



Aboriginal Housing Management Association  
Over 25 years of Indigenous housing expertise.



# BC'S LEADER IN URBAN INDIGENOUS HOUSING

2023-2024  
Activities and Achievements Report



## OUR **MISSION**

Lead and advance the housing rights for all Indigenous peoples living in British Columbia

## OUR **VISION**

A globally recognized leader in Indigenous housing solutions across the housing spectrum

## OUR **VALUES**

**Responsive** – Valuing a responsive working culture, which is relationship-centered and collaborative in its approach

**Capacity building** – Empowering our stakeholders with self-sufficiency and visionary practices

**Holistic** – Honoring diversity, partnership, and growth

**Innovative** – Striving for innovation through flexibility, entrepreneurship, and creativity (while honoring our experience)

**Respect** – Respecting our stakeholders through trust, reliability and accountability

**Advocacy** – Advancing the quality of housing for the collective interests of our communities



At AHMA, we honour Elders past, present and future from all nations and traditional territories. The land and waters colonially named BC are home to over 290,000 Indigenous people and more than 200 distinct First Nations. (Statistics Canada 2021)



## CONTENTS

- 2 **Message from Our President & Our Chief Executive Officer**
  
- 6 **Striving for AHMA's Strategic Objectives**
  
- 7 **Advocacy, Funding & Reconciliation**
  
- 12 **Transitions to Housing**
  
- 16 **Diverse Solutions (Housing Continuum)**
  
- 24 **New Construction**
  
- 26 **Health, Culture, Training & Capacity**
  
- 31 **AHMA'S Organizational Sustainability**
  
- 34 **Raising Our Hands to Indigenous Housing Providers**
- 35 Cariboo Friendship Society
- 38 Hiyám Housing
- 41 Kamloops Native Housing Society
  
- 44 **Náćwa?mat Lelám Committee**
  
- 46 **Meet AHMA's Team**
  
- 49 **AHMA Financial Report**



**Gary Wilson**  
President, Board of Directors

**Margaret Pfoh**  
Chief Executive Officer

# MESSAGE

## FROM OUR PRESIDENT & OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Our Board of Directors developed a declaration to assert AHMA’s authority as the provincial housing expert for urban Indigenous people. We are building new alliances to address the intersectionality of health and housing and diversify our funding.

We’re supporting members to expand our complex care model of trauma-informed, culturally safe, wraparound services to support Indigenous people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We’re also gathering the latest data on factors affecting urban Indigenous people.

## Declaring Our Urban Indigenous Housing Authority

“Our Board drafted the **BC Urban, Rural and Northern Housing Providers Declaration** to address challenges with gaining government recognition,” says Gary Wilson, President of the AHMA Board of Directors. “Our goal is to take collective action as a *For Indigenous, By Indigenous* (FIBI) housing authority to advance housing as a human right for urban Indigenous people in BC.”

“We are the first *For Indigenous, By Indigenous* housing authority in Canada,” says Margaret Pfoh, AHMA’s Chief Executive Officer. “AHMA administers funds for almost 10,000 Indigenous people living off reserve and our members manage 95% of all urban Indigenous housing in BC.”

“AHMA should automatically be at the table to participate in creating housing policies, programs and services that affect urban Indigenous people. Instead, the government suggested we seek the blessing of First Nations leadership, which is a provincial responsibility under its own legislation, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.”

“We respect the housing work of First Nations, Métis and Inuit,” says Gary. “Our intent is to complement their efforts, not to compete or overlap with their jurisdiction and sovereignty. AHMA members support Indigenous people living away from their communities—who make up three-quarters of the Indigenous population in BC.”

“We shared the declaration with members at our 2024 Spring Gathering,” says Margaret. “We will integrate our members’ feedback and share a fresh approach at AHMA’s Annual General Meeting in September.”

“AHMA has been advocating for autonomy for eight years, as a key strategy voiced by our members to ensure we meet provider needs. We’ve discovered autonomy holds different meaning for different people. We need to clarify how AHMA defines autonomy—our Indigenous right to self-determination—to strengthen our advocacy moving forward.”



*AGM welcome by Elder Syexwáliya/Ann Whonnock*

*At the AHMA 2023 AGM*



*Gary Wilson addressing attendees*

## Evolving Partnerships

“We’ve been collaborating with new partners like the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) to bridge gaps in our services,” says Margaret. “We created a Memorandum of Partnership with FNHA and are in the early stages of relationship development with the First Nations Justice Council, because health and justice are intersections with housing. These partnerships will broaden support for Indigenous peoples’ ways of healing and help address legacies of injustice.

“We also made great progress diversifying our funding sources, with new direct funds from the provincial Ministry of Housing and from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), plus access to urban Indigenous funding through NICHI’s—the National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Inc.—first proposal call.”

“We’re really pleased to see AHMA’s credibility paying dividends,” adds Gary. “AHMA has secured more than \$45 million from funders other than BC Housing.”

## Decolonizing Housing

“We know Indigenous approaches improve health and housing outcomes,” says Margaret. “AHMA is seeking funding to roll out our new vision for housing and health, designed to expand innovative FIBI models like complex care.

“Other provinces and territories are approaching AHMA for advice on preparing a *For Indigenous, By Indigenous* housing strategy. We encourage all levels of government to engage with local Indigenous housing experts for guidance on building trauma-informed, culturally safe urban Indigenous solutions. This collaborative approach fosters more equitable, sustainable communities.

“Everyone needs a place to call home. Home is where we learn who we are. This is how we will walk into the future together, confident we have protected seven generations, as our ancestors did for us.”



*Canadian Council for Indigenous Business gala celebrating incoming AHMA member, Annette Morgan (in red, holding drum) of Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society for winning an Indigenous women in leadership award.*



Below: Opening in a good way for the CMHC funding announcement.



Above (from right): Honorable Hedy Fry; Olivia Jim, Executive Director, Helping Spirit Lodge Society; Blake Scott, AHMA Director; Kelly Moon, AHMA Manager, Media & Communications, at the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Co-Investment Announcement

## Updating URN Data

We are currently researching a range of data sources—from BC Housing, CMHC, Statistics Canada, Housing Assessment Resource Tools at UBC, the Social Planning and Research Council of BC, and more—to update our knowledge of the way socioeconomic factors affect urban Indigenous populations.

Our studies are examining the current impacts of:

- ▶ Rising costs of living and housing
- ▶ Urban Indigenous homelessness
- ▶ Gender-based violence on housing precarity
- ▶ Energy poverty

## Expanding Our Horizons

“In the coming year, we will consult with our membership to seek endorsement for the declaration,” says Gary. “The Board will continue to focus on achieving autonomy for AHMA and pushing for more long-term funding for members, as many struggle on shoestring budgets.”

“AHMA has been navigating a new reality of rebuilding relationships following leadership changes at BC Housing, which is both a step back and also an opportunity to redefine our relationship,” adds Margaret. “Ultimately, we want to expand the scope of support in our provincial funding agreement and ensure self-determination for AHMA and our members.

“We are beginning to explore the concept of delivering urban Indigenous homeownership in co-op housing. We’re investigating models in other jurisdictions to find opportunities for learning in this space. I met with representatives of the London & Quadrant Housing Trust, a charitable non-profit that has gone from one house almost 60 years ago to over 105,000 homes in England now, an impressive feat.

“AHMA is also involved in planning a Global Indigenous Housing Conference for 2026 to share our *For Indigenous, By Indigenous* model and best practices, not only in Canada, but across the world.

“We raise our hands to our AHMA members again this year. You empower urban Indigenous peoples to live their best lives in culturally safe, affordable homes.”

# Chet kw'enmantumiyap

“We are thankful to you all” (Squamish)



## Honouring AHMA CEO Margaret Pfoh

We raise our hands to Margaret as she celebrated 30 years of service within the non-profit and Indigenous affordable housing sector on April 4, 2024! Margaret is a visionary leader and advocate, who has dedicated her life to serving urban Indigenous communities and advancing progressive Indigenous housing strategies.

This year, Margaret also went on a journey of personal and professional reconciliation to strengthen her resiliency and resolve.

## JOURNEYING HOME

“Hearing government ask AHMA to seek First Nations support and do their work of reconciliation was unacceptable,” says Margaret. “I felt compelled to explain how government is responsible for the dispossession and colonization impacts on our community.

“I experienced some re-traumatization as a 60s scoop person, validating where I belong. And I thought, ‘If I could feel so hurt, how do our most vulnerable people feel fighting to find affordable housing and address complex issues?’

“I asked myself how I could be an effective advocate for this community in these circumstances. And so, I went through my own journey of reconciliation.

“I was invited to speak in Terrace at the Room for All conference. I saw this opening as an opportunity for my own healing, as part of a lifelong process. I told everyone in the room, I’m going home.

“I reached out to my nation for the first time and connected with a reconciliation worker who investigated my genealogy. I discovered I’m not eagle clan. I was shown my matrilineal line is the killer whale or blackfish clan.

“I toured the lands of my ancestors and sat with a circle of Elders to hear, sadly, the traumas of our people from residential and day schools. There’s a lot of intergenerational trauma and battles between traditional learning and the colonial constructs of today, including my story.

*“I’ve learned so much. I walked on 10,000-year-old middens with the literal bones of our ancestors. These artifacts struck a chord with me—the meaning of being connected both ancestrally and to the land where my ancestors walked. I’ve found a sense of peace and passion with moving forward.”*



In the past year, AHMA has worked towards achieving the five key objectives in our **2023-26 Strategic Operational Plan**, developed in collaboration with our members and ratified at the 2023 Annual General Meeting:

**1** **ADVOCACY, FUNDING & RECONCILIATION**

**2** **TRANSITIONS TO HOUSING**

**3** **DIVERSE SOLUTIONS (HOUSING CONTINUUM)**

**4** **HEALTH, CULTURE, TRAINING & CAPACITY**

**5** **AHMA'S ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY**

# Striving for AHMA's Strategic Objectives



# Advocacy, Funding & Reconciliation

Address the housing needs of all Indigenous households living in urban, rural and northern communities

## ADVOCACY & ENGAGEMENT

### New Indigenous Housing and Health Partnership

“We want to improve health and housing outcomes for Indigenous people in BC, through a new Memorandum of Partnership AHMA has signed with the First Nations Health Authority,” says AHMA CEO Margaret Pfoh. “Housing is an essential determinant of health. Everyone needs a safe place to call home to rest and recover from health issues.”

This new partnership is designed to bridge gaps between housing and health care. AHMA and FNHA will identify areas of collaboration to better connect First Nations people with housing and support services.

### AHMA’s International Relations

AHMA’s **Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy** has received national and international recognition as an exemplar of excellence in Indigenous research and practice. That’s why CEO Margaret Pfoh was invited to share our expertise on Indigenous housing at the 6<sup>th</sup> Pacific Urban Forum in September 2023, convened by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

Margaret was also invited to participate in:

- ▶ Meetings in Australia with the new Aboriginal Commissioner and with the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute to discuss First Nations international policy
- ▶ Discussions with the World Bank on regional and global agendas, international partnerships, and uniting our voices on housing and sustainable development from an Indigenous perspective



*BC’s housing leaders and Premier Eby talking shop at the Housing Central conference.*

### AHMA Partners at Housing Central

AHMA was a presenting partner at Canada’s largest affordable housing conference, Housing Central 2023, with the BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA) and Co-operative Housing Federation of BC (CHF BC). We hosted/participated in the:

- ▶ **Indigenous Caucus** – Panel discussion on supporting Indigenous housing needs
- ▶ **Youth in transition** – Promising practices for serving youth transitioning out of care
- ▶ **Delivering Indigenous housing beyond four walls** – Creating homes for urban Indigenous people that connect culture and community
- ▶ **Housing for Indigenous people with diverse abilities** – AMHA and Community Living BC’s (CLBC) partnership
- ▶ **Strategies for success in major capital projects** – Key project management approaches
- ▶ **Indigenous Elders’ room** – A culturally safe space for connection and mindfulness

### 1st First Nation Joins AHMA

This year, AHMA welcomed Hiýám Housing of Squamish Nation as the 1st First Nation-based housing provider to become a corporate member (see the Hiýám profile on page 38). Chief and Council founded Hiýám Housing in 2019 to address the Skwxwú7mesh people’s number one priority—unmet housing need. Hiýám Housing is developing affordable, decolonized homes to help bring Squamish people home.

## National Housing Leadership

As President of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA), AHMA CEO Margaret Pfoh welcomed delegates from across Canada to the 2024 CHRA National Congress on Housing and Homelessness, held in Fredericton. CHRA has long been an ally to urban Indigenous people, contributing to the success of:

- ▶ Important initiatives like the Indigenous Caucus and NICHI
- ▶ \$4 billion committed to URN Indigenous housing in the 2024 federal budget

## Sharing URN Perspectives Nationally

“Our submission to the Canadian Urban Institute’s 2023 report, **State of Canada’s Cities**, advocates for municipalities to support local Indigenous housing projects by partnering with Indigenous housing experts,” says CEO Margaret Pfoh.

Following AHMA’s submission, Margaret was invited to participate in a panel discussion at the 2023 State of Canadian Cities Summit. She shared AHMA’s perspective on key challenges and strategies for success in urban, rural and northern Indigenous housing in Canada’s cities.

## Networking at RENT Event

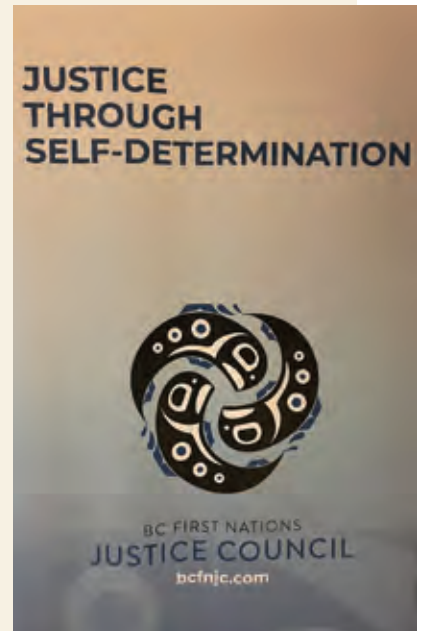
AHMA members and staff participated in recent BCNPHA Regional Education, Networking and Tradeshow (RENT) events in Courtenay and Burnaby. We networked with non-profit housing leaders, providers, and community advocates and shared AHMA’s latest initiatives.



