



ARTIST CREDIT: SATSI NAZIEL

BC INDIGENOUS HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy Steering Committee

Contact information:

Celeste Hayward

Director of Operations

Aboriginal Housing Management Association

Phone: 236-330-2265

Email: chayward@ahma-bc.org

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BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy: Policy Framework

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- Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Society
- Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee for Greater Vancouver
- Aboriginal Housing Management Association
- All Nations Outreach
- BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
- BC Housing
- Cariboo Friendship Centre
- First Nations Health Authority
- First Nations Housing & Infrastructure Council
- Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association
- Ktunaxa Nation Social Sector
- Lu'ma Native Housing Society
- Métis Nation BC
- Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council
- Ministry of the Attorney General and Ministry Responsible for Housing
- Nisga'a Nation
- Northwest Regional Housing Committee
- Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee
- Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre Society

We would also like to thank the artist Satsi Naziel who designed the image on the cover of this strategy. The image represents accessing housing with the support of one another, thus creating community.



Executive Summary

The overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples among the unhoused shows that current processes and strategies are not adequately addressing or preventing homelessness for Indigenous communities. Given this overrepresentation, Indigenous engagement and integration of Indigenous perspectives must be prioritized at all stages of developing and implementing an Indigenous provincial strategy to address homelessness.

In response to this, the BC IHSSC¹ undertook a data collection process in 2022 that was rooted in multiple Indigenous values and wise practices. This involved engaging with Indigenous community co-researchers and Indigenous peoples with past and current experiences of being unhoused to better understand how to collect data in a culturally safe way, and how to help address, alleviate, and eradicate experiences of being unhoused and housing insecurity in BC Indigenous communities.

The data collection process included:

- Extensive engagement with the 18 BC IHSSC members who come from various Indigenous organizations and urban and on-nation communities, including undertaking a full review of the BC government's draft Provincial Homelessness Strategy Framework.
- 67 direct conversations between community-based co-researchers and Indigenous peoples with lived and living experiences of housing insecurity or being unhoused.
- Six themed discussion circles (co-researchers, youth, women, urban, rural, 2SLGBTQAI+).
- 130 survey responses from Indigenous people with lived and living experiences of homelessness.

The stories heard through this process have been collated into a *What We Heard Report (Appendix A)*, and the key themes are included in the **Engagement and Partnerships** section on page 10. The research highlights that Indigenous experiences of homelessness are often a result of the current system of capitalism, government, and not taking care of each other. It is rooted in colonialism, the Indian Act, intergenerational trauma associated with residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, the Millennium scoop, racism, and loss of land.

The BC IHSSC has now developed and is pleased to present its evidence-based, trauma-informed **BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy**. The BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy is an Indigenous-led process that identifies, analyzes, and makes recommendations to address unique complexities, structures, challenges, and resiliencies.

The BC IHSSC is aware that there are other initiatives currently underway by the Province but would like to highlight that while there is a desire to find innovative and modern ways to address Indigenous homelessness, the foundation of this strategy primarily looks to reintroduce

¹ Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Society, Aboriginal Homelessness Steering Committee for Greater Vancouver, Aboriginal Housing Management Association, All Nations Outreach, BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, BC Housing, Cariboo Friendship Society, First Nations Health Authority, First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Council, Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association, Ktunaxa Nation Social Sector, Lu'ma Native Housing Society, Métis Nation BC, Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council, Nisga'a Nation, Northwest Regional Housing Committee, Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee, Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre Society



traditional and innovative Indigenous-led approaches to helping and empowering Indigenous people that have been disturbed and dismantled through colonization. Various Indigenous organizations and communities are already undertaking this work, and the BC IHSSC recognizes that some of these approaches are different from current government processes, which may make it difficult for the government to understand how it can be operationalized and understood. However, in line with Article 23 of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*:

“Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing, and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.”

However, not only do we need to recognize First Nations and other distinctions-based groups, but we must also recognize urban, rural, and northern Indigenous populations.

