general downtown area — including:
    - Empty alcohol containers
    - Empty packaging
    - Cigarette butts and cartons (Image 32)

(Image 32)

- High severity refuse includes bio-hazardous material that needs immediate removal from the downtown core — including:
  - Empty narcotics containers located adjacent from WES (Image 33)
  - Used condoms, and condom packets
  - Glass pipe, typically used for various stimulant drugs — found near Sixth Ave. (Image 34)
  - Used needles, and empty needle packets   (Image 33)
- Strongly recommend to collaborate with Blood Ties to immediately tackle this issue — as of currently, there is a high possibility of a bystanders encountering bio hazardous material

(Image 33 - empty narcotics container, and needle package)

(Image 34 - Pipe, lube packets)

- There is a general lack of lighting along Alexander street
  - Eventually, pedestrian scale lighting should be installed along Alexander St. to Sixth Ave.,
    - To promote visibility
    - Increase likelihood of safety and reduction in respect to criminal situation(s) — I.e., assault, theft, etc.,
  - Pedestrian scale lighting complements street lighting by bringing light source closer to street level, and thus, increasing the immediate line of site for pedestrians
  - In addition, increased lighting can provide preventative measures to criminal activity, based on concept of Natural Surveillance
  - Pedestrian scale lighting must follow CPTED standards for lighting — *found in Natural Access Control section*

- Graffiti/ artist program can be expanded to periphery area of 405 Alexander Street
  - Murals can be added along Alexander St., from Third Ave, towards Sixth Ave, as part of a general beautification process of the downtown area

- A beautification process must eventually be conducted in the surrounding area of 405 Alexander Street
  - In the *short term*: this can include planter boxes, benches, CPTED fencing off areas that do not have specified uses
  - In the *long term*: this can include adding outdoor seating areas to promote natural surveillance, acquiring abandoned building/sites to accommodate additions, and reorienting traffic systems to be pedestrian centered