## Indigenous Housing & Justice

AHMA staff attended the 2024 BC First Nations Justice Forum, which brought First Nations leaders, Indigenous legal service providers, subject matter experts, and Indigenous justice-serving organizations together to advance transformative justice work through collaboration.

AHMA supports the First Nations Justice Council’s Indigenous Women’s Justice Plan, Community Justice Centres opening across BC, and work to decolonize systems of law for First Nations—called Indigenous law revitalization.



# Government Relations

## Building FNLC Alliance

Cliff Grant, AHMA Director of Strategic Relations, gave a presentation to the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) this year—a group of political executives from the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and Union of BC Indian Chiefs, who advocate for the 203 First Nations in BC.

Our organizations share a mutual goal to provide safe, affordable housing for Indigenous people living on and off reserve. In our relationships, AHMA:

- ▶ Recognizes the importance of collaboration to close the gap between First Nations on reserve and urban Indigenous communities
- ▶ Supports many First Nations members living away from home
- ▶ Advocates for additional, proportional funding to support the urban Indigenous population; we never want to take away from existing on-reserve housing funds
- ▶ Recommends sending the provincial government a united message on Indigenous self-determination for both on reserve and urban Indigenous communities

## Strengthening Our Government Relationships

In addition to our FNLC alliance, AHMA continues to focus on relationships with First Nations Chiefs, provincial and federal representatives (elected and senior administrators), and municipal mayors and councils to advocate for urban Indigenous inclusion at all levels of government planning.

“Just five years ago, many of these leaders were not aware of us,” says Cliff Grant, AHMA Director of Strategic Relations. “Now, AHMA leads from a trusted position of expertise and experience and has gained recognition as the go-to partner on urban Indigenous housing.”

## Delivering Keynote Address

Terrace Mayor Sean Bujtas approached AHMA CEO Margaret Pfoh after a panel presentation at the Housing Central conference. He asked her—plus CHF BC CEO Thom Armstrong and BCNPHA CEO Jill Aktey—to be keynote speakers at a Terrace conference, *Room for All: Housing Solutions as the Northwest Grows*, held in March 2024.

“All this work we do, all these conversations we have in community, have a ripple effect,” says Margaret. “We impact how people think about safe, affordable housing.”



“Just five years ago, many of these leaders were not aware of us. Now, AHMA leads from a trusted position of expertise and experience and has gained recognition as the go-to partner on urban Indigenous housing.”

Cliff Grant, AHMA Director of Strategic Relations.

## Advocating to Address Inequity

“The playing field is not even for Indigenous people due to centuries of colonial displacement and dispossession from traditional lands,” says AHMA CEO Margaret Pfoh. “Today, 75% of the Indigenous population lives in urban, rural and northern areas rather than on reserve. Urban Indigenous people have unique needs for housing and cultural support, as many are impacted by inequity, racism and intergenerational trauma.”

To advocate for change, AHMA released a position statement addressing the growing inequities facing urban Indigenous people in the current housing crisis. Real solutions require governments to:

- ▶ Meaningfully include Indigenous voices and knowledge at decision making tables—partnering with non-profit housing experts to preserve and increase affordable housing stock
- ▶ Invest in culturally safe, affordable FIBI housing, with wraparound services to reduce barriers and support complex health needs



“AHMA members provide a continuum of culturally safe, affordable housing options and support services to help urban Indigenous people live their best lives.”

Margaret Pfoh, AHMA CEO

## Regional Relationships

Our Director of Strategic Relations Cliff Grant was invited to share ways municipalities can support *For Indigenous, By Indigenous* approaches to urban Indigenous housing with the Social Issues Subcommittee of Metro Vancouver’s Regional Planning Advisory Committee.

Cliff also gave a presentation on *Urban Indigenous Housing: Bridging the Gap Between On and Off Reserve*, at the First Nations 2024 Housing & Infrastructure West Conference.



## Non-partisan Election Campaign

AHMA is working with our Housing Central partners, BCNPHA and CHF BC, on a campaign for the upcoming provincial election to inform providers about the housing platforms of each candidate.

Our shared priority is funding for AHMA’s **Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy**. AHMA members are overloaded trying to keep up with wage stagnation, rising costs, and increasingly complex tenancies. Indigenous housing and service providers can’t meet existing cost pressures.

More new development is needed for urban Indigenous people, but existing providers must also be able to pay their bills, or we will see increasing instability and homelessness.

Housing investments must prioritize populations experiencing the greatest struggles with precarity to deliver affordability, end financialization, and address increasing, non-controllable housing costs.

Homes need maintenance and older housing requires retrofits to cope with increasing extremes of heat and cold. Equitable policies are needed to end energy poverty and appropriately support Indigenous housing and service providers.

# Member Communication, Engagement & Empowerment

## New Member Communication Portal

“We set up a new communication portal in SharePoint to provide a single point of access for our members to retrieve their AHMA information,” says Jacki Skeet, AHMA Revitalization Project Manager. “Everyone can collaborate on documents behind a secure firewall.”

AHMA members working on complex care were the first to use the portal, which provides access to contracts, budgets, assessment tools, policy and procedure templates, training options, resources and funding opportunities.

We were able to transfer all the data and gradually onboard members, so everyone will be online by mid-September.



## 2024 SPRING GATHERING

At the Spring Gathering, we shared information and asked for input from AHMA members on:

- ▶ Our new partnership with the First Nations Health Authority
- ▶ The Board declaration to assert our authority as BC’s FIBI urban housing expert
- ▶ Options for the Rural Native Housing fund and Indigenous homeownership

We’ll work on next steps for these important initiatives with our member feedback in mind.

“I saw a significant shift in how members engage with our team at this Spring Gathering, compared to the first one I attended several years ago,” says Celeste Hayward, AHMA Director of Operations. “Our communication is more relationship-based now. We’re starting to see how honouring our teachings of reciprocal relationships can build trust.”



## Let’s Engage

AHMA staff also supported members in the past year by:

- ▶ Attending members’ opening ceremonies
- ▶ Facilitating conversations with people with lived experience
- ▶ Funding and engaging in culture and ceremony for members
- ▶ Supporting Indigenous design, art and employment in development and renewals
- ▶ Advocating for Indigenous-led policy and legislative changes
- ▶ Facilitating and mediating between members and Boards

## Connecting at AHMA’s AGM

At the 2023 Annual General Meeting, we presented AHMA’s **2023-26 Strategic Operational Plan** and reviewed highlights of the year.

AHMA CEO Margaret Pfoh reflected on the power achieved with our collective voices, “Over the last five years, AHMA’s independent governance structure—coupled with members’ voices channelled through the Nóca?mat Leləḿ Committee—has enabled us to achieve significant improvements for members, compared to previous government-led approaches. We are stronger together. We are sustaining *For Indigenous, By Indigenous* models.”



# Transitions to Housing

Make any instance of Indigenous homelessness a rare, brief and one-time experience. Apply the lens of intergenerational trauma impacts with consideration of historical displacement and colonization.

## Wraparound, Addictions and Mental Health Support

### New Complex Care Developments

“We’re renovating a house in Surrey to provide a 10-bed complex care development, in partnership with Fraser Region Aboriginal Friendship Centre Association (FRAFCA),” says Stacey Bourque, AHMA Revitalization Manager. “This project will support Indigenous women experiencing homelessness and living with severe and/or persistent mental health and/or substance use issues. We also purchased a property in Prince George to create a 10-bed complex care development in that community.”

AHMA members FRAFCA and Prince George Native Friendship Centre Society operate these new developments.

We added a Provincial Clinical Supervisor/Educator role this year to support the 24/7 onsite multidisciplinary teams and increase capacity for delivering holistic, wraparound services—using a trauma-informed approach that focuses on personal autonomy and cultural safety.

Hišukiš éawak, our name for complex care, means, ‘everything is one, all is interconnected’ in Nuu-chah-nulth.

AHMA is working to secure properties for Hišukiš éawak projects in Vernon and Victoria; the first for women and the latter a complex care site for men, all experiencing homelessness and

living with severe and/or persistent mental health and/or substance use issues. Vernon Native Housing Society and Victoria Native Friendship Centre Society will lead these projects.

*Complex care development in Prince George*



*Kaitlin and Zara*

### Meet Kaitlin

Kaitlin moved into the first Hišukiš éawak project, Ama

Huuwilp—loving home of the coming spirit—in Surrey, in January this year. “I was homeless for over four years,” says Kaitlin, “and using drugs for 10-plus years.

“I got pregnant and didn’t know where to go. I was sent to the Fir Square unit at BC Women’s Hospital, where they help women with substance use deliver their babies and find housing that keeps moms and babies together.

“The social worker looked into housing options for me and found Ama Huuwilp. Getting into this place has been so amazing and made a big impact. It’s helped me and my daughter Zara live an awesome life. More programs like this are needed for women with babies who want to live independently.

“Being a mom is super fulfilling. We get up and Zara feeds, then goes for a nap. Sometimes I nap with her or make food for her while she sleeps—I make everything from scratch. We have several naps and feedings every day. We started swimming lessons and Zara loves the water. Then I make dinner, do the dishes, give her a bath, and we’re ready for bed. It’s repetitive but I’m very happy; life is great.

“HelloFresh meals are delivered Mondays. I get to choose the recipes and cook them every evening and they’re pretty awesome. I did my first year in culinary arts while in high school. I’m doing drivers education too, practicing to get my license.

“I hope we learn to take the stability we have here out into the world and have my own place, where Zara can have her own room. I’ll have my license and be able to drive. Stacey (Bourque) is encouraging me to return and work in this awesome program, to use my experience to come back and help others.”

(Kekinow Native Housing Society runs Ama Huuwilp to support pregnant or newly postnatal Indigenous women dealing with mental health and substance use issues.)

## Land-Based Healing

“We developed a land-based healing model this year to support complex care clients’ journeys,” says Stacey Bourque, AHMA Revitalization Manager. “Land-based programs re-establish a spiritual connection with the land, by recognizing creations—the animals, plants, rocks, and forces of nature—are healers and teachers. This program will help clients re-establish that connection.”

Land-based healing describes an Indigenous way of life that can:

- ▶ Improve mental, physical and spiritual wellness by reclaiming traditional activities
- ▶ Reconnect Indigenous people with cultural traditions
- ▶ Build life skills and resilience
- ▶ Foster intergenerational connections

Land-based activities include berry picking, gathering traditional medicines, hunting with family, fishing, and more. The acres surrounding our complex care projects will enable clients to:

- ▶ Grow and sell fruits, vegetables, traditional medicines, crafts, woodwork, eggs, meat
- ▶ Create a vegetable stand or home-based small business
- ▶ Use outbuildings for woodworking, arts and crafts
- ▶ Keep horses and other animals for equine-assisted therapy and farming

Wood carving has been an integral part of Indigenous cultures for centuries. Working with horses can relieve stress, improve confidence, and build relationship skills, especially among those affected by emotional trauma.



## Indigenous Advisory House on Homelessness

AHMA hosted the Indigenous Advisory House (IAH) on Homelessness gathering on January 17-18, 2024, with 59 people from 27 organizations across BC. Our aim was to prioritize actions for how we want to work with government in the next three years.

### Day 1

We reviewed current supports and presented ideas for new directions. Three Elders offered insights and we heard from five people with lived experience, as well as the:

- ▶ **First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Council** – Shared experience seeking funding for provincial peer support workers
- ▶ **First Nations Health Authority** – Shared services available for urban Indigenous people
- ▶ **Dutch** – Shared *Promising Practices: Plant Medicine for Harm Reduction*
- ▶ **All Nations Outreach Society** – Shared Indigenous-led best practices for addressing Indigenous homelessness

“One of our values is having a relationship-centered, collaborative culture,” says IAH Chair Celeste Hayward, AHMA Director of Operations. “In this space, we shared emotional moments and deep ideas, a reminder we all need supportive relationships.”

### Day 2

We invited representatives from the ministries of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, Children and Family Development, Housing, Mental Health and Addictions, plus BC Corrections, Reaching Home, and BC Housing:

- ▶ We heard a recap of **Belonging in BC**, the province’s plan to prevent and reduce homelessness
- ▶ We shared an overview of IAH’s work to date and priorities for the future

“We had an authentic space to communicate our needs with government and our voices were received in an impactful way,” says Cailan Gardner, AHMA Health Policy Analyst. “We hope this collaboration creates positive change down the road.”

Together, we cataloged the current landscape of Indigenous-led services, identified system and service gaps, reviewed promising practice models, and determined priorities for homelessness policy.

### Next Steps

Following the gathering, AHMA worked with IAH members to develop an action plan—based on IAH priorities—which was submitted to government in June. IAH will continue to meet monthly to advise government.

### Using Traditional Medicines to Heal

“I’m a person who went from homeless to homeowner in 10 years,” says Dutch. “I don’t think that’s a typical journey, and part of the process for me was becoming an advocate and helping other folks.”

Dutch gave a presentation called *Promising Practices: Plant Medicine for Harm Reduction* at the IAH gathering.

“I’m not advocating that people should stop replacement therapy to reduce their use of substances and use plants instead. I’m advocating for reintroducing knowledge of traditional plant medicines that can be used to help address issues of substance use and mental health concerns.”



*Traditional medicinal plants include Mullein (left), Cedar (above), and many more.*

“As people reduce their use, they might experience symptoms that traditional plants—historically used by Indigenous people—could help in reducing or alleviating. For example, you can gather plants to make a tea that will make you feel better if you’re detoxing.

“Another important component is for Indigenous folks to be rooted in and reconnected to the land. The protocols of gathering medicines are an active engagement with culture.

“Ultimately, I think a lot of what is experienced by Indigenous folks living through a period of homelessness is disconnection from these things. And so, it’s important to advocate to create a return in any small way.”