Recommendations

The strategy includes 33 recommendations across five key priority areas:

Transform systems

1. Equitable funding for Indigenous-led Complex Care Housing, designed and determined by Indigenous communities.
2. Specific trauma-informed housing allocations and support within the Permanent Housing Plan for Indigenous Peoples healing.
3. Supported Rent Supplements set aside for Indigenous Peoples and administered in line with guidance from Indigenous organizations and communities, surrounded by supportive services.
4. Equitable funding for Integrated Supports for Indigenous Peoples.
5. Ongoing support for the Dual Model of Housing Care Framework.
6. Ensure that wraparound supports function in tandem with supportive housing.
7. Support for robust systems that interface with Section 84 of the Corrections and Correctional Release Act.
8. Implementation of land-based approaches to housing and wellness.
9. Support and promote Cultural Safety in the Housing Sector.

Enhance partnerships and strengthen collaboration

10. Funding to support culturally safe, trauma-informed, and coordinated encampment responses that provide space for meaningful Indigenous engagement and leadership.
11. Funding to support peer support workers and the purposeful engagement of people with lived and living experiences in all spaces.
12. Make space to allow Indigenous communities and Peoples with lived/living experiences to lead the design of long-term solutions to address experiences of being unhoused and housing insecurity.



13. Create an Indigenous Stream of the Homelessness Community Action Grants. Support Indigenous communities to design the grant and the process of funding distribution.
14. Ensure Indigenous collaboration in developing the Community Inclusion Knowledge Guide and those participating in the process are remunerated appropriately for their time and expertise.
15. Support for more Indigenous employment in the non-profit sector.
16. Funding for Indigenous teachings across life events and life skills in the housing sector and create space for culturally supported housing.
17. Funding to help Indigenous organizations build relationships with relevant nations.
18. Funding to help Indigenous tenants access legal clinics about tenant rights and responsibilities.
19. Work with Indigenous organizations and support them to explore other ways to build their organizational capacity.

Promote equitable service design and delivery

20. Develop an implementation plan in conjunction with appropriate organizations regarding Indigenous youth transitioning out of government care.
21. Establish an Indigenous Lived Experience Network that feeds into the broader Lived Experience Network, and ensure it is resourced and undertaken appropriately.
22. Establish an Indigenous Decision-Making Panel that can drive implementation of both the mainstream BC Homelessness Strategy and the BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy.
23. Improve intake processes for those accessing homelessness services and create/amplify Indigenous designed intake processes.

Strengthen data-driven, evidence-informed policy and programs in a culturally safe way

24. Incorporate Indigenous organizations and communities as close partners for the Provincial Homeless Count and include learnings from the BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy Data Collection Process.
25. Engage with the Indigenous communities, organizations, and leadership on the Integrated Data Project and acknowledge the importance of data sovereignty.
26. Ensure funding for new research on unhoused or precariously housed Indigenous women including efforts to include and meet Indigenous women in a way that works for them.
27. Fund and support specific projects to protect Indigenous women in high-risk areas.
28. Support and help leverage the recently developed BC Indigenous Data Collection Framework.

Measure success

29. Commence evaluation of any strategy seeking to address experiences of being unhoused from the beginning of strategy development, with continuous evaluation throughout the process.
30. Develop a work plan in collaboration with Indigenous organizations, communities, and leadership, with the BC IHSSC as the lead.



31. Develop key performance indicators and evaluative measures in collaboration with Indigenous organizations, communities, and leadership, with the BC IHSSC as the lead.
32. Determine roles and responsibilities in collaboration with Indigenous organizations, communities, and leadership, with the BC IHSSC as the lead.
33. Delegate oversight authority to the BC IHSSC to enable an Indigenous-led body to ensure the Province appropriately funds and implements projects to address Indigenous experiences of being unhoused.



Context

Homelessness as experienced by Indigenous Peoples

This strategy is built upon a lived experience co-research methodology that looks at multiple different definitions of homelessness in Indigenous communities in Canada. The literature reveals various approaches to defining experiences of homelessness in Indigenous communities through examining the root determinants and expanding the standard definition of homelessness with a broad, intersectional view. This is crucial and indicates a new reality and new paradigm when it comes to trying to address Indigenous experiences of homelessness, as it indicates different definitions of homelessness and the idea that even when talking to people living on the streets, they may not consider themselves “homeless” as they live in a non-standard form of housing, such as a tent.

