

## STAFF PROFILE: ERIN SHEA

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Erin Shea took on the role of Homelessness Coordinator with the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation in the fall of 2013. The new role had been created to administer homelessness programming and consult on issues around homelessness. The NWT HC administers funds that provide support and direct assistance to residents who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The NWT HC also funds projects in smaller NWT communities that address issues related to homelessness in these communities; strengthens the capacity of community homelessness partners through capital upgrades and explores innovative homelessness solutions such as Housing First.

Erin has a background in social work, her past experience includes front line work with young offenders. Her job is a mixture of working one-on-one on individual case files, working with community leaders and groups and administering the various programs.



Some of these programs include the Homelessness Assistance Fund, which provides emergency one-time funding to individuals experiencing crises within the NWT and the Shelter Enhancement Fund, which provides funding to shelters and homelessness agencies for capital upgrades or the purchase of equipment required for their operations.

Another program addresses homelessness in smaller NWT communities, which often takes a different form than what is seen in larger communities. There are residents that are unable to access social housing because of past behavior (arrearages or other tenant issues) or residents in situations where the availability of housing has limited their options. To help alleviate these issues, under the Northern Pathways to Housing Program, the NWT HC will be entering into five-year partnerships with smaller NWT communities to operate transitional housing for residents.

Erin is also involved in exploring the applicability of the Housing First concept to the North, which involves the approach of housing homeless persons and then providing them supports they may require.

Erin works with a multitude of stakeholders not only in large communities like Yellowknife, Inuvik and Hay River, but as much of her work is outside these centres, in many small communities as well.

“I find the work that we do very gratifying, because although the persons that our programming assists have many significant and complex challenges, there are tangible improvements and gains with every intervention and investment we make,” notes Erin.