Dutch also felt optimistic about where the gathering could lead: “I’m incredibly happy to see this has been an opportunity for people with lived and living experience of homelessness and people working in the sector to advocate for change. I felt it was taken seriously. I felt a genuine reciprocated concern from those ministers and folks representing different areas of government.

“It’s so important we’ve been able to say nothing about us without us. The members of this Indigenous Advisory House are enthusiastic about creating change, so I’m hopeful the work will continue.”

## Connective Partnership Builds Capacity

Connective is a community-based social services agency that provides person-centered, holistic support and advocacy in restorative justice, reintegration support, housing and homelessness prevention, employment, outreach and community living, in BC and the Yukon.

The organization has a long history of supporting people with complex needs and capacity building experience with Indigenous agencies.

“AHMA and Connective staff both see unmet need for housing and support services in Indigenous communities, especially in northern BC,” says Jena Weber, AHMA Policy Manager.

“AHMA doesn’t have capacity to deliver all the support needed in the province. At the same time, Connective wants to serve more people in rural and remote BC and foster relationships with First Nations and Indigenous communities.

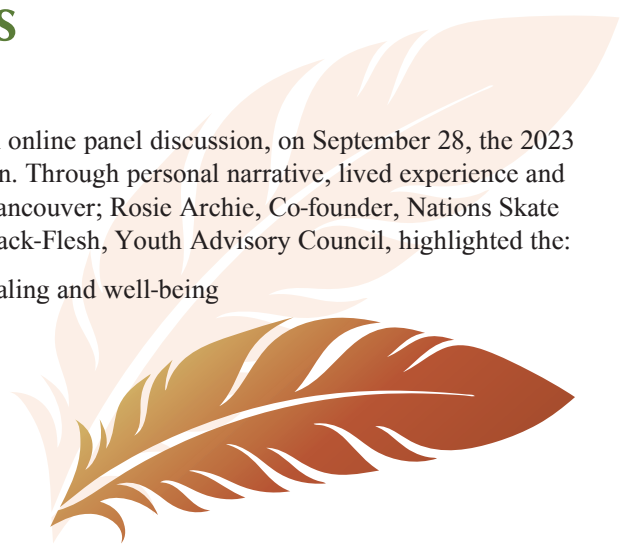
“We recognized an opportunity to partner with Connective and leverage both our strengths to help address these unmet needs. Our new partnership agreement affirms a shared belief that housing and services for Indigenous people must be Indigenous led.”

## Support For Priority Populations

### 2023 National Day for Truth & Reconciliation

AHMA hosted *Hlaa daxgyathl antimahlasxw – Strength of our Stories*, an online panel discussion, on September 28, the 2023 National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, featuring four Indigenous women. Through personal narrative, lived experience and research findings, Viola Thomas, Indigenous Relations Manager, YWCA Vancouver; Rosie Archie, Co-founder, Nations Skate Youth; Judy Wesley, AHMA Training and Capacity Specialist; and Fialka Jack-Flesh, Youth Advisory Council, highlighted the:

- ▶ Importance of culturally safe housing models that contribute to health, healing and well-being for Indigenous people
- ▶ Need to address systemic barriers Indigenous peoples face in housing
- ▶ Impacts of intergenerational trauma from residential schools on housing precarity and homelessness
- ▶ Importance of Indigenous rights and self-determination in housing





## Supporting Indigenous People with Diverse Abilities



“Our research found Indigenous-led housing is essential to reduce the gaps and barriers Indigenous people with diverse abilities face,” says Jena Weber, AHMA Policy Manager. “Current systems increase the risk of the most vulnerable falling through the cracks and into a cycle of homelessness.”

AHMA partnered with Community Living BC to examine the accessibility of housing supports and services for Indigenous people with diverse abilities. CLBC funds services for adults with developmental disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

The study included a literature review, survey of AHMA members, and key informant interviews with Indigenous people and/or family members with lived experience accessing support from CLBC.

The report—**Exploring Inclusive Housing for Indigenous Peoples Living with Diverse Abilities Across British Columbia: An Environmental Scan**—makes 26 recommendations for advancing culturally safe housing solutions in six key areas. Some highlights include:

- 1) Education & Training** – Develop a cultural safety training program on working with Indigenous peoples with diverse abilities for CLBC staff and Indigenous/non-Indigenous housing providers
- 2) CLBC Eligibility & Assessments** – Change the CLBC requirement for youth assessments by 18, which isolates many from lifelong support, and make assessments mandatory for youth in care
- 3) Outreach & Engagement** – Conduct outreach to Indigenous communities to increase awareness of CLBC supports
- 4) Partnerships & Collaborations** – Collaborate with Indigenous organizations and strengthen government relationships to develop mandatory transition plans for youth aging out of care
- 5) Indigenous Housing Provider Recruitment** – Launch a provider recruitment campaign to increase culturally safe, inclusive housing options for Indigenous clients
- 6) Programs and Services** – Create Indigenous CLBC Facilitator positions to support Indigenous clients; co-develop a program with AHMA to offer resources and training for tenants and landlords

AHMA and CLBC set up a working group to plan for additional support.

New services are already in place coming out of this partnership. For example, Kekinow Native Housing Society has four new units with CLBC support for youth transitioning out of care in Surrey.

“When youth age out of care, housing can be a big challenge,” says Rupinder Cheema, Kekinow CEO. “AHMA connected us with CLBC so we could support these youth in our new development. We combine housing with employment training—approved electrician foundational training, for example—to help youth build a good life.” (See the report via this QR link.)



## Stay Tuned for New GBV Housing Strategy

“The level of violence against Indigenous women and girls has not changed since the 2019 report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) issued 231 Calls to Justice,” says Terri Fortune, AHMA Gender-based Violence (GBV) Policy Analyst. “AHMA decided to develop a FIBI **Gender-Based Violence Housing Strategy** to enable systemic change, because housing is inextricably linked to safety.”

We are collaborating with the:

- ▶ BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
- ▶ Battered Women’s Support Services
- ▶ BC Society of Transition Housing

AHMA is working with a provincial subcommittee of Indigenous housing providers—Cariboo Friendship Society, Prince George Native Friendship Society, Vernon Native Housing and Wilma’s Transition Housing Society—Indigenous women, activists, Elders, and Central City Foundation, a non-Indigenous provider working with AHMA members to be Indigenous-informed.

Preliminary findings show:

- ▶ 20,000+ Indigenous women are at risk of homelessness across BC
- ▶ Indigenous women experiencing mental health and substance use are at highest risk of violence
- ▶ All housing models put Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people at risk of violence

Our strategy aligns with the 231 Calls to Justice; includes the voices of people with lived experiences; employs a culturally safe, trauma-informed approach; and seeks to decolonize housing policy for women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

“It takes more than a village to stop this violence,” says Terri. “Our framework will identify housing models and intersectional services that prevent risk to violence and precarious housing.”

# Diverse Solutions (Housing Continuum)

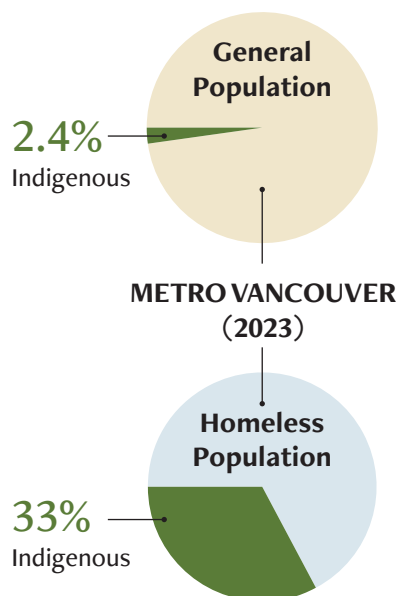
Ensure Indigenous people have access to a variety of housing solutions, including homeownership

## Decolonize Housing Policies

### Decolonizing Housing

AHMA's **Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy** focuses on FIBI approaches to decolonize housing policies and practices. Our CEO Margaret Pfoh shared these messages in recent keynote presentations:

- ▶ **Urban Indigenous Housing – Why self-determination matters** – 2023 National Conference on Ending Homelessness, put on by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness
- ▶ **Decolonizing housing: How Indigenous ways of thinking can improve housing** – University of BC Balanced Supply of Housing Research Cluster event, held in Toronto



At these events, Margaret spoke about:

#### ▶ Signs of the growing affordable housing crisis in Canada

- ◆ Encampments and increased homelessness across all jurisdictions
- ◆ Middle class and dual-income families are also struggling with rising costs of living and housing
- ◆ Supply chain issues, higher interest rates, and rising insurance premiums have increased costs
- ◆ Key systems of response in health and climate are overwhelmed
- ◆ Need to battle the financialization of housing

#### ▶ Disproportionate Indigenous homelessness

- ◆ Indigenous peoples are 13 times more likely to be homeless than the general population
- ◆ 50% of Indigenous people can afford 0% of available rental units
- ◆ 2.4% of Metro Vancouver's population is Indigenous while 33% of people experiencing homelessness there are Indigenous
- ◆ In Northern BC, up to 90% of those experiencing homelessness are Indigenous

#### ▶ Truth, reconciliation and our human right to housing

- ◆ Recognize housing is a fundamental need for all people and is foundational to health and healing

- ◆ Address the systemic racism and socioeconomic inequity urban Indigenous people face
- ◆ Engage municipal leadership to influence policies for ending homelessness and housing precarity
- ◆ Include urban Indigenous housing needs in planning
- ◆ Support *For Indigenous, By Indigenous* solutions and self-determination
- ▶ **Hišukiš ćawak in housing is crucial**
  - ◆ URN Indigenous populations have specific needs related to intergenerational trauma
  - ◆ Wraparound services are embedded in complex care for Indigenous people coping with trauma
  - ◆ AHMA's Four Pillars of Cultural Safety in housing—self agency, relationship, trauma-informed, reciprocity—are key to support healing
- ▶ **AHMA is decolonizing housing policy**
  - ◆ Integrate Indigenous ways of thinking to consider the coming seven generations
  - ◆ Provide Indigenous housing and service providers with adequate funding to achieve equitable outcomes
  - ◆ Support decolonization to address disparities and promote a healthy, thriving society for all

## National Right to Housing Panel

On November 22, 2023, National (Right to) Housing Day, AHMA CEO Margaret Pfoh participated in an online panel—*Making the Best of Public Money for Public Good*. Federal Housing Advocate Marie Josee-Houle and the National Right to Housing Network co-hosted the event.

Participants called on the federal government to introduce a human rights approach to solving Canada’s housing supply issues—recognizing that housing is a human right for everyone—and scale up non-market housing development and acquisition.

Margaret advised support for Indigenous self-determination and equitable access to housing:

- ▶ **Expand support for NICHIP’s leadership** – Release the \$4 billion in federal funding designated for URN Indigenous housing and wraparound supports
- ▶ **Set a minimum 20% deeply affordable target** – For all housing developments, in all regions, with priority for vulnerable and marginalized populations
- ▶ **Respect the duty to consult** – Support FIBI approaches and self-determination
- ▶ **Implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action** – Only 12 of 94 Calls to Action have been completed—government needs to move from performative to true reconciliation
- ▶ **Recognize housing as a social determinant of health** – Complex care combines health and housing to meet the needs of Indigenous people with concurrent vulnerabilities
- ▶ **Address inequities** – Indigenous people are 13 times more likely to experience homelessness than non-Indigenous people and core housing need is double, inequities all levels of government must resolve



This knowledge was shared in **What We Heard Report: Nonmarket housing as a solution to the housing crisis**, published following the event. (See the report via this QR link.)

## Award Winning Indigenous Homelessness Strategy

The Planning Institute of BC recognized the **BC Indigenous Homelessness Strategy** with an award for “excellence in planning,” at its annual conference in June 2023.

AHMA collaborated on this project with the Indigenous Advisory House on Homelessness and Resilience Planning. (We serve as the IAH secretariat.) The project involved collecting data and stories of Indigenous peoples’ experiences of homelessness and housing insecurity across BC to:

- ▶ Create a replicable data collection framework
- ▶ Provide recommendations to help alleviate and eradicate Indigenous homelessness and housing insecurity



## AHMA Advocacy Gets Results

AHMA’s advocacy led to changes in BC’s Residential Tenancy Act (RTA). We submitted a position paper on supportive housing in 2023 and new regulations came into effect in February 2024.

Under the RTA, guest policies and wellness checks were prohibited. Now, amendments enable supportive housing providers to support tenant and staff safety by conducting wellness checks and managing guest policies. The prohibition remains in place for other landlords to protect tenant privacy.

AHMA and BC Housing are collaborating on template policies for housing providers.

“We call on the federal government to release the \$4 billion budgeted for URN Indigenous housing. Urgent implementation is crucial.”

Margaret Pfoh, AHMA CEO

“Housing financialization maximizes profits for shareholders, resulting in rising rents and evictions.”

Margaret Pfoh, AHMA CEO



## Stop Financialization of Housing

In 2023, the National Housing Council held a review panel on the financialization of rental housing. AHMA and our Housing Central partners, BCNPHA and CHF BC, submitted recommendations to stop the financialization of housing.

AHMA CEO Margaret Pfoh was also invited to speak at an Indigenous-centered oral hearing, where she pointed out:

- ▶ Financialization is a major issue that undermines housing affordability in Canada
- ▶ Financial firms and institutional investors, focused on maximizing profits for shareholders, hold 20-30% of purpose-built rental housing stock in Canada, which has resulted in rising rents and evictions
- ▶ A recent survey found Indigenous respondents face homelessness after evictions at almost double the rate of non-Indigenous respondents<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ The **National Housing Strategy** may have indirectly increased financialization of housing with the rental construction financing initiative, as requirements are inaccessible to the non-profit sector
- ▶ Instead, the initiative gave private developers access to low interest loans for new construction, further concentrating rental housing in the hands of real estate investment trusts
- ▶ The federal government needs to support more affordable housing options in the non-profit and Indigenous housing sector, plus regulatory mechanisms to ensure private market affordability

In May, the panel submitted its report to federal Housing Minister Sean Fraser, stating:

- ▶ Housing must be treated the same way as health care, as universal access to adequate housing is essential
- ▶ Using financialized strategies is having an adverse impact on the right to adequate housing and is reducing the supply of affordable rental housing

Minister Fraser must respond to the report this fall.  
(See the report via this [QR link](#).)