Initiated by the work of the Indigenous Homelessness Steering Committee for Metro Vancouver, the following community-based definition of homelessness was agreed by consensus as: ‘Homelessness’ refers to two groups. “The first group is those who are considered ‘absolute homeless’ and the second group is those who live ‘at risk of homelessness’.”²

Definitions of Homelessness as experienced by Indigenous Peoples

In a 2019 report *Reaching Home: Canada’s Homelessness Strategy Directives*, a definition of homelessness experienced by Indigenous communities was further developed to refer to:

“Indigenous Peoples who are in the state of having no home due to colonization, trauma and/or whose social, cultural, economic, and political conditions place them in poverty. Having no home includes: those who alternate between sheltered and unsheltered, living on the street, couch surfing, using emergency shelters, living in unaffordable, inadequate, substandard and unsafe accommodations or living without the security of tenure; anyone regardless of age, released from facilities (such as hospitals, mental health and addiction treatment centers, prisons, transition houses), fleeing unsafe homes as a result of abuse in all its definitions, and any youth transitioning from all forms of care”³

Dimensions of Homelessness in Indigenous Communities

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness developed a working definition of homelessness in Indigenous communities in Canada, which is relational and considers connection/disconnection with “healthy social, cultural, spiritual, emotional and physical relationships.”⁴ The BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy also considers:

- Overarching impacts of intergenerational trauma, historical and current processes of colonization
- On and off-reserve movement/migration
- Fluid, cultural family structures

² City of Vancouver, Government of Canada, and Lu'ma Native Housing Society. “Aboriginal Homelessness Count in Metro Vancouver.” (Vancouver, 2018), 5, <http://infocusconsulting.ca/wp-content/uploads/ABORIGINAL-HOMELESSNESS-Aug-2018-Final.pdf>

³ “Reaching Home: Canada’s Homelessness Strategy Directives” Government of Canada, last modified April 21, 2022, <https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/homelessness-sans-abri/directives-eng.html#fn3-0-rf>.

⁴ Thistle, Jesse A. “Definition of Indigenous Homelessness in Canada.” (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, Toronto, 2017), 16, <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/COHIndigenousHomelessnessDefinition.pdf>.



- Gender-based consideration for Indigenous women, i.e. interpersonal violence, sexual exploitation, children at risk, maternal health
- 2SLGBTQAI+ considerations
- Youth in care and ageing-out of care
- Episodic homelessness
- Northern and rural versus urban, and the movement/migration between these spaces
- The broad scope of geography/location means diversity of need and capacity in communities
- Métis representation, identity, jurisdiction, and access to services, how the Métis experience homelessness
- The illicit drug toxicity crisis – substance use and harm reduction
- People in and transitioning out of Corrections
- Racism, stigma and discrimination in service access and delivery

Current state of Indigenous experiences of homelessness in BC

Indigenous community members continue to be widely over-represented across the homeless population in BC. The 2018 Report on Homelessness Counts in BC found that 38% of those reporting homelessness identified as Indigenous. This number climbed to over 80% in some Northern communities and 40% in Metro Vancouver⁵. High rates of Indigenous homelessness are attributed to the lack of affordable, safe, and accessible housing and intergenerational trauma resulting from colonization, cultural genocide, and policies that actively sought to dismantle Indigenous culture, families and communities.⁶ Research illustrates that the homeless Indigenous participants first experienced homelessness at younger ages, first use substances at younger ages, spend more of their lives living homeless, are more frequently taken by emergency responders to hospital, and are more likely to meet the criteria for PTSD, problematic substance use and infectious disease diagnoses⁷.

Intergenerational trauma and colonial legacy result in greater system involvement and acuity for Indigenous Peoples. As a result, Indigenous Peoples often navigate multiple systems to meet basic needs. Fragmentation across systems exacerbates challenges and barriers. Negative experiences, stigma, and discrimination can lead individuals to resist further system involvement and choose to remain homeless. Despite the significant over-representation of Indigenous Peoples experiencing homelessness in BC, only 21% of BC Housing Homeless Outreach Programs are delivered by Indigenous organizations with Indigenous-specific perspectives and approaches⁸. The needs of Indigenous Peoples at risk and affected by homelessness are best

⁵ Urban Matters CC and BC Non-Profit Housing Association. 2018 Report on Homeless Counts in BC. December 2018, p.6.

⁶ Thistle, Jesse. Definition of Indigenous Homelessness. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. p.14.

