



PROJECT PROFILE

Zhaawnong Gamik, **Nishnawbe Homes**

Toronto, Ontario

For the many single Aboriginal people coming to Toronto for education or job opportunities, Nishnawbe Homes offers affordable housing that connects them to the community and reflects First Nation culture and values.

When the organization first started its work in 1984, there was no affordable housing for single Aboriginal people in Toronto. According to the executive director of Nishnawbe Homes, between 70,000 and 100,000 Aboriginal people come to Toronto looking for opportunities.

Nishnawbe Homes owns 15 properties. Their goal is to promote a safe, affordable and co-operative lifestyle for underhoused and homeless Aboriginal people.

The Affordable Housing Solution

In 2008, Nishnawbe Homes opened Zhaawnong Gamik ("South House" in the Ojibway language), a renovated

Highlights

Nishnawbe Homes provides safe, affordable housing to single Aboriginal men and women in urban Toronto.

Client Group: Under-housed and homeless single Aboriginal adults, students and seniors.

Developer: Nishnawbe Homes

Number of Units: 60

Tenure: Rental

Who was involved? Nishnawbe Homes, City of Toronto, CMHC, The Province of Ontario, Rotary Club, Salvation Army

three-storey apartment building at the corner of Church and Dundas Streets. Originally a hotel built in 1850, the property had undergone various changes over the years. Most recently, it was a dormitory owned by Our Lady's Missionaries.

Nishnawbe Homes received \$10,000 in Seed Funding from CMHC in 2006 to help cover the costs of developing their proposal. The organization purchased the building in 2007 and began renovations in March 2008.

Renovations included upgrades to bring the building up to code, changing from electric to gas heat, new wiring, new windows, more bathrooms and more communal kitchens. Tenants moved in, floor by floor, as renovations were completed.

The purchase price for the building was \$2.25 million and renovations brought the total cost to just over \$4 million. CMHC and the Government of Ontario provided \$3.7 million in assistance





through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program and the affordable rents paid by residents sustain the operating costs. The average rent is \$500 per month.

Each of the 60 furnished one-bedroom apartments contains a bed, a desk, fitted wardrobes, a phone, a fridge and a sink. Tenants share kitchens, washrooms and common rooms. The Nishnawbe Homes office is located in the building, with hours that suit tenants' work and class schedules.

From students to seniors, the tenants are encouraged to eat together, socialize and connect to social and cultural events in the community. Elders run the building and the scent of sage is often in the air. About 90 per cent of the tenants are far from home. Many of them stay while they complete their education or get established in their careers.

A 24-hour staffed reception desk ensures security. Community organizations such as the Rotary Club and Salvation Army have donated furnishings and services to the organization.

CMHC Contact

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Additional Information

Nishnawbe Homes

http://www.miziwebiik.com/mbic/Section3/html/nishnawbehomes.htm