<sup>1</sup> First United survey in BC, June 2022 to June 2023

## Homeownership

### Connecting with Co-ops

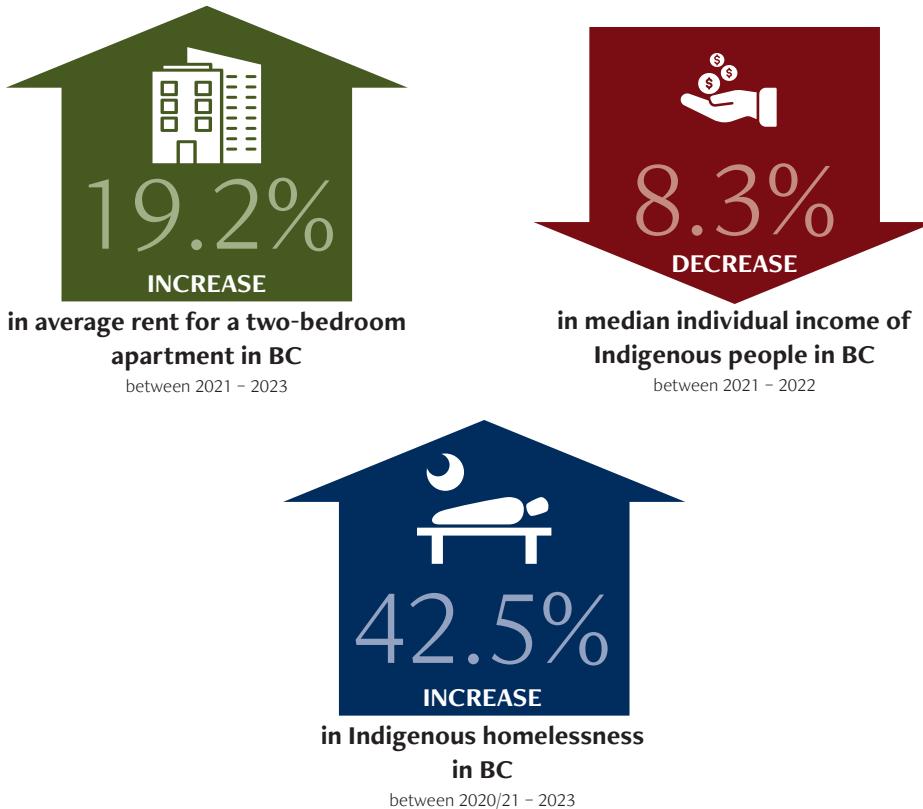
“AHMA is exploring the potential to achieve Indigenous homeownership in co-op developments,” says Cliff Grant, AHMA Director of Strategic Relations. “More urban Indigenous people live in cities than on reserve. We want to see if the co-operative model of shared ownership will fit well with our people.

“We’re researching how other jurisdictions create affordable homeownership to find adaptable approaches. We have begun discussions with the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC, BC Co-op Association, and New Relationship Trust. And we will share what we learn with AHMA members and First Nations in BC.”

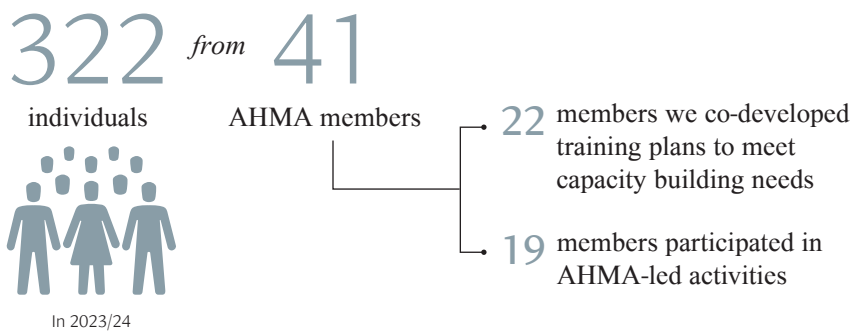
# Data and Research

## Exploring Data Trends

We are reviewing various data sources—BC Housing, CMHC, Statistics Canada, and more—to ensure our knowledge of how Indigenous populations are affected by current socioeconomic trends is current. For example, recent data show increasing housing costs combined with a drop in incomes have contributed to rising homelessness among Indigenous people:



## AHMA's Training & Evaluation team delivered training for:



“Every service provider should have this training!”

Training participant

## Seeking Indigenous Data Sovereignty

“AHMA has created a unique stream of Indigenous data with our complex care program,” says Bryan Sluggett, AHMA Data and Evaluation Coordinator. “We have funding for an Electronic Medical Record database for the project, which AHMA administers, not the health authorities.

“We enhanced consent and privacy processes to ensure people living in complex care can choose whether to participate in program evaluation of clinical records. And we are developing an Indigenous-lens evaluation framework, grounded in the cultural context of each site. Now we can collect, report and evaluate data, setting our own indicators for success.

“Most data sets in BC don’t have a safe, consistent way to identify Indigenous people within services. We’re working with government departments and Indigenous organizations on the Indigenous Data Advisory Committee to address the lack of Indigenous identifiers in homelessness data.”

In addition, AHMA joined the Indigenous Evaluation Network’s inaugural online Indigenous Evaluation Summit in February 2024, with 200-plus participants across Canada. The goal is to share resources, build capacity, support mentoring, and nurture new Indigenous approaches to evaluation.

To connect cultural safety and privacy, we shared an online session with AHMA members, *A Culturally Safe Approach to Privacy*: a discussion with the Deputy Privacy Commissioner to raise awareness we are regulated by the Personal Information Protection Act.

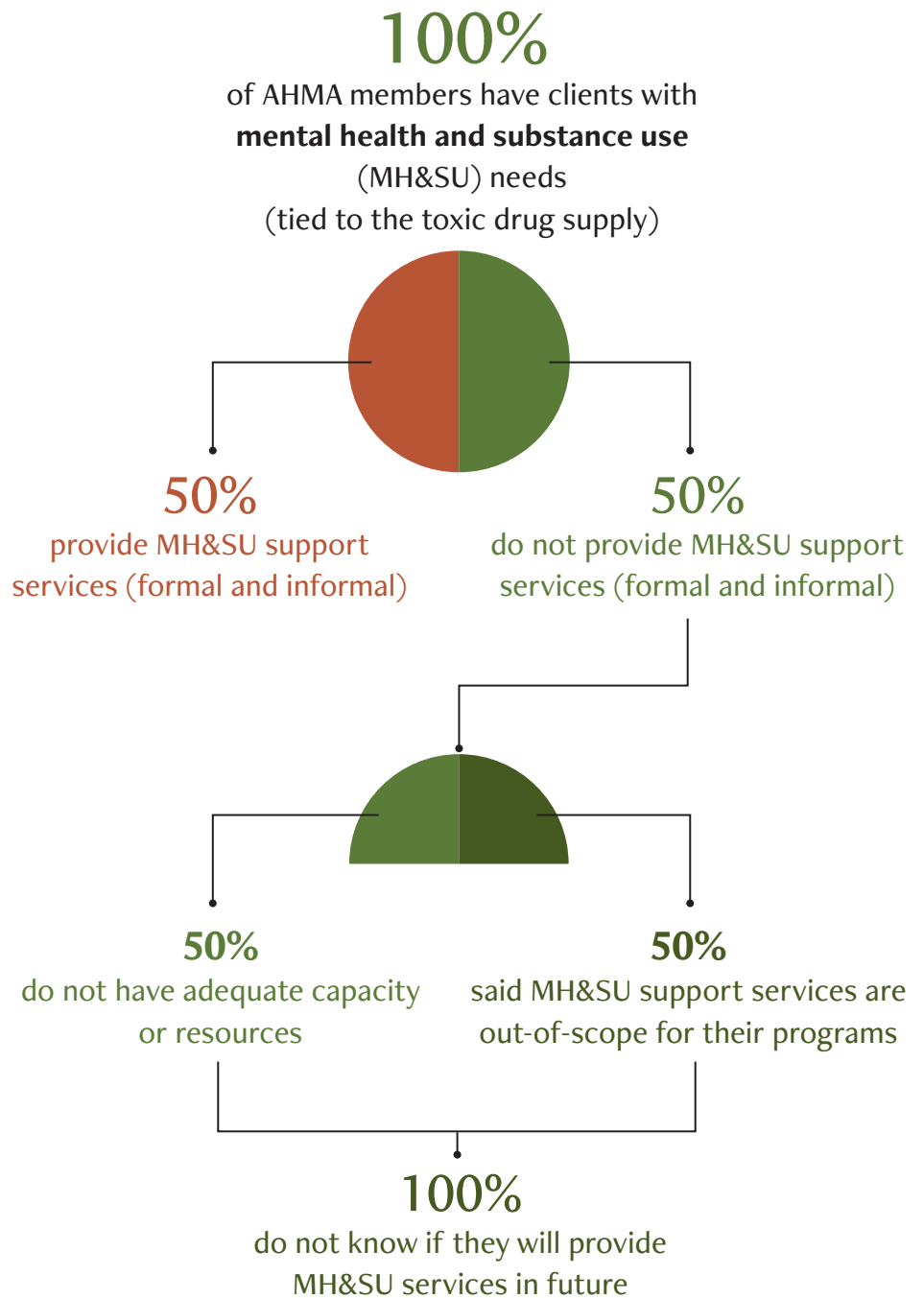


“We need more effective supports for people with complex needs.”

AHMA member

## Increasing Complexity

“In fall 2023, we completed our needs assessment of AHMA members’ experiences providing housing and homelessness services,” says Andrea Carter, AHMA Manager, Training and Evaluation. “The leading theme—*For Indigenous, By Indigenous* providers are seeing increasingly complex mental health and substance use needs among clients, in a resource-scarce environment.”



## Members face seven core challenges:

### Lack of equitable access to services

- 1
  - ◆ Lack of partnerships and referral pathways in the community
  - ◆ Assessment processes for access are culturally unsafe and traumatic
  - ◆ Specialized services require formal diagnosis but opportunities are scarce
  - ◆ People living in rural, remote and northern areas must often relocate to access health services, causing financial, family and cultural hardships

### Lack of safe services and pathways

- 2
  - ◆ Calling for help or referring Indigenous clients to other service providers can have risks
  - ◆ Indigenous people face discrimination, neglect, unsafe situations, abuse and violence accessing services

### Lack of coordination and accountability

- 3
  - ◆ People are discharged/transitioned among systems with no accountability for follow up to ensure high risk clients receive critical supports
  - ◆ Detox and treatment programs often discharge patients without a housing plan or connection to housing supports
  - ◆ Corrections often discharge without a housing plan which can lead to breach of probation

### Lack of holistic supports

- 4
  - ◆ Providers are doing this work out of necessity and without core funding
  - ◆ Staff are working outside their roles, skills and experience
  - ◆ Crisis response is becoming normalized, without resources and supports for clients or staff

### Security and safety issues

- 5
  - ◆ Negative impacts for other tenants/clients witnessing mental health, substance use and overdose behaviours
  - ◆ Staff unsure how to identify or address undiagnosed MH&SU
  - ◆ Inability to transition people to more appropriate housing without risking homelessness
  - ◆ Buildings are not designed to have complex needs alongside family units
  - ◆ Substance use can bring organized crime, drug dealing, and gang violence to projects

### Limited harm reduction and recovery services

- 6
  - ◆ 36% of survey respondents provide harm reduction services
  - ◆ 27% of survey respondents provide overdose prevention services
  - ◆ Staff training is needed to increase safety and reduce risk
  - ◆ Members have different levels of openness to harm reduction services

### Staff recruitment and retention issues

- 7
  - ◆ Limited pool of candidates with experience working in this changing landscape
  - ◆ Low wages and high workloads make it difficult to compete with other sectors and retain experienced staff
  - ◆ Staff wellness challenges like burnout, fatigue, trauma responses

## To improve outcomes for Indigenous people with MH&SU issues, members need:

- ▶ Sufficient support to sustain people in current housing
- ▶ Resources to support staff recruitment and retention
- ▶ Specialized training for staff across the sector
- ▶ Specialized complex care services for vulnerable and at-risk groups
- ▶ Holistic, wraparound support for people across the housing continuum
- ▶ Culturally supportive, appropriate diagnosis and assessment
- ▶ Pathways and partnerships to fast-track clients identified with complex needs
- ▶ Accountability across systems for monitoring follow up and ensuring people receive support
- ▶ Rural, remote and northern strategies to connect people to specialized services

# Funding Supports

## Helping Members Get NICHI Funding

AHMA helped create NICHI in late 2022 to deliver *For Indigenous, By Indigenous* housing solutions for urban Indigenous people. On November 24, 2023, NICHI issued its first proposal call for \$281.5 million in federal funding, with submissions due just seven weeks later.

“All our members face financial stress,” says Patrick Caraher, AHMA Portfolio Planning and Development Specialist. “This was an opportunity to cover crucial expenses not funded by existing programs. Our asset strategies and operations staff fast tracked a NICHI project team to help members apply.”

Indigenous providers across the country submitted proposals worth more than \$2 billion, demonstrating need outstrips supply and supporting the case for greater investment.

NICHI selected 65 proponents for grants across Canada, with 20 in BC and the Yukon. These grants provide either capital or capacity support. Joint AHMA-member applications secured nine.

Our team collaborated on 39 funding applications from 18 members. Of these, AHMA members were granted almost \$12 million in capital projects and \$1.5 million in capacity projects:

### Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George

**\$1,845,094**

in capital funding

### Citaapi Mahtii Housing Society (Ahousesht Nation)

**\$216,000**

in capacity funding

### Dakelh & Quesnel Community Housing Society

**\$175,020** and **\$134,784**

in capital funding

in capacity funding

### Fort St. John Native Housing Society

**\$157,490**

capacity funding

### Island Urban Indigenous Wellness Society

**\$221,889**

capacity funding

### Kekinow Native Housing Society (see story on page 24)

**\$9,643,082** and **\$861,524**

capital funding

capacity funding

### Salish Lelum Housing Society

**\$1,000,000**

capacity funding



Jaydin and family

## Meet Jaydin

Jaydin worked as an intern with Island Urban Indigenous Wellness Society, after asking Thomas O’Brien, their Housing and Facilities Manager, for a job. Jaydin helps with property and garden maintenance and janitorial work and says the opportunity has given him a sense of community.