⁷ Bingham, Mnrizzaman, Patterson, Dostaso, Sareen, O'Neil and Somers. Indigenous and non-Indigenous people experiencing homelessness and mental illness in two Canadian cities: A retrospective analysis and implications for culturally informed action. *BMJ Open*. 2019 Apr 8 doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2018-024748

⁸ BC Housing. 2021. Facts & Stats. Retrieved Aug 26, 2021 <https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre/facts-stats>



addressed through interdependent healing processes originating within community; for Indigenous and by Indigenous⁹¹⁰¹¹.

Change in use of terminology

While this document has so far used the term ‘homelessness’, the rest of this strategy will use the term “unhoused” to recognize that recent research, such as the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Society’s *Unsettling Stigma* report¹², considers the use of the term “homelessness” to be problematic in Indigenous contexts. This is largely because a) the term does not adequately reflect the historical drivers - economic, social, imperial, colonial, genocidal - underpinning the Indigenous unhousing process, and b) large segments of the Indigenous Street Family prefer other terms, such as “the unhoused.” By reconsidering the terms this document uses, the BC IHSSC uses the most up-to-date research, data, and terminology.

Engagement and Partnerships

As noted previously, the BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy has been developed following extensive engagement with 18 BC IHSSC members from various Indigenous organizations and communities, 67 direct conversations between community co-researchers and Indigenous Peoples with lived or living experiences of being unhoused, six themed discussion circles (co-researchers, youth, women, urban, rural, 2SLGBTQAI+), and 130 survey responses from Indigenous Peoples with lived and living experiences of being unhoused and housing insecurity. These engagements took place across the province throughout 2022, and key themes in the *What We Heard* report (**Appendix A**) largely centered around the lack of cultural safety in the wider system including:

- Indigenous Peoples have significant experiences of racism, stigmatization, social profiling, and discrimination.
- Indigenous Peoples are negatively impacted by service systems that fail to care for and protect Indigenous Peoples physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, intersectionally, and culturally, including shelters, child protection, health, social housing, and more.
- Indigenous Peoples have mixed feelings about their journey to acquire housing. Their negative experiences and feelings are impacting their health and ability to thrive.
- Indigenous families have unique and complex experiences and challenges, including families where some children have never had a home and being unhoused while pregnant.
- Indigenous youth have unique experiences and challenges, including poor transition programs when aging out of the child welfare system, little or no access to support funding, little or no support for life skills education, and age-based discrimination.

⁹ Canadian Council on Social Determinants of Health. 2013. *Roots of Resilience: Overcoming Inequities in Aboriginal Communities – Final Report*.

¹⁰ Barker, C., and A. Dion. 2012. "Trauma and First Nations Peoples." *Legacy Education: Knowledge to Support Families*. A Symposium on Understanding Impacts of Residential Schools on Families, Addictions and Violence. Upstart and FCSS. Calgary, Alberta. Slide 27. Quoted in Pinnow, Joanne. 2014. "Socio-psychological impacts of intergenerational trauma and trauma responses." Aboriginal brief. FCSS Calgary Research Brief 6. Calgary: City of Calgary, FCSS Calgary. p.10.

¹¹ Allan, B. and Smylie, J. 2015. *First Peoples, second class treatment: The role of racism in the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples in Canada*. Toronto, ON: the Wellesley Institute. p. 31-34.

¹² Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Society. (2022) *Unsettling Stigma with the Indigenous Street Community in Victoria, BC*. Retrieved September 15, 2022, from <https://acehsociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/stigma-poster.pdf>



- Temporary housing can be dangerous and not culturally appropriate for Indigenous Peoples, as conditions may be unclean and unsafe (especially if there is no 24/7 staffing and appropriate guest policies).
- Indigenous Peoples need more housing and more affordable housing and to be included in decisions about what housing for them looks and feels like.
- Indigenous Peoples need more support and access to culture to “bring the spirit back into the body” and to heal.
- Indigenous Peoples must feel safe when accessing services, and need acknowledgement and work done to end racism, discrimination, stigmatization, stereotyping, and tokenization.
- Indigenous Peoples continue to suffer from the injustices and impacts of colonialism, including the harms of intergenerational trauma from being separated from families, communities, languages, values, and culture.

