

## 20 Sewells Road: Integrating Aboriginal and Low-Income Tenants Into the Community

Aboriginal people living in cities have an urgent need for affordable rental housing. Working in partnership with the City of Toronto, Wigwamen Incorporated developed a 92-unit apartment building at 20 Sewells Road that is designed to give Aboriginal people in the Greater Toronto Area a new source of affordable housing, while also helping them integrate into the community.

Wigwamen was founded to provide decent, affordable housing for Aboriginal individuals, families and seniors in the province of Ontario. The four-storey Sewells Road building, completed in the summer of 2005, provides affordable accommodations for 92 low- and moderate-income families and individuals.

All of the units are rented at 30 per cent of household income. One third of the apartments are reserved for transitional housing. Half are mandated specifically for Aboriginal persons.

The building includes a large multi-purpose room and is directly adjacent to the Malvern Community Centre, which provides a wide range of recreational and educational resources. For the 35 transitional tenants, a full-time support worker is available to help them achieve the stability they need to return to independent living and a more permanent home.

To keep expenses down, modest-cost materials were used throughout the development. The building is also highly energy-efficient, resulting in lower ongoing operational costs and a smaller environmental footprint.

In view of the modest incomes of most of the tenants, Wigwamen received a 50-per-cent reduction in parking requirements from the City to further enhance affordability.

In addition, the project provides a high level of integration between transitional and permanent residents, as well as between Aboriginal people and other cultures. This integration helps break down many of the barriers encountered by Aboriginal people living in urban areas, and allows them to feel more a part of the community.

- Number of units: 92 units (9 bachelor, 33 one-bedroom, 28 two-bedroom, 20 three-bedroom and 2 four-bedroom)
- Size of units: 316.45 to 1,117.75 square feet
- Construction cost: \$15.1 million (\$110 per square foot)
- Cost to rent: 30 per cent of income

### Contributors

- Wigwamen Incorporated (funding)
- Charitable fundraising
- City of Toronto (grant, lease of the land, waived fees and interest-free loan)
- Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (funding through the Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program)
- Human Resources and Social Development Canada (funding through the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative)
- Natural Resources Canada (a grant through the Federal Commercial Buildings Incentive Program for Energy Conservation)
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (Proposal Development Funding loan, Mortgage Loan Insurance and mortgage premium reduction)

20 Sewells Road is a great example of government working in collaboration with the private and non-profit sectors to create sustainable, affordable housing, and make a real, positive difference in peoples' lives.

### For further information, please contact:

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CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

# PROJECT PROFILE

## Wigwamen Waabnong

Toronto, Ontario

For Wigwamen Incorporated, a request for proposals from the City of Toronto to develop housing at 20 Sewells Road was an opportunity to build safe and affordable housing for Aboriginal families, singles and seniors. Wigwamen is Ontario's oldest and largest urban Aboriginal housing provider. The group submitted the winning proposal and secured funding from a range of partners to build Wigwamen Waabnong.

### The Affordable Housing Solution

Wigwamen Waabnong, which means "Houses in the East" in the Ojibwa language, is a four-storey, 92-unit apartment building that opened in 2005. The brick and stone building has nine bachelor, 33 one-bedroom, 28 two-bedroom, 20 three-bedroom and two four-bedroom apartments. One-third of the units are for transitional housing.

The project has a large common room that is used as a multi-denominational worship space and for community

## Highlights

An innovative approach to securing funding created 92 safe and affordable housing units for Aboriginal people in Toronto.

**Client group:** Aboriginal families, singles and seniors

**Developer:** Wigwamen Incorporated

**Number of units:** 92

**Tenure:** Rental

**Who was involved?** Wigwamen Incorporated; Hilditch Architect; City of Toronto; Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Human resources and Social Development Canada; Natural Resources Canada; CMHC

activities. These include the Aboriginal Peer Nutritional program, which teaches preparation of nutritious and affordable meals, and a multicultural arts and crafts program for children. Wigwamen Waabnong provides office space to the Aboriginal Housing Support Centre, a program funded by the City of Toronto that helps Aboriginal families and individuals apply for non-profit housing. A community centre offering recreational and educational resources is next door to the project.

Rent is 30 per cent of household

income. A full-time transitional housing staff member works with residents who could benefit from assistance to stabilize their lives through support services including credit counselling, resumé building and job training.

Construction costs were \$13.38 million. Modestly priced building materials improved the affordability of the project and energy-efficient building features reduce operational expenses and environmental impact. Wigwamen received an interest-free CMHC Proposal Development Funding loan to

help cover some of the expenses incurred during the planning stages of the project.

Wigwamen injected over \$1 million of its own equity into the project. The federal government provided approximately \$2 million in funding through the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI). The Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing provides ongoing support of about \$800,000 per year through their Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program. CMHC provided mortgage loan insurance and a mortgage premium reduction. The land was provided by the federal and Ontario governments through the Surplus Real Property for Homelessness Initiative. The City of Toronto contributed a \$1 million dollar grant, a \$1 million loan from its Capital Revolving Fund, and fee and permit waivers, including a 50 per cent reduction in parking requirements.

Wigwamen Waabnong won a CMHC Housing Award in 2006 for its innovative approach in securing financing from a variety of private and non-profit groups to create affordable housing that has made a positive difference in peoples' lives.

#### **CMHC Contact**

Donna Mayer, 416-250-3229, dmayer@cmhc-schl.gc.ca

#### **Additional Information**

Wigwamen website. From the left menu, select New and Events and then click on 20 Sewells Road Project

<http://www.wigwamen.com/>

CMHC Housing Awards Program fact sheet

[http://www.cmhc.ca/en/inpr/graw/hoawpr/upload/111832\\_2.pdf](http://www.cmhc.ca/en/inpr/graw/hoawpr/upload/111832_2.pdf)

Listing of 2006 Housing Awards Program initiatives

[http://www.cmhc.ca/en/inpr/graw/hoawpr/hoawpr\\_009.cfm](http://www.cmhc.ca/en/inpr/graw/hoawpr/hoawpr_009.cfm)

CMHC Housing Award Program web page

<http://www.cmhc.ca/en/inpr/graw/hoawpr/index.cfm>

Hilditch Architect web site

<http://www.hilditch-architect.com/>