“I’m related to a lot of the people here, so it’s a family-based, good environment,” says Jaydin. “People say they’re grateful for me being here. I’m not used to hearing stuff like that and it motivates me to do my best. I love coming to work every day and track on being positive, even on my bad days.

“I’m a parent so Thomas tries to keep me employed and I’m grateful he sent me for a Building Service Worker Certificate to build me up. Having a son has changed my perspective—I need to take responsibility. And having Thomas as a boss is good for me because he’s a strong leader and I look up to him.

“I wasn’t hanging around the best people before I had my son, and when I stopped drinking, I didn’t like the state I was in. After my son was born, I really wanted to change and have some self-respect, because how else would I teach my son to feel self-respect? I work on being open because of childhood trauma; my mom and dad are residential school survivors. And being a native man is hard. Now I just try to live my life as comfortably as I can, and I’ve forgiven people.

“Being a parent gives me a purpose. Work helps me move forward and not try to control things I can’t control, and gave me clarity that anything I put my mind to is possible. It’s also about being a man, being vulnerable. When people hold stuff in, it ends up hurting them. I want to teach my son it’s okay to be vulnerable because it makes you stronger at the end of the day. My life revolves around my son, he motivates me to try to be a better person every day.”



## Youth Internships Build Capacity

We were able to support five youth interns to acquire skills working with AHMA members, during the second year of our Housing Internship for Indigenous Youth program:

- ▶ **Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George** – Two interns supporting social programs for tenants
- ▶ **Aboriginal Mother Centre Society** – One intern supporting tenant relations and housing administration
- ▶ **Island Urban Indigenous Wellness Society (IUIWS)**– One intern supporting maintenance and repairs
- ▶ **Helping Spirit Lodge Society** – One intern supporting maintenance and repairs

Thanks to CMHC for funding youth development opportunities again this year!



## Rental Protection Fund Acquisitions

### Lu'ma Native Housing Society

Lu'ma purchased a 16-unit apartment building in Esquimalt to ensure current tenants will not face renoviction or displacement. The building was for sale and at risk of redevelopment. The Rental Protection Fund (RPF) contributed \$3 million to the \$5.3 million cost. Lu'ma is putting in the balance through low-interest financing.

Residents will be able to stay in the building with the same rents, while Lu'ma manages renovations to the roof, the building exterior and upgrades in three units. As units become available over time, Lu'ma will offer them to urban Indigenous people.

In addition, Hi'yám Housing just purchased a 35-unit apartment building in North Vancouver, with an RPF grant to cover most of the purchase costs and the remaining amount financed through a loan. As tenants move out, Hi'yám Housing will give Squamish people priority to fill the vacancies.

## Budget 2024 Recommendations

AHMA collaborated with our Housing Central partners, the BC Non-Profit Housing Association and Co-operative Housing Federation of BC, on recommendations to the provincial and federal governments for their 2024 budgets:

### Provincial Budget

- ▶ Support AHMA's **Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy**
- ▶ Allocate \$24 million to offset the Property Transfer Tax for co-op lease renewals and Rental Protection Fund beneficiaries
- ▶ Allocate \$60 million to exempt non-profit housing providers from property tax
- ▶ Redirect the renter rebate and additional homeowner grant allowances to supportive housing

### Federal Budget

- ▶ Allocate resources to implement year one of AHMA's URNIHS
- ▶ Create a federal fund to enable the community housing sector to acquire rental housing properties:
  - ◆ We were pleased to see our successful RPF model scaled up to the national level with a new \$1.5 billion Canada Rental Protection Fund
- ▶ Refresh the current approach to taxation and revenue generation to reduce the financial burden on non-profit and co-operative housing providers
- ▶ Adjust the Co-operative Housing Development Program budget to account for lost capacity due to higher interest rates and construction costs

## Project Support Services

### AHMA Trainee in Development Services

Our Development Manager Daana Magi is working on secondment to BC Housing to train in development management services. Combined with our new direct funding from the Ministry of Housing (see story on page 31), AHMA is taking the initial steps toward offering more in-house development support for members.

# NEW CONSTRUCTION



Kekinow's renovated and upgraded New Dawn project



Kekinow's New Dawn project - aerial view



Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George building

## New NICHI Housing

Two AHMA members have significant capital projects in the works with their NICHI funds:

## Kekinow Renovates Surrey Property

Congratulations to Kekinow Native Housing Society for winning a \$9.6 million grant to renovate its affordable housing complex in Surrey, a project called New Dawn.

“This project isn’t a good candidate for redevelopment,” says Kekinow CEO Rupinder Cheema. “We were blessed to receive funding to renovate these 33 townhouses to current standards and extend the life of the development.

“We’re excited about improving the quality of life for residents with better homes and surroundings, so people can build good memories here and feel connected to the land.”

Upgrades include new floors, cabinetry, heating system, roof, windows, landscaping, and a new play area for children. Kekinow is exploring outdoor Indigenous features like a fire pit, sweat lodge and wall mural by a local artist. A land-based healing approach will be used to create a wellness walk through the complex and a gardening area.

## New Home for Indigenous People with Diverse Abilities

Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George is building a new, six-unit house for Indigenous people with diverse abilities—with ongoing support from Community Living BC—ready for move in next year.

## New URN Indigenous Housing

AHMA members are opening some stunning new developments:

**M'akola Housing Society** – 170 new affordable homes for Indigenous individuals and families living in Sooke opened in spring 2024, the largest expansion of affordable housing in the district's history. Two identical five-storey buildings include 34 units reserved for people with very low incomes, rented at the shelter rate, with the rest at below-market rates. M'akola opened another 75 affordable rentals in Sooke in fall 2023 for Indigenous individuals, seniors and families.



Sooke Drennan building



Port Alberni Huupsitas building

**Swahili Vision International Association & Aboriginal Land Trust** (a subsidiary of Lu'ma Native Housing Society) – 96 units of affordable, culturally safe housing for Black and Indigenous families, Elders and individuals opened in New Westminster. This unique collaboration brings multiple generations of Indigenous and Swahili families together and supports sharing cultures and traditions. The building and landscaping incorporate Indigenous and Swahili art and Indigenous plants. Lu'ma and Swahili Vision International will operate the development.

**WestCoast Native Health Care Society** – 48 new affordable units for Indigenous seniors and people with diverse abilities opened in Port Alberni in January 2024. Half the units in the five-storey Huupsitas building are rent-gear-to-income, nine will be for households with very low incomes, and the remaining will be rented at low end market rents. Huupsitas enables independent seniors to age in place. WestCoast Native Health Care contributed the land, part of the Tsawaayus Rainbow Gardens Campus of Care, which is also home to a 44-unit complex care facility and a 20-unit independent living apartment building.



Swahili vision International Association & Aboriginal Land Trust development



Vernon Thunderbird Manor

**Vernon Native Housing Society** – 35 new affordable rental homes in Thunderbird Manor – Phase 2 for Indigenous people in Vernon, close to amenities, services and transit. Three apartments are for young people, age 16-19, who live independently, with access to counselling and community resources.

Sooke, Port Alberni, and Vernon building photos courtesy of BC Housing

# 4 Health, Culture, Training & Capacity

Support improved health and well-being of Indigenous people through safe, stable and culturally appropriate housing programs and services

## Housing Provider Staffing

### Building Members' Capacity

“During the past year, we met with six members to discuss their training and capacity needs,” says Karin Zylstra, AHMA Training and Capacity Building Specialist. “Based on our conversations, we created a capacity building proposal for each member, with a list of recommended training courses.”

Training can include board governance, grant writing, trauma-informed practice, staff wellness, tenant management, cultural safety, non-violent crisis intervention, and more.

“Our goal is to build long-term capacity that supports personal and professional growth and staff retention,” adds Judy Wesley, AHMA Training and Capacity Specialist. “By doing so, we hope to help members reduce staff burnout and turnover. We offer free training to members through AHMA-led and contracted courses, as operating budgets don't provide much support in this area.”

### Adding Indigenous Lens to Ready, Set, Operate!

In the past year, AHMA has worked on weaving Indigenous cultural safety throughout the BCNPHA course, Ready, Set, Operate!

This training teaches service providers about the complexities of operating non-profit housing, from asset management to tenant relations, financial and risk management, organizational development, effective maintenance, and more. The course combines four facilitated workshops and five online modules.

Judy Wesley, AHMA Training and Capacity Specialist, will share our Cultural Safety Reflection Tool at the first workshop; the tool is also covered in the online introduction. Reflective questions on cultural safety are included throughout the course sessions. Then Judy will return to lead a discussion on cultural safety in the final workshop. We will roll out the new course this fall.

### Revitalizing Support

“We reached out to support several members with revitalization and remediation needs,” says Stacey Bourque, AHMA Revitalization Manager. “We spent time with each society to discuss operational, financial, or governance challenges, and work towards a solution that meets their needs. We share our findings and recommendations and provide further support if needed.”

Revitalization recommendations may include new policies, stronger financial procedures, bylaw adjustments, leadership/governance training, or other strategies.

AHMA is hiring two additional revitalization coordinators to support this work.

“We need cultural safety because Indigenous people need and deserve spaces where they feel welcome, safe and home.”

Judy Wesley, AHMA Training and Capacity Specialist



# Cultural Humility & Trauma

## Cultural Safety Reflection Tool

“We launched our Cultural Safety Reflection Tool with a community agency this year,” says Andrea Carter, AHMA Manager, Training and Evaluation.

“Our model focuses on non-Indigenous providers who work with Indigenous people in the housing and homelessness sector. Our goal is to help them build good relationships with Indigenous people receiving support, using our four pillars of cultural safety—self-agency, relationship, trauma-informed and reciprocity.”

“Each participant does a self-reflection and organizational reflection related to the four pillars, which requires openness and safety,” says Judy Wesley, AHMA Training and Capacity Specialist. “We use a reflective tool called the Medicine Bent (Tool) Box to help each person exercise self-agency. This work is emotional, interpersonal and impactful—the gravity of cultural safety is quite beautiful.”

“Evidence and experience show cultural safety improves outcomes across determinants of wellness,” adds Karin Zylstra, AHMA Training and Capacity Building Specialist. “Our process creates a safe space to unpack uncomfortable dialogues about imbalances in an organization. We identify capacity building to close gaps in Indigenous services and support Truth and Reconciliation.”

## Our Learning

- ▶ Giving self-assessment surveys before the organizational surveys enabled people to offer an honest perspective on the organization and their place in making change
- ▶ The trauma-informed experiential exercise gave space for grounding, before moving into difficult topics and self-reflection
- ▶ The Medicine Box tool gave participants space to visualize their current capacity and shift previous learnings, and safety to see their strengths and reflect on new directions
- ▶ Offering time for participant aftercare may be helpful, such as an opportunity to debrief, given the intensive nature of the topics.

## Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People

For too long, the housing needs of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people have been underestimated. Indigenous women are less likely to appear in shelters, drop-ins, public spaces, or social services and are undercounted in data and research as a result.

To understand Indigenous women’s housing needs and gender-based experiences of homelessness in BC, AHMA hired a contractor to calculate core housing need and housing targets for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

This research laid the groundwork for developing a **Gender-based Violence Housing Strategy** (see story on page 15).

## Housing & Health

### New Lodge Teachings Course with FNHA

“Individuals carry so much wisdom and knowledge in their bodies from birth,” says Judy Wesley, AHMA Training and Capacity Specialist. “The world is ever changing. We created a reflective tool called the Medicine Bent (Tool) Box individuals can use to understand what is showing up within the body—for example, when the mind, body and spirit are in a survival mode no longer needed for the present life—and seek a fresh perspective of the situation.

“We delivered a new Lodge Teachings course to the First Nations Health Authority this year, using the medicine box to create a safe space to reflect on goals, understand the authentic self and daxgyet (strengths), and apply new tools to daily living, personally and professionally.

“The course integrates teachings from my Gitksan Elders with research into Indigenous psychotherapy and philosophy and western theories.” The three modules cover:

#### MEDICINE BOX #1



**Tending to the fire**  
(trauma-informed practice)

#### MEDICINE BOX #2



**Building a resiliency blanket**  
(trauma-informed land-based healing and staff wellness support)

#### MEDICINE BOX #3



**Walking beside our neighbour inside our village**  
(how we walk with Indigenous people)

## Housing & Health Vision

“Our members are seeing a growing number of tenants with complex needs who require additional supports to maintain housing,” says Stacey Bourque, AHMA Revitalization Manager. “Yet many do not have the resources to provide the clinical and social services these tenants need.

“AHMA recognizes the intersectionality of health and housing. We have created a vision for integrating health and housing across the continuum to address unmet needs among urban Indigenous people. We are actively seeking funding for a full spectrum of support services.”

Recognizing the intersection of health and housing would include:

- ▶ A single point of coordinated access and assessment for urban Indigenous people who are homeless or at risk
- ▶ Based on acuity level, people would be directed to appropriate support—some may simply need help finding subsidized housing and others may require clinical supports 24/7
- ▶ Low barrier Housing First programs are crucial to supporting people experiencing homelessness
- ▶ Intensive case management teams to attach a case manager to each individual
- ▶ Indigenous-led Assertive Community Treatment teams—of nurses, concurrent disorder clinicians, social workers and justice specialists—to provide wrap-around supports for people experiencing homelessness and MH&SU, who don’t need complex care
- ▶ Indigenous recovery coaching teams to engage with clients coming out of treatment and/or initiating Opioid Agonist Therapy to support stabilization, reduce the risk of relapse, and increase success in housing
- ▶ Complex care housing, with in-house 24/7 access to clinical care and a supportive environment for vulnerable populations—URN Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, substance use and mental health conditions

## Support For Housing Assets

### Building Indigenous Youth Capacity

Our second cohort of Indigenous youth completed high performance building training at the Cheakamus Centre in North Vancouver. This program, We are One, combines an interactive online curriculum with in-person learning to:

- ▶ Provide hands-on experience in building envelope retrofit
- ▶ Teach building science and energy conservation
- ▶ Introduce communication, leadership and teamwork skills with an Indigenous perspective
- ▶ Empower Indigenous youth to pursue careers in the high-performance building sector
- ▶ Increase the skilled Indigenous workforce in rural and remote communities

This course is our second collaboration with the BC Institute of Technology, North Vancouver School District, Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Elders, Indigenous educators and industry leaders. We’re already planning phase three!