Strategic Pillars

In alignment with the BC government’s Provincial Homelessness Strategy, the BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy also contains the same three Strategic Pillars but with amendments and additions which set out the goals for the strategy and guide the immediate actions and long-term vision. There is some replication from recent prospective documents, particularly regarding intersectional methodology, integrative support frameworks, and overlapping services. This is because the BC IHSSC recognizes that the Province is engaged in multiple approaches to tackling the unhousing process and developing distinctive models that address the Indigenous experience of unhousing more specifically, however, there are multiple gaps that this strategy looks to address.

Prevention	Immediate Response	Stability, Healing & Community Integration
<p>Make experiences of being unhoused rare by identifying Indigenous Peoples at risk and intervening early and helping those at risk of being unhoused or precariously housed. Transform systems to reduce the risk of being unhoused, reduce the need for re-telling traumatizing stories multiple times, and have targeted interventions for those at increased risk.</p>	<p>Ensure a coordinated response to addressing experiences of being unhoused in a culturally safe, trauma-informed manner, where integrated services and the right supports are accessible across the province. If an Indigenous person becomes unhoused, actions should make the experience brief by supporting them access the right housing and supports to reduce harm and prevent persistent experiences of being unhoused.</p>	<p>Provide affordable housing options for Indigenous Peoples with diverse needs, including equitable distribution of housing units depending on the need. Integrate wraparound and transitional supports as needed, promote community inclusion and belonging. Reduce the risk that someone will have additional experience of being unhoused, making the experience of being unhoused a one-time occurrence.</p>



Priority Actions

In alignment with the BC government's Provincial Homelessness Strategy, the BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy builds on the Province's **Priority Actions** with further details on how to address Indigenous experiences of being unhoused. Each Priority Action addresses immediate needs and a long-term plan to reduce and prevent experiences of being unhoused.

Transform Systems: *Build integrated, culturally safe, inclusive, just, and welcoming systems for Indigenous peoples*

Priority Actions:

- **Indigenous-led Complex Care Housing** – Ensure that at least 40% of funding for new complex care housing services is set aside for Indigenous organizations, communities, and leadership to support Indigenous Peoples who experience significant barriers to housing, including capital funding and operating funding, and therefore support Indigenous ownership of property to provide complex care housing. This recognizes that almost 40% of the unhoused population in BC identifies as Indigenous. However, in some communities, this can be as high as 80%, and funding must reflect these geographic variations and respond accordingly.
- **Permanent Housing Plan** – Determine the number of Indigenous Peoples among the 3,000 people in temporary and leased COVID-19 spaces and ensure equitable amounts of funding are allocated to help them transition to the “right” type of permanent housing with the appropriate supports. This includes specific housing allocations and support for people healing from intergenerational trauma associated with residential schools, sixties scoops, the Millennium scoop, experiences in the child welfare system, and physical and sexual abuse.
- **Supported Rent Supplement Program** – Rather than committing to a specific dollar amount, the BC IHSSC recommends that rent supplement values are automatically readjusted each year in line with the average cost of living in that region. This will make them more effective and reduce research costs associated with determining how much a rent supplement must be.
- **Integrated Supports** – Ensure that an equitable amount of funding (at least 40%, but may vary on regional needs) is set aside for investments into health, basic needs, social, and cultural supports for Indigenous Peoples across unsheltered and housing settings to improve stability and inclusion. This should be directed to Indigenous non-profit housing



providers, Indigenous health providers, and First Nations communities that deliver health supports to this population.

- **Ongoing support for the Dual Model of Housing Care**¹³ - This is an approach which incorporates culturally supportive housing and Indigenous harm reduction and is critical to creating pathways to healing and recovery. This model is currently being developed by the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Society and will integrate their culturally supportive housing model with a decolonized harm reduction framework. The framework is being created by Indigenous and for Indigenous Peoples, and there are pre-existing systems that are in operation, but additional funding to provide ongoing support and expand this framework would assist in Indigenous experiences of being unhoused.
- **Wraparound supports** - Must function in tandem with supportive housing as seen through the Dual Model of Housing Care, Culturally Supportive Housing, and Decolonized Harm Reduction Framework. This is already being undertaken by some organizations, including the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Society.
- **Support for robust systems that interface with Section 84 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, including research, pilots, and strategic actions** - to address the connection between unhousing and incarceration and disrupting this circle. There are elective affinities between the disproportionate number of Indigenous Peoples interacting with corrections, and the disproportionate number of unhoused Indigenous Peoples.
- **Implement land-based approaches to housing and wellness as much as possible** - recognizing that organizations such as the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Society already offer examples of land-based camps as a feature of the Decolonized Harm Reduction Framework, and fostering connection to land for the Indigenous unhoused living in urban contexts is crucial to reducing further experiences of being unhoused.
- **Promoting “Giving Each Other a good Life: cultural safety” across the housing sector** – the BC IHSSC requests that the Province makes a commitment to working with, and supporting, Indigenous organizations, and communities who wish to promote cultural safety for Indigenous Peoples in the housing sector (both in Indigenous housing and non-Indigenous housing), including supporting specific initiatives and ideas.

¹³ Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness Society. (2022). *Housing. Culturally Supportive Housing and Services*. Retrieved September 15, 2022, from <https://acehsociety.com/housing/>



Long-term vision:

Transforming government systems and how it engages with the Indigenous housing sector to ensure Indigenous Peoples do not experience barriers to accessing government services and housing more broadly, nor are they required to repeat their stories multiple times and therefore experience re-traumatization. The province must acknowledge that no matter how good programs and services are, a poor system will limit effectiveness, and therefore it is imperative that the system is transformed. However, this transformation must be led by Indigenous Peoples, given their overrepresentation among the unhoused population. By making space for Indigenous Peoples to lead this process and handing over decision-making authority, the Province is also upholding its commitment to reconciliation.

Addressing housing affordability for Indigenous Peoples and making sure the right type of housing is available for Indigenous Peoples in different stages of life, including changing family dynamics, appropriate physical structures, and proximity to cultural supports and relevant communities, to prevent and address current experiences of being unhoused for Indigenous Peoples.

Focusing on critical transition points at which Indigenous Peoples and families are especially vulnerable to experiencing being unhoused as a preventative measure. These critical transition points include:

- Indigenous youth and young adults transitioning from care, recognizing that Indigenous youth are 17 times more likely to be in care than non-Indigenous youth¹⁴.
- Indigenous Peoples being discharged from hospitals, including mental health and substance use bed-based, supportive recovery, or acute care settings.
- Women and children fleeing violence, recognizing that Indigenous women are more likely to experience violence in their lifetime versus non-Indigenous women¹⁵.
- Indigenous Peoples being detained in and transitioning from correctional centres, recognizing that Indigenous Peoples represent 35% of those in government custody despite representing under 6% of the BC population¹⁶.

A collaboratively developed Integrated Support Framework, which is built on expertise in the BC government, federal government, municipalities, non-profit organizations, Indigenous organizations, Indigenous communities, and people with lived and living experiences of being unhoused and housing insecurity. The framework will ensure people have coordinated access to wraparound supports.

¹⁴ Charlesworth, J. (2020, December). A Parent's Duty: Government's Obligation to Youth Transitioning into Adulthood. Representative for Children and Youth. Retrieved November 17, 2021, from https://rcybc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/RCY-A-Parents-Duty_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁵ Statistics Canada. (2022). Violent victimization and perceptions of safety: Experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Women in Canada. Retrieved August 30, 2022, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00004-eng.htm>

¹⁶ Government of British Columbia. (2022). BC Corrections and Indigenous justice. Retrieved August 30, 2022, from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/criminal-justice/corrections/reducing-reoffending/indigenous>



Enhance Partnerships and Strengthen Collaboration with the Indigenous housing sector: *Create spaces and places for all partners across all sectors, particularly the Indigenous housing sector*

Priority Actions:

- **Funding to support culturally safe, trauma-informed, and coordinated encampment responses** – Promote health and safety for Indigenous Peoples in encampments until they are able to access shelter and housing by providing encampment response services that are trauma-informed and undertaken in consultation and delivered with and by Indigenous communities and organizations. Additional implementation planning will be designed with Indigenous organizations, communities, and law enforcement to ensure belongings are not removed from unhoused people without consent.
- **Funding for peer support workers** - The value of peer support workers was demonstrated in Oppenheimer Park in 2020, as research shows that they were an essential part of supporting people living in the park in the absence of safe, affordable housing¹⁷. There are Indigenous organizations that already provide these types of services, such as All Nations Outreach Society.
- **The Province must let Indigenous communities and unhoused communities take the lead in designing long-term solutions** to housing and reducing experiences of being unhoused and housing insecurity, and integrating that into both the design of housing, design policies, and the rules surrounding housing.
- **Create an Indigenous Stream of the Homelessness Community Action Grant program** – Establish a separate stream within the Homelessness Community Action Grant program specifically for Indigenous organizations and communities to enable them to identify and respond to Indigenous experiences of being unhoused at a local level in a timely, culturally safe manner. This also includes increased transparency of program requirements and timeframes, such as application deadlines, and providing consistent, ongoing funding that is not project based in order to reduce the administrative burden on Indigenous frontline organizations.
- **Community Inclusion Knowledge Guide** – the BC IHSSC requests that the Province works collaboratively with Indigenous organizations, communities, and groups on this

¹⁷ Carnegie Action. (2020). *Carnegie Community Action Project*. Retrieved September 14, 2022, from <http://www.carnegieaction.org/2020/02/05/peers-parks-and-safety-residents-advocates-and-un-rapporteur-on-affordable-housing-weigh-in-on-peer-support-and-harm-reduction-in-oppenheimer-park%E2%82%AC%80/>



Province-led initiative. People participating in the development of this guide must be remunerated a living wage (including honoraria) to recognize their time and expertise in this field, and funding so they can access after-care support.

- **Staffing support to increase Indigenous employment in both the Indigenous non-profit sector and mainstream non-profit sector to help build organizational capacity and help Indigenous Peoples feel safe wherever they choose to make their home** – Provide appropriate funding for non-profit organizations to hire and retain Indigenous staff. These investments will increase workplace safety, reduce staff burnout, and help promote culturally safe spaces regardless of where Indigenous Peoples choose to make their home.
- **Funding for Indigenous teachings across life events and life skills in the housing sector:** including opportunities for cultural teachings on parents, transitioning to becoming a youth or Elder, Indigenous history, how wealth is distributed traditionally, and other cultural practices.
- **Funding to help Indigenous organizations and communities build relationships with relevant nations** so they can better support unhoused Indigenous Peoples off-nation.
- **Funding to help Indigenous tenants access legal clinics about tenant rights and responsibilities.** This includes education on navigating tenancy agreements and the Residential Tenancy Branch.
- **Work with Indigenous organizations and support them to explore other ways to build their organizational capacity,** noting that some areas of BC are experiencing rapidly growing populations of Indigenous Peoples.

Long-term vision:

In alignment with the Province, the BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy also looks to enhance relationships with various partners across the sector, including municipal, provincial, and federal government, Indigenous and mainstream non-profit organizations and service providers, Indigenous communities (urban and on-nation), and people with lived and living experiences of being unhoused. The goal of enhancing these relationships is to improve service delivery, ensure funding is targeted and delivered efficiently, and ensure the right kinds of services are available at the right time.



Promote Equitable Service Design and Delivery: *Address unique and intersecting needs of Indigenous Peoples*

Priority Actions:

- **Indigenous Youth Transitions** – Develop an implementation plan in conjunction with the BC IHSSC, the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions, the BC Coalition to End Youth Homelessness, the Unified Aboriginal Youth Collective, Indigenous organizations that support/advocate for child welfare, and a 2SLGBTQAI+ youth panel to proactively house Indigenous youth transitioning out of government care and reduce their likelihood of experiences of being unhoused.
- **Indigenous Lived Experience Network** – while the Province is leading a broader Lived Experience Network, the BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy calls for an Indigenous-led network that can collaborate and plug into the broader network. The goal of these two networks is to advise on the implementation of the Provincial Homelessness Strategy and the BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy.
- **Indigenous Decision-Making Panel** – convene an Indigenous expert panel to advise and make decisions on funding opportunities and processes to address Indigenous experiences of being unhoused. This panel must be supported to do the work, e.g. support to provide a Secretariat function by a body that is not a fund-receiver and has a provincial-wide reach.
- **Improved intake processes** - the Vulnerable Assessment Tool (VAT) is mandated by BC Housing for funded projects, and it plays a significant role in Eligibility Criteria. However, how this data is tracked and maintained is unclear. The Province must make space and support development and implementation of an Indigenous culturally safe tool and move away from the traditional VAT.