*We are One program provides high performance building training for Indigenous youth at the Cheakamus Centre in North Vancouver*



# Renewing Indigenous Housing

## Integrating Indigenous Design

► **Bevan Place** – M’akola Housing Society recently completed a \$4 million upgrade at its affordable housing complex in Terrace, with project management support from AHMA. Now renamed Bevan Place, the project honours Mel Bevan, who was a strong voice for Indigenous housing through Muks-Kum-Ol Housing, which built the residence. Bevan died last fall. (Muks-Kum-Ol became part of M’akola.)

For this upgrade, M’akola asked Mel’s son, artist Stan Bevan, to create an exterior art piece. His stunning, three-storey metal ombrae artwork of bear and salmon, called *The Welcome*, was unveiled in June. Indigenous artist Shawna Kiesman designed the entrance artwork to include “La Bala Sgan— Welcome, the cedar mat is laid out,” from the local Kitsumkalum people.

This project marked a milestone in our journey towards sustainability and cultural integration. The space blends with the natural environment, preserving natural elements like mature trees. We introduced advanced cooling systems, heat-recovery ventilators, and state-of-the-art exhaust ventilation to enhance energy efficiency. A new waterproofing system for the foundation, upgrades to the roof, external walls and openings, and new energy-efficient windows and doors bolster the building’s defenses against natural elements.

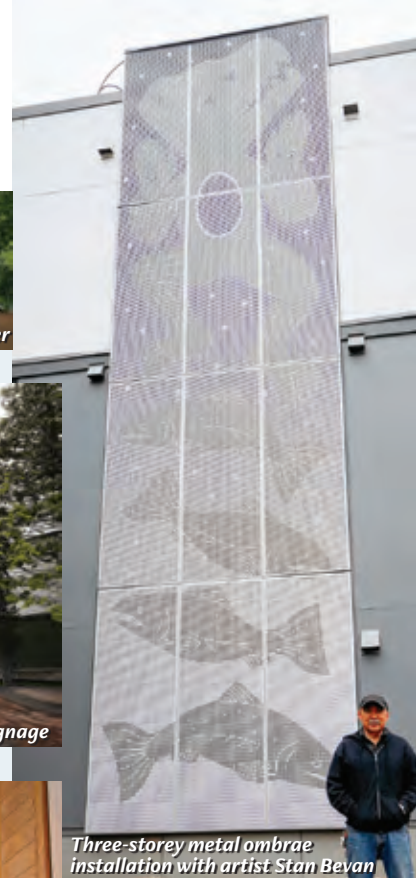
► **George Dowling Place** – M’akola also recently finished a \$2.4 million upgrade at George Dowling Place in Port Alberni. The exterior renewal includes a full building envelope and site rehabilitation, with a new retaining wall and walkway, wooden backyard fencing and concrete patios, custom playground, heat pumps and Indigenous art installations at each site entrance.



Front entrance with signage



Front entrance



Three-storey metal ombrae installation with artist Stan Bevan



Bevan Place



George Dowling Place



## Climate Action

AHMA members and tenants across the province have struggled during extreme weather conditions in recent years, from flooding to heat domes to wildfires. Our team participated in research and events aimed at ameliorating the impacts of climate change:

### ► Communities Taking Climate Action: Leading Courageously

– Sara Fralin, AHMA Engagement and Technical Services Manager, shared asset care activities designed to increase members’ building energy efficiency and reduce emissions, in a November 2023 panel discussion.



The Tamarack Institute’s Community Climate Transitions team hosted this event to explore inclusive, equitable climate transition activities in our communities.

### ► Lived experience & stories of extreme heat among Indigenous households in BC:

*Assessing the response from Indigenous housing providers and AHMA* – We connected with 16 AHMA members to learn about the challenges urban Indigenous providers and tenants face dealing with extreme heat events like the 2021 heat dome in BC. Our 2023 report makes six recommendations, each with supporting activities, to protect vulnerable citizens:

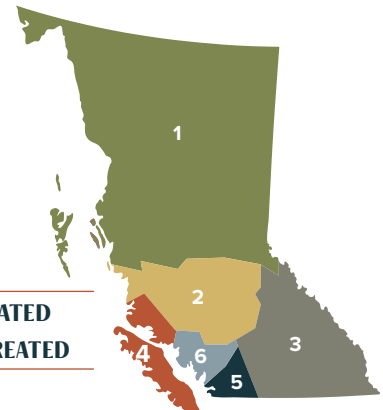
- ◆ Nurture existing social networks, support systems and partnerships
- ◆ Think beyond centralized cooling systems
- ◆ Embrace community strength and resiliency
- ◆ Transform financial support systems
- ◆ Ensure effective communications and information management
- ◆ Develop transformative, equitable policies, programs and emergency response plans

(See the report via this QR link.)



## Renewal Projects by Region\*

This year, AHMA supported 14 members with a variety of capital renewal projects—from boiler replacements to flood and fire restoration, electrical service upgrades, roof repairs and replacements, interior renovations, sprinkler system upgrades, HVAC installations, new windows, building envelope upgrades, asbestos abatement, emergency bridge repairs, re-piping, energy retrofits and elevator modernization—valued at more than \$40 million.



REGION	PROJECTS	#UNITS	TOTAL\$*	ESTIMATED JOBS CREATED
1 Northern BC	5 (4 new/1 ongoing)	108	\$4,725,766	6
2 Cariboo Chilcotin	3 (new)	40	\$91,617	1
3 Thompson Okanagan	2 (1 new/1 complete)	21	\$1,232,571	4
4 Vancouver Island	20 (4 new/3 ongoing/13 complete)	467	\$11,664,808	2
5 Vancouver Coastal	10 (9 ongoing/1 complete)	506	\$14,309,848	0
6 Fraser Valley	7 (1 new/5 ongoing/1 complete)	176	\$16,533,024	9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>1,078</b>	<b>\$40,172,103</b>	<b>22</b>

\* This amount represents the total approved project budgets, so differs from the 2023/24 fiscal year amount



# AHMA'S Organizational Sustainability

Foundational to supporting members and being a leader in the housing sector

## Funding Diversification



### New Ministry Funding

“We received \$29.3 million in direct funding from the Ministry of Housing in spring 2023,” says David Silva, AHMA Director of Asset Strategies. “AHMA is using the money to lead *For Indigenous, By Indigenous* capital projects we prioritized with members. Our team is excited at the opportunity for AHMA provide project management support and pilot direct delivery of two new developments.”

### Development & Capital Renewal

#### \$16.9 million

To develop a new housing complex for the Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Centre on a vacant lot; we transferred land ownership to the society



### Operational Support

#### \$183,000

For operational funding at Wilma's Transition Housing new third-stage housing project for women and children

#### \$10.9 million

To redevelop Aqanttanam Housing Society's Claydon Villa complex in Cranbrook



#### \$100,000

For a fund navigator position to develop sustainable grant writing tools with AHMA and members

#### \$500,000

To buy and renovate a building in Smithers into a small supportive housing site for Indigenous families, run by Dze L'Kant Friendship Centre



#### \$400,000

To upgrade HVAC systems in various Vernon Native Housing homes to alleviate high energy costs and provide climate protection

“We are here to help AHMA members and will walk alongside you.”

Margaret Pfoh, AHMA CEO

## Direct Federal Funding

“We also established our first direct funding agreement with the federal government this year—\$12.8 million over three years from CMHC toward capital renewals,” says David Silva, AHMA Director of Asset Strategies. “Kudos to CMHC staff for setting up a flexible approach so we can target our priority projects—renewing 855 affordable urban Indigenous homes.”

We have a unique co-investment arrangement, with CMHC providing 40% of overall funding and AHMA covering the other 60% from existing sources.



*Aaron Williams, Squamish Nation and Olivia Jim, Executive Director, Helping Spirit Lodge Society, at the event*

*CMHC Co-investment Announcement*



*Helping Spirit Lodge Society Staff blessing by Bradley Pearce (Singing Thunderbird Man)*

## Celebrating Partnerships

We are grateful to FortisBC and BC Hydro for continuing to co-fund four positions at AHMA, as part of our successful three-year partnership:

- ▶ James Bourque, Housing Condition Advisor
- ▶ Mae Flanders, Energy Program Coordinator
- ▶ Louis Napope, Housing Condition Advisor
- ▶ Shahed Shafazand, Energy Projects Advisor

These employees have increased AHMA’s capacity to improve energy efficiency in our members’ buildings.

Read FortisBC’s profile of AHMA’s work in **How energy efficiency upgrades at Indigenous affordable housing societies make a positive impact.**  
(See the report via this [QR link](#).)



Check out BC Hydro’s article on the impacts of our collaboration via this [QR link](#).



# New AHMA \$\$ Partners provided a total of \$45,837,825

\$\$	FUNDER
\$29,333,000	<b>Ministry of Housing</b> one-time grant
\$12,825,000	<b>CMHC</b> co-investment funding
\$1,000,000	<b>CMHC</b> seed funding to conduct condition assessments
\$900,000	<b>Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction</b> for complex care housing
\$280,000	<b>BC Hydro</b> funding
\$252,842	<b>Zero Emissions Innovation Centre</b> – Deep Retrofit Accelerator Initiative grant
\$250,000	<b>FortisBC</b> funding
\$207,523	<b>BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres</b>
\$200,000	<b>Vancity</b> funding for member asset management support
\$156,006	<b>Ministry of Housing</b>
\$75,000	<b>Tree of Life Foundation</b> (\$150,000 over two years, now in second year)
\$123,954	<b>Community Living BC</b>
\$94,500	<b>CMHC</b> for our youth internship program
\$85,000	<b>TED Foundation</b>
\$35,000	<b>Catherine Donnelly Foundation</b>
\$10,000	<b>Vancity</b> funding to research members’ lived experiences in extreme heat events
\$10,000	<b>Tamarack Institute Community Climate Transitions Community Innovation Fund</b>

## Strengthening Relationships with Members

### Meeting with Members

“Coming out of the pandemic, we shifted to visiting as many members in person as possible in the last year,” says Celeste Hayward, AHMA Director of Operations. “We talked about our member needs assessment, did operational reviews, and began revitalization work.

“Most importantly, we had many meaningful conversations to build our knowledge, so we can meet members where they’re at. Together, we identified areas where AHMA can provide support, in addition to being a funder. We also helped new members to onboard leaders and staff.”

## AHMA Platforms & Processes

### New Website Live

We refreshed our website this year to enhance functionality and feature new information about:

- ▶ **AHMA membership** – Outlines the benefits of AHMA membership and opportunities to partner with like-minded organizations
- ▶ **AHMA’s history** – Shares AHMA’s origins and milestones in our evolution over the years
- ▶ **Interactive map** – Enables users to search members by service provided or by AHMA region



## Organizational Effectiveness

### Professional Development Builds Capacity

“We like to offer our employees opportunities to pursue professional career paths, with training to learn new skills and advance to new positions,” says Cliff Grant, AHMA Director of Strategic Relations. “This approach builds internal capacity and helps us retain staff.

“For example, Courtney Ellis MacDonald advanced from AHMA’s Office Coordinator last year to Project Coordinator with Asset Strategies this year.

“We’re always interested in recruiting talented Indigenous individuals to our team to increase capacity for supporting AHMA members.”



# Raising Our Hands to Indigenous Housing Providers

In this year's report, we welcome the stories of three AHMA Indigenous housing and service providers—Cariboo Friendship Society, Hiýám Housing, and the Kamloops Native Housing Society. Each group supports Indigenous tenants across multiple generations, a reflection of cultural tradition.

# CARIBOO FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY



“Friendship centres exist to help urban Indigenous people get ahead in life,” says **Rosanna McGregor**, Executive Director, Cariboo Friendship Society (CFS). “I’ve seen our housing and services help people move from living in poverty to being settled two years later.”



*Cariboo Friendship Centre*



*Cariboo Friendship Centre dinner and dance*



*Elders' art lesson*

## Housing & Support Services

In 1967, Cariboo Friendship Centre opened a drop-in space with youth programming across the street from its current location in Williams Lake. The group incorporated as CFS two years later and moved to the new site.

In the early 70s, centre staff helped people moving from the reserve get ID and set up bank accounts. Others needed support to address alcohol and drug use. Since then, CFS has always kept an eye on community needs and launched services in response. Now CFS offers:

**Affordable urban Indigenous housing** – We run several types of affordable housing for low-income Indigenous individuals and families, including:

- ▶ **17 affordable apartments** in our main administration building, two for people with diverse abilities and one designated for supportive recovery
- ▶ **Eagles Nest**, a 33-unit apartment complex of one and two-bedroom units, four for people with diverse abilities
- ▶ **Detached housing**, for a total of 38 two, three, and four-bedroom units
- ▶ **Two four-plex townhouses**

“Reconciliation is about trust.”

**Rosanna McGregor**  
Executive Director,  
Cariboo Friendship Society

**Social services** – CFS also offers a range of services to support urban Indigenous people from conception to dying:

- ▶ **Transition housing** – Chiwid Transition House provides a safe, non-judgmental refuge, with 16 beds for women and children who have experienced physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, and offers counselling, education, support workers and support groups
- ▶ **P.E.A.C.E. Program for children and youth experiencing violence** – Our staff counsellor offers one-on-one counselling, group work, and support
- ▶ **Shelter services** – Free overnight accommodation—30 beds and a family unit—for people temporarily without housing and in crisis
- ▶ **Mental health liaison** – Our Mental Health Worker supports Indigenous individuals dealing with mental health issues and their families
- ▶ **Aboriginal addictions and mental health outreach** – We help Indigenous clients dealing with addictions and mental health issues address daily challenges and learn life skills

- ▶ **Pregnancy Outreach Program** – Our early childhood development program provides prenatal women with:
  - ◆ Lifestyle counselling on nutrition, breastfeeding, budgeting and substance use
  - ◆ A free weekly luncheon with guest speakers (car safety, infant massage, sewing group)
  - ◆ Education on food safety, menu planning, shopping lists, and low cost, nutritional meal prep
  - ◆ Parenting support groups on children’s health issues
- ▶ **Aboriginal supported child development** – For Indigenous children with special needs who require additional support in childcare settings
- ▶ **Aboriginal infant development** – We partner with parents/caregivers to develop strategies for promoting child development, in a family centred, home-based program
- ▶ **Little Mukluks Childcare Centre** – Parents, Elders and CFS staff work together in a culturally based daycare program for Indigenous children from birth to five years of age

- ▶ **Little Moccasins Learning Centre** – We offer the Aboriginal Head Start preschool program for Indigenous children from three to five years of age
- ▶ **Aboriginal Child and Youth Mental Health Program** – Our team promotes wellness with children and youth experiencing social, emotional and/or behavioural disorders
- ▶ **Family Ties Supervised Visitation Program** – CFS provides a safe, comfortable setting for children, youth and families to enjoy time together during supervised visits
- ▶ **Elders’ Circle of Care Program** – We bring Elders together to share knowledge, tell stories, and socialize

**Economic development projects** – We also contribute to the local economy:

- ▶ **Hearth Restaurant** – Our restaurant serves the community and shelter and offers catering
- ▶ **Native Arts and Crafts Shop** – We sell artworks and jewellery by local Indigenous artists
- ▶ **Local contracting** – CFS contracts with the community for dry walling, painting, building repair, maintenance, and more
- ▶ **Longhouse rentals** – We operate a full-service Longhouse for dances, gatherings, meetings and workshops



*Art lesson*

*Elders' mural*



*Elders' art*



Remembering our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls



Cariboo Friendship Society group

## Making a Difference

“I tell staff, ‘Never look down on anyone unless you’re giving them a helping hand up,’” says Rosanna.\* “Reconciliation is about trust.

“We watch for needs and gaps in our services, then look for funding and create solutions. For instance, we partnered with UBC Okanagan to create an Indigenous diabetes program, because a significant portion of our tenants have Type 2 diabetes.

“CFS also contributes to the local economy in a big way. Our society has \$2 million in assets and an operating budget of \$6.8 million. We employ 82 staff, with an annual payroll of \$2.4 million, who spend locally. And we run the Hearth Restaurant, which is not a money maker, but employs locals and is a popular place for people to visit—different ways to measure success.

“We also participate in the Social Planning Council to support community-wide socioeconomic development.”

## Working with AHMA

“I’ve been involved with AHMA since the beginning as a founding member, because member needs should drive AHMA’s priorities for urban Indigenous housing.

“The relationship with AHMA continues to evolve with the needs of our people. We rely on AHMA to step up on our behalf when we find common ground to benefit members and bridge gaps—like the partnership with the First Nations Health Authority and new model for complex care. AHMA helped bring different agencies together to create a program we need to help clients deal with complex needs.”

\* Paraphrase of Jesse Jackson quote

## TENANT VOICES

**Colten and his daughter Lily** first found a home with Cariboo Friendship Society in 2019. He’d been renting a room with his grandmother while Lily stayed with cousins.

“I moved to Williams Lake to start over, but nothing was affordable,” says Colten. “Then I got lucky when the Friendship Society found us an awesome two-bedroom apartment in Eagle’s Nest. We lived there for four years.

“We recently moved into a townhouse, with so much more space and a backyard with a trampoline. We set up a playroom in the basement. We have our own laundry and it’s free. Our new place is amazing.

“And it’s super affordable, just the rental portion of my disability pension, so I still have money for food. Plus, I can make a bit of extra money on disability to help us, so I bought a lawnmower and weedwhacker and started a small business in town.

“I have my independence with this home. Without the Friendship Society, I don’t know if I would ever have been able to take Lily back. She has grown up with staff at Little Moccasins, one of the best programs I’ve ever dealt with, and is in grade two now.

“Me and my daughter have never been happier. It’s a small community and everybody knows everybody else. I never thought I could afford a place like we have today. It’s been a blessing. We really are thriving.”



### Traditional Territory Recognition

Our team at Cariboo Friendship Society works in the traditional territory of the T'exelc te Secwépmc Nation.

# HIYÁM HOUSING



“Our Nation set an ambitious goal to house every Skwxwú7mesh person within a generation—25 years,” says **Donalene Rapada**, CEO of Hiyám ta Skwxwú7mesh Housing Society. “I’ve been working for our Nation for 30-plus years. As long as I can remember, housing has been our people’s top priority.

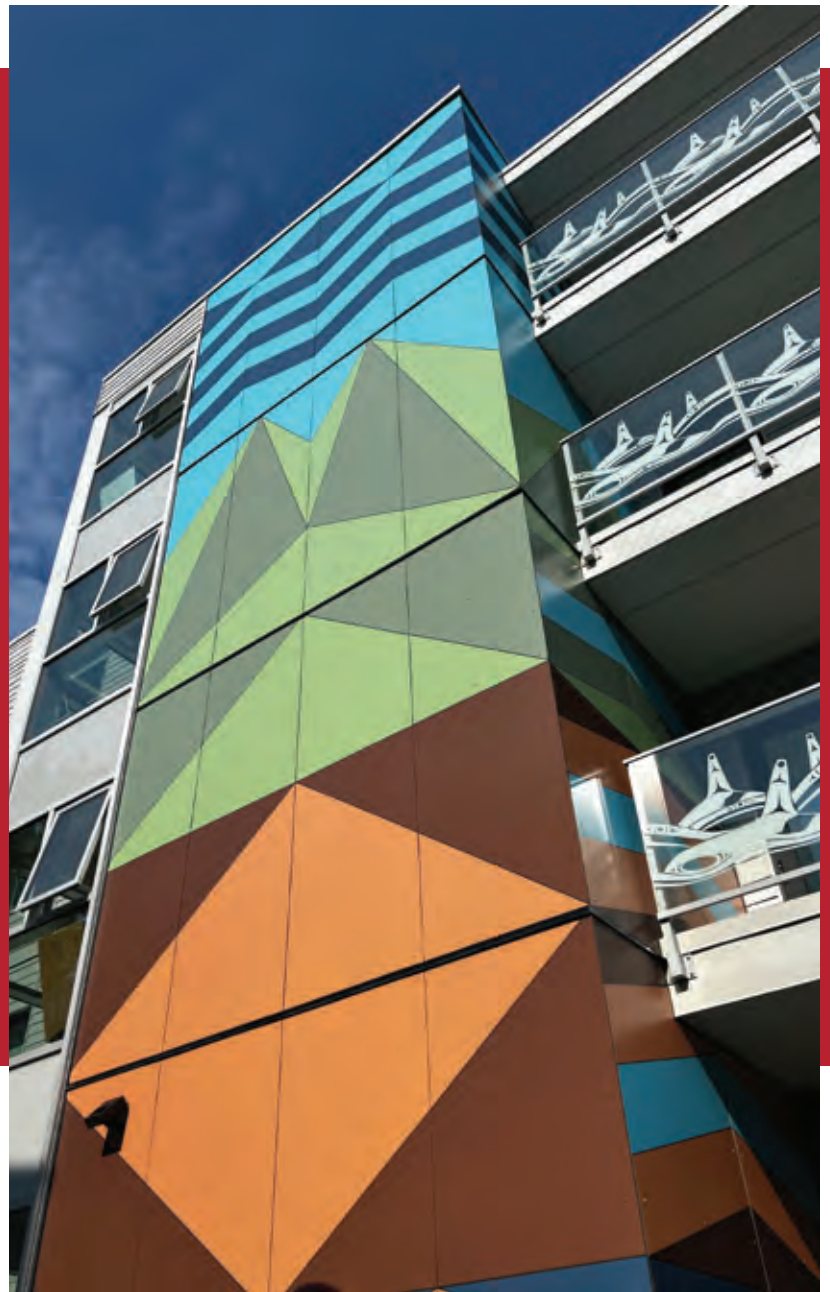
“We currently have more than 1,000 people on a waitlist for housing. Council realized the historic approach of building single family homes was not enough to meet the need and created Hiyám Housing in 2019. We were given six sites from our Nation to develop affordable housing for Squamish people.



*Hiyám Housing Chenkw Enút development (all building photos) nearing completion*



*Hiyám Housing staff*





# Housing & Support Services

Hiyám Housing is a unique on-reserve housing development agency in Canada and, so far, has built three affordable, multi-unit developments and is working on another:

**Supportive housing** – We’ve opened two new projects for vulnerable Squamish people:

- ▶ **Estítkw Place** means safe place – 55 units of supportive housing for vulnerable Skwxwú7mesh Nation people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, on the Capilano reserve in West Vancouver, with priority given to women. Squamish design elements are woven throughout, from cedar walls to splashes of bright red on the building’s edifice, apartment doors and unit walls.
- ▶ **Esqékwí7ch t’la Sp’ák’us Place** means the gathering place of eagles – 27 units in Squamish, with priority for vulnerable women and their children experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and second priority for homeless or at-risk families, Elders, people with diverse abilities, and LGBTQ2SIA+.

At these developments, we::

- ◆ Use culture to promote healing
- ◆ Provide culturally safe, decolonized, compassionate care
- ◆ Serve meals for residents each day
- ◆ Work with Skwxwú7mesh Nation departments to ensure seamless service delivery
- ◆ Collaborate with external agencies to provide mental health and wellness services, substance use support and medical care

**Affordable member housing** – We also have two new affordable housing projects:

- ▶ **Chenk’w Emút** means I am home – 95 affordable rental units will open in North Vancouver this fall, with priority given to independent Elders, youth and families. The design is inspired by traditional, multigenerational Squamish long-houses and includes:
  - ◆ Food services and security
  - ◆ Community garden
  - ◆ Onsite resident management office
  - ◆ Community art opportunities
  - ◆ 19 fully accessible units and 25 adaptable units
- ▶ **Orwell Housing Project** – This site at Seymour Creek has the potential to fit about 200 units in three blocks of housing. We hope to break ground within two years.

**Rent supplements** – We also provide rent supplements to help low and moderate-income Squamish people living off reserve pay market rents.

**Hiyám Home Loan Program** – We launched phase two of our home loan program to give more Squamish people the opportunity to obtain a bank loan to build a home. We can fund 15 single-family homes, plus five renovations to complete unfinished basements so people can house additional family.

“As long as I can remember, housing has been our Squamish people’s top priority.” Donalene Rapada, CEO, Hiyám Housing





*Estítkw Place*



*Capilano*



*Seaichem*

## Making a Difference

“We have 4,100 Squamish people—about half lives on and half off our reserves,” says Donalene. “When we conducted a housing needs assessment, 75% of those living away said they want to come home. By creating new homes, we will open doors for them. Welcoming everyone home is what we’re all about.”

## Working with AHMA

Hiyám Housing is also the first 100% First Nation-led AHMA member.

“Our Nation has worked with provincial and federal funders over many years who don’t understand our history. We joined AHMA in April this year and Debra Webber, our Director of Operations, used to work there. We are working together to build a more culturally supportive relationship.”

## TENANT VOICES

**Richard Billy** was among the first to move into Estítkw Place in November 2023. He was forced to evacuate his Kelowna rental last year when the landlord decided to sell the home he lived in.

“Living here is joyful,” says Richard. “You wouldn’t come here and think this is supportive housing. There’s a misconception everyone living in supportive housing suffers from addiction. But some of us are here just because we fell into a bit of bad luck. What happened to me could happen to anyone, and if it wasn’t for Estítkw Place, I don’t know where I would be.”

“After living in Kelowna for 12 years, returning home to my roots on Squamish land has been like taking a breath of fresh air.”



### Traditional Territory Recognition

Hiyám Housing is located on Sḵw̓xwú7mesh Nation land.

# KAMLOOPS NATIVE HOUSING SOCIETY



“We’re now housing a second generation of Indigenous families,” says **Jacqueline Johnson**, Chief Executive Manager, Kamloops Native Housing Society (KNHS), who has been with the organization since day one. “I’ve watched children grow up in our housing and then return with their own children. It warms my heart knowing our people feel safe here.”

## Housing & Support Services

Incorporated in 1987, Kamloops Native Housing Society evolved out of the local friendship centre and has since opened four multiplex developments and manages many single-family homes:

**Affordable urban Indigenous housing** – Our portfolio of safe, affordable housing for urban Indigenous people has grown over the years:

“We hold our Indigenous heritage front of mind in all we do.”

**Ruth Williams**, President,  
KNHS Board of Directors

► **Brocklehurst neighbourhood** 1988 – We decided to open our first building, 30 family units, here, because most urban Indigenous people lived in the area. We initially faced community opposition, with fears low-income Indigenous housing would increase traffic and decrease property values. But we consulted neighbours and city council, and the building has been a positive fixture in the community. Our project still looks amazing, even after 36 years, because staff ensure it’s so well maintained.

1989 – KNHS also purchased six single-family homes in this neighbourhood.

► **Sahali neighbourhood** 1991 – We opened 24 family units in three buildings with a shared community room. Some Indigenous individuals were moving to Kamloops to attend university and couldn’t afford to bring their families. We’re proud this project has helped our people pursue career paths over the years.

► **North Shore neighbourhood** 1992 – Our Elders’ residence has 24 units, three accessible, with free laundry and a community room. We put on bingo events, monthly meals, a food share program to augment residents’ groceries, and celebratory dinners on Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, where everyone gets to take home some leftovers.

► **Twin Feathers** 2010 – This LEEDS GOLD certified project has 19 apartments for Indigenous students, families and seniors. Without ongoing subsidy, 20% of units are rent-g geared-to-income and the rest are low end market rents.

► **Thompson, Okanagan and Kootenay regions** 2013 – KNHS acquired title to 97 units, most single-family homes, from the Rural Native Housing program, and sold five to cover maintenance and improvement costs for the rest. Currently we have 57 units in the Thompson Region, 14 in Okanagan Region, and 21 in Kootenay Region.