Long-term vision:

To effectively prevent and respond to Indigenous experiences of being unhoused by understanding and addressing the unique and intersecting needs, rights, circumstances, and barriers for unhoused Indigenous Peoples. In particular, Indigenous Peoples with physical, health, spiritual, and emotional health, and substance use challenges, Indigenous Peoples with diverse abilities, 2SLGBTQAI+, Indigenous women, Indigenous youth and young adults, and Indigenous seniors.



Strengthen Data-Driven, Evidence-Informed Policy and Programs in a culturally safe way: *Enhance the available data on Indigenous experiences of being unhoused; use data and evidence to implement wise and innovative, and traditional Indigenous practices.*

Priority Actions:

- **Provincial Homeless Count** – While this is a Province-led initiative that looks to undertake another Provincial Homeless Count across 20 communities in 2023, the BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy requests that the BC IHSSC and other Indigenous organizations and communities are incorporated as close partners in this work. This will help ensure the count is undertaken in a culturally safe, trauma-informed, and reciprocal manner and ensure data integrity across the province.
- **Integrated Data Project** – It is crucial that the Province engages with the Indigenous community on its Integrated Data Project, and acknowledges the importance of data sovereignty. The BC IHSSC will work with the Province on this project to develop innovative data methods to better measure, understand, and respond to Indigenous experiences of being unhoused.
- **Women and Homelessness Research Project** – Ensure funding for new research on unhoused women includes efforts to meet Indigenous women where they are at.
- **Funding for specific projects to protect women in high risk areas** to try and reduce instances of missing and murdered women.
- **Provincial support to leverage the BC Indigenous Data Collection Framework** - The BC IHSSC developed a model in 2022 for ongoing, culturally safe data collection activities to continuously understand the true extent of Indigenous experiences of being unhoused in BC. The BC IHSSC is willing to share this model for future research projects so that there is more comparable data across different communities.

Long-term vision:

Use evidence that has been collected in a culturally safe, trauma-informed, and reciprocal manner to better understand Indigenous Peoples' lived and living experiences of being unhoused, particularly among vulnerable groups such as women and youth. The data and stories collected will be used to develop appropriate policies and programs that are funded by



the BC government, and ensure that they are implemented effectively so that support reaches the right people. The data collected must link to other province-wide strategies, including:

- The BC Government's Provincial Homelessness Strategy
- The Aboriginal Management Association's Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy
- Enhancing Justice and Public Safety, including BC First Nations Justice Strategy and the forthcoming Métis Justice Strategy.
- Decriminalization of drugs and prescribed pharmaceutical alternatives to the illicit drug supply
- Reviewing related legislation, including anti-racism laws and a new Anti-Racism Act.
- Improving the mental health & substance use system of care, including accelerating BC's response to the opioid crisis across the full continuum of care.
- Expanding the Situation Table model across communities¹⁸.
- Developing an action plan to end gender-based violence.
- Continuing to work to implement the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Measuring Success

The BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy aims to prevent and reduce Indigenous experiences of being unhoused in BC. The strategy will measure success in collaboration with the Province's **Outcomes Reporting Framework**, which must include:

- Commencement of Indigenous evaluation at the beginning of strategy development as development of success measures must be done upfront, with continuous feedback and evaluation to determine if the process is working. There must also be methods for changing course if specific strategies are working or not working, and determining qualitative and quantitative measures.
- Development of a work plan that is not set in stone but guides all of the work. This makes the strategy more strategic in nature, rather than reactive.
- Development of key performance indicators and evaluative measures. An overall indicator of progress will be the number of unhoused people, as measured in the point-in-time homeless counts, the Integrated Data Project, and the BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy Data Collection Framework.

¹⁸ These tables consist of teams made of representatives from health, public safety, and social service agencies. They proactively identify vulnerable individuals or families who have a significant probability of committing criminal offences or experiencing harm or victimization and rapidly connect them to services before they experience a negative or traumatic event. In the context of housing and being unhoused, it is crucial that Indigenous organizations and communities participate in this process.



- Responsibility for actions determined across multiple ministries and agencies and clear timeframes for implementing specific measures.
- The Preventing and Reducing Homelessness Integrated Data Project will inform the measurement and evaluation of the strategy.
- Delegating oversight authority to the BC IHSSC to ensure that the BC government appropriately funds and implements projects to address Indigenous experiences of being unhoused.