*Springhill*



*Springhill Garden*



*Twin Feathers*

**Support services** – KNHS has a Tenant Relations Coordinator on staff to help people apply for housing, make counselling referrals, bring in cultural supports, and assist with ancestry searches for status applications. We also offer:

- ▶ **Indigenous Outreach Worker** – Reaches out to connect with Indigenous people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and works with local teams in community and government agencies to help people access housing and community resources.

We were able to house two families who lost their homes to wildfire on reserve. And we obtained grants to purchase sleeping bags for homeless people living in local tent encampments.

- ▶ **Rent supplements** – We provide 25 rent supplements to give people experiencing or at risk of homelessness access to stable housing.

**Community participation** – KNHS hosts lunches where community agencies can share information with tenants. We also partner with:

- ▶ **A Way Home Kamloops**, a non-profit group that provides wraparound services for youth experiencing homelessness. Our contribution is a two-bedroom unit for young Indigenous mothers, with support to learn parenting, tenancy and life skills.
- ▶ **Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Nation** to administer housing services, as our visions for on and off-reserve housing are a good fit.
- ▶ **ASK Wellness Kamloops** to support their Indigenous outreach clients facing homelessness, mental health and/or substance use challenges.



Sydney

## Making a Difference

“We’ve housed almost 700 families over the past 37 years and helped 78 families move on to buy their own homes,” says Jacqueline.

“We will conduct a demographic study in the coming year to identify current needs and use this information to broaden our capacity,” adds Ruth Williams, President, KNHS Board of Directors. “I was appointed to the first Kamloops Community Land Trust Foundation Board in June, and let the mayor and council know about KNHS’ track record as a good neighbour.”

## Working with AHMA

“We have a small staff, and everyone is hands on to support tenants,” says Jacqueline. “We support the great work AHMA is doing and want to strengthen our relationship, especially as we face the expiry of mortgages.”



### Traditional Territory Recognition

Kamloops Native Housing Society is located on the ancestral lands of the **Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc** people.

## Tenant Voices

“I worked as an Aboriginal Transition Planner at the university and helped students find affordable housing, so knew about Kamloops Native Housing Society,” says **DL, a KNHS tenant.**

DL originally applied to live with her daughter and grandson and was approved for a three-bedroom unit. But her daughter declined in the end; she was still struggling with an abusive relationship.

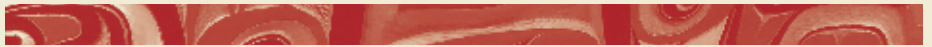
After retiring in fall 2016, DL spent some time living with her brother in Vancouver and bouncing from place to place. Then KNHS called one day to see if she was still interested in a place to live (her file was marked, “excellent candidate”). Her answer: “I’d love to.”

“I moved into a one-bedroom in the summer of 2017,” says DL “It was a life saver. I felt part of a community again.

“Then my daughter started struggling with homelessness and addiction again, and KNHS gave me a three-bedroom townhouse so my grandson could live with me and not go into foster care. Fortunately, mom and son are together again and doing well.

“Today, I am unpacking kitchen boxes in my new one-bedroom apartment in the Elders’ residence. I already know some of the other Elders, because I used to come by to teach cedar weaving and basket making. Now that I live here, I’ll start a beading and moccasin making group too.

“Staff are so kind and skilled at listening; they’re busy but always take time to talk. They have been such a godsend and I’m so grateful. I love living here.”



When **Wendell and Sharon** met, she was living in a KNHS apartment with three small children. He has three kids too, so they decided to wait a while before moving in together—almost eight years.

Now, they’ve been together 11 years and live in a five-bedroom KNHS house. Sharon has two teenagers and an 11-year-old son. Wendell’s daughter is 15; the other two are grown and on their own.

“We asked if could move in with Sharon,” Wendell explains, “but KNHS wanted us to have a bigger place with bedrooms for all our children. They got us into a five-bedroom home together within a couple of months, with a park across the street.

“If we have any issues, we can call, and they deal with it. When we moved in, the washing machine leaked—we had a new one within days. The house didn’t have air conditioning—KNHS had an HVAC company put in a new furnace and A/C, so we’d be comfortable.

“Our rent here is based on income. Sharon receives disability assistance, and we do our taxes together. Once I make a certain amount, she gets cut off, so paying just a portion of income makes it easier for us to live and provide for our kids.

“KNHS has real honest family people who care about you on personal level, rather than a landlord who just collects rent. They are so responsive and really understanding with personal issues too. Staff told Sharon she’s one of their cleanest tenants—it’s why they bent over backwards to get us into this home. And if she ever wants to talk, just call or come by.”



# Náćwa?mat Lelə́m Committee

By Committee Chair  
**Rosanna  
McGregor**

As recognition of AHMA's leadership has grown, I've been asked to participate on provincial committees as Náćwa?mat Lelə́m Committee Chair. It's important to bring our members' voices to these forums to ensure impacts on urban Indigenous peoples are part of the conversation.



## Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee

In this role, I bring an Indigenous perspective to the table advising government on policy developments to reduce and prevent poverty. Currently, we're working with low-income people to obtain input on changes to income assistance rates, so the amounts are more realistic, given the rising cost of living.

## Indigenous Advisory House

Musqueam Elder Shane Pointe helped us name Nóćwa?mat Leləḡ—meaning one house. He also advised our Indigenous Advisory Committee was too big for just a table—for all the work we do and all those involved—we're a house. We changed the name to Indigenous Advisory House, because One Big House is more meaningful and inclusive—of shelter, health and well-being.

The provincial government wants to provide municipalities with legislation for dealing with encampments and sought our endorsement. Our group insisted on sufficient time to review and consult on the draft.

Compassion must guide the approach, because people living in homeless encampments hold all their belongings in a tent. They may have family photos or an heirloom. We have a responsibility to find a place to store their belongings, not take away the only things they still have. Municipalities must also ensure support staff are onsite to find appropriate accommodation and services for people experiencing homelessness.

## FNHA & Interior Health

Two key takeaways emerged for me at our Spring Gathering:

- ▶ **Improve access to substance use treatment** – First Nations Health Authority representatives attended the gathering this year. I asked FNHA to challenge the status quo for accessing substance use treatment.

I also sit on Interior Health's Opiate Overdose Committee and shared the same message there: We need to change archaic rules set 30 years ago to support better client outcomes.

When someone with addiction asks for treatment, why should we send them to emergency to wait hours for a prescription? Why do they have to attend appointments to seek approval? Why not just give people access to treatment when they're ready?

In Williams Lake, we have a new service called Cornerstone, where a nurse sees patients right away to prescribe opioid agonist treatment for managing withdrawal symptoms and create a care plan. This approach provides immediate access; we need to see more.

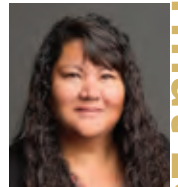
- ▶ **Complex care empowers change** – We also heard from the physician helping clients at the first complex care site in Surrey. I'm optimistic this model has the potential to change the cycle of addiction and homelessness some of our most vulnerable people face. We need to expand this support as client outcomes prove the model makes a difference.

## Sharing Member Voices

We will continue to share members' voices with the AHMA Board of Directors to ensure member needs are at the forefront of all AHMA does.

Nóćwa?mat Leləḡ members

**Rosanna McGregor**  
Committee Chair  
(Cariboo Friendship Society)



**Roger Kishi**  
(Wachiy Friendship Centre Society)



**Steve Arnett**  
(Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre)



**Margaret Pfoh**  
Exofficio  
(AHMA CEO)





# Meet AHMA's TEAM

**Toyuxsiim,**  
thank you,  
to our Board of Directors,  
Nóca?mat Leləm  
Committee members,  
and AHMA employees  
for your unwavering  
commitment to AHMA  
members and urban  
Indigenous peoples across  
the province.



## Executive Leadership Team

**Margaret Pfoh**, Chief Executive Officer  
(Gitga'at First Nation)

**Lloyd (Tag) Taghavi**, Chief Financial Officer

**Cliff Grant**, Director, Indigenous Strategic Relations (Haisla Nation)

**Celeste Hayward**, Director, Operations  
(Wet'suwet'en Nation)

**Nizar Laarif**, Director, Public Affairs

**David Silva**, Director, Asset Strategies

## Employee Team

**Atoine Archie**, Manager, Capital Projects (Canim Lake Band)

**Justeen Barnes**, Portfolio Manager (Métis)

**James Bourque**, Housing Condition Advisor (Métis)

**Stacey Bourque**, Revitalization Manager

**Lance Brommeland**, Technical Services Advisor

**Lauren Brown**, Senior Policy Analyst

**Lucy Byrne**, Portfolio Manager

**Patrick Caraher**, Portfolio Planning and Development Specialist (Métis)

**Andrea Carter**, Manager, Training and Evaluation

**Deanna Daniel**, Project Coordinator (St'at'imc Nation)

**Sandra Eatmon**, Portfolio Manager (Métis)

**Sharilyn Erickson**, Executive Assistant (Nak'azdli Whut'en)

**Krista Ferguson**, Development Manager

**Mae Flanders**, Program Coordinator (Mamalilikulla First Nation)

**Terri Fortune**, Gender-Based Violence Policy Analyst (Haida Nation)

**Sara Fralin**, Manager, Engagement and Technical Support

**David Garcia**, Manager, Portfolio Planning and Development Manager

**Cailan Gardner**, Health Policy Analyst (Stó:lō Nation)

**Sarah Hird**, Portfolio Manager

**Sue Lee**, Senior Financial Services Specialist

**Daana Magi**, Development Manager (Pikwakanagan First Nation)

**Connie Mah**, Business Administration Manager

**Courtney Ellis MacDonald**, Project Coordinator (Sayisi Dene First Nation)

**Kelly McCarty**, Revitalization Coordinator

**Kelly Moon**, Media and Communications Manager

**Louis Napope**, Housing Condition Advisor (One Arrow First Nation)

**Trevor Norris**, Project Manager (Kitigan Zibi Anishiaabeg First Nation)

**Monica Ramon**, Portfolio Manager

**Shahed Shafazand**, Energy Project Advisor

**Jacki Skeet**, Revitalization Project Manager (Métis)

**Bryan Sluggett**, Data and Evaluation Coordinator

**Daniel Szykaruk**, Provincial Clinical Supervisor/Educator

**Janine Tallio**, Operations Coordinator (Nuxalk Nation)

**Aquila Underwood**, Communications Coordinator

**Carlo Vijandre**, Project Manager

**Bailey Waukey**, Youth Policy Analyst (Ojibwe-Mohawk)

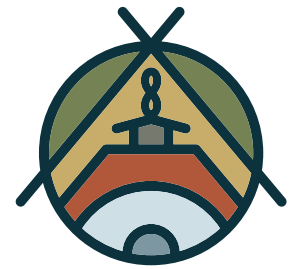
**Jena Weber**, Policy Manager

**Judy Wesley**, Training and Capacity Specialist (Gitxsan Nation)

**Cindy Williams**, Financial Client Services

**Kaila Wong**, Housing Operations Manager (Cree-Sioux/Taishan)

**Karin Zylstra**, Training and Capacity Building Specialist



## Board of Directors

**Gary Wilson**  
President (Region 4)

**Blake Scott**  
Vice President (Region 5)

**Mike Daigle**  
Treasurer (Region 3)

**Maria Martin**  
Secretary (Region 2)

**Trevor Morrison**  
Director (Region 1)

**Chaslenn Gillanders**  
Director (Region 6)



## Revenues 2024

BC Housing grants	\$58,796,119
Province of BC housing investment	\$29,333,000
Ministry of Health complex care funding	\$9,965,000
Other grants	\$3,133,969
Interest	\$2,435,937
Tenant rents	\$143,813
CMHC (Indigenous youth internships)	\$73,263
Administration revenue	\$942
Transfer (to) from deferred revenue	(\$35,282,288)

**\$68,599,755** TOTAL

## Expenses 2024

Advertising	\$1,600
Amortization of tangible capital interests	\$129,501
Bank charges and interest	\$2,545
Complex care health distribution (Prince George)	\$69,588
Complex care health distribution (Vernon)	\$22,262
Complex care health distribution (Victoria)	\$189,474
Conferences and gatherings	\$726,482
Contracted services	\$458,916
Fraser Health distribution	\$526,078
Insurance	\$77,269
IT Consultants	\$282,346
Office	\$155,576
Professional development	\$21,595
Professional fees	\$432,248
Professional fees subsidy	\$7,320
Property taxes	\$22,733
Public relations	\$84,563
Rent	\$328,170
Repairs and maintenance	\$17,354
Salaries and benefits	\$5,022,366
Staff travel	\$457,622
Subsidy payments	\$57,968,569
Telephone	\$37,929
Training	\$103,848
Utilities	\$13,752

**\$67,159,706** TOTAL

**\$1,440,049**

EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF  
REVENUES OVER EXPENDITURES

# AHMA FINANCIAL REPORT

Year ended March 31, 2024

## Summary of Financial Statements

	2024	2023
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash	\$49,549,351	\$11,882,002
Capital Assets	\$1,872,630	\$1,983,854
Other	\$2,772,814	\$3,463,783
	<b>\$54,194,795</b>	<b>\$17,329,639</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
	\$49,786,615	\$14,361,508
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Operating	\$2,535,550	\$984,277
Capital Assets	\$1,872,630	\$1,983,854
	<b>\$4,408,180</b>	<b>\$2,968,131</b>
<b>CHANGES IN CASH</b>		
From operating activities	\$1,569,550	(\$896,517)
Changes in non-cash working capital account	\$36,116,076	(\$6,106,448)
Cash from financing and investing activities	(\$18,277)	(\$68,985)
<b>Net increase in cash</b>	<b>\$37,667,349</b>	<b>(\$7,071,950)</b>

AHMA's audited financial statements are available on request.



“Our Indigenous rights to self-determination reflect AHMA’s founding principle.”

Margaret Pfoh, AHMA CEO



Aboriginal Housing  
Management Association  
*Over 25 years of Indigenous  
housing expertise.*

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ahma\_bc