



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

British Columbia Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Declaration

ASSERTION OF AUTHORITY

Indigenous housing and service providers, as corporate members of the Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA), have committed decades of working with and for Indigenous people living off reserve in British Columbia. Positioned at the heart of reconciliation, we have achieved significant progress in advancing Indigenous rights in the 28 years since AHMA's inception.

This Declaration affirms that we, the corporate members of AHMA, and AHMA, our not-for-profit society, are, collectively, an established authority on housing and service delivery in BC for the over 75% of Indigenous people in BC who live in urban, rural, and northern (URN) areas. These individuals often do not benefit from federal housing funding directed to on-reserve communities. Both on-reserve and off-reserve populations are important and require support. We are a well-established society of Indigenous housing providers in BC and support First Nations members living off-reserve to ensure this population receives culturally-supportive housing.

AHMA, we (the members), and our partners play a critical role in housing BC's most vulnerable population through effective *For Indigenous, By Indigenous* approaches. We deliver over 35 different housing programs, currently serving more than 10,000 Indigenous families and individuals and providing over 6,000 homes. We operate complex care sites that integrate housing and healthcare and offer homelessness prevention services, solutions for women fleeing violence, programs for youth transitioning out of care, accessibility for people with disabilities, and affordable homes for Elders.

AHMA is well-positioned to be an active partner with the BC Government in solving the housing crisis and participating in housing decisions and policy creation to provide culturally-supportive housing for Indigenous people. AHMA, as an organization and supporter of its members' operations, complements the work of First Nations organizations in BC, contributes to various goals within the BC Government's Declaration Act Action Plan, and advances economic reconciliation. For example, we (the members) have been and continue to be engaged in significant housing and service work across BC that aligns with various Ministry goals and mandates, including those related to housing, poverty reduction, and healthcare, and we have over 40-years of well-established infrastructure, community employment, assets, and delivery mechanisms to ensure cultural safety in housing.

AHMA has the trust, respect, and confidence of its members and partners and a proven track record of delivering housing programs for the URN Indigenous population. We (the members) are the leading experts on URN Indigenous housing and are committed to continuing our work as autonomous housing and service providers and as a collective voice for the URN Indigenous population through AHMA. As such, we support AHMA's direct engagement with the BC Government on all initiatives relating to culturally-supportive housing for URN Indigenous people and AHMA's authority as an expert of URN Indigenous housing in BC.

In 2022, AHMA developed and published the first Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy in BC, calling on the federal government to invest \$7.3B over the next 10 years to bridge the housing gap for URN Indigenous households in BC. Currently, all URN Indigenous housing and service providers in BC are facing cost



pressures that are not covered by the provincial funding provided through AHMA under the Indigenous Social Housing Management Agreement (ISHMA). These cost pressures are driven by increases in the inflation rate, wage stagnation, increasingly complex health requirements, rising insurance premiums, and higher interest rates.

The federal and provincial governments, in developing and managing their Indigenous housing policies and programs, have adopted a distinctions-based approach focused on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. This approach often excludes the URN Indigenous population and stakeholders from consultation or participation in these policies and programs. We (the members) fill this gap in distinction-based policies by providing supports to the URN Indigenous population, benefitting all Indigenous peoples in BC.

AHMA, as part of the social welfare sector, is committed to fulfilling its role within the larger Canadian society by meaningfully contributing to reconciliation. Reconciliation involves recognizing and rectifying inequalities, striving to establish and sustain a relationship of mutual respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and implementing systemic and cultural shifts to eradicate discriminatory practices, policies, and attitudes. This entails addressing the root causes and barriers that result in the disproportionate lack of safe and affordable housing opportunities for Indigenous people. After discussing and reflecting on the work completed thus far and the challenges encountered with federal and provincial housing policies, the undersigned have agreed to the next steps to bridge the URN Indigenous housing gap.

AREAS OF MUTUAL AGREEMENT

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) sets the universal minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous peoples worldwide. The UN Declaration confirms that Indigenous peoples globally have the right to self-determination, including the right to freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development (Article 3), to improve their economic and social conditions in the area of housing (Article 21), and to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development, particularly the right to be actively involved in developing and determining housing and other social programs through their own institutions (Article 23).

We, the undersigned:

- (a) seek to promote and advocate for the full realization of these rights for BC's URN Indigenous people;
- (b) respect and support the work and policies of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, as well as the work of their respective organizations and authorities in addressing housing issues within their communities;
- (c) agree that AHMA's *For Indigenous, By Indigenous* approach to housing and services, upholds and advances housing as a human right for all Indigenous people living off-reserve in urban, rural, and northern communities in BC;
- (d) agree to work together, alongside our ongoing mandates, to advance housing and support services for URN Indigenous people in BC, and to collaboratively fulfill our responsibilities and make decisions to ensure the well-being of URN Indigenous people; and
- (e) recognize and support AHMA and AHMA's corporate members as the authority on URN Indigenous housing in BC.

For certainty, this Declaration aims to bolster and supplement the housing-related initiatives of



Indigenous people, without duplicating existing initiatives or undermining the inherent rights of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, particularly First Nations who possess land-based rights in BC.

PRINCIPLES

In advancing our work under this Declaration, we, the undersigned, agree to abide by the following principles:

- (a) respect for each other and a commitment to upholding self-determination and Indigenous sovereignty;
- (b) respect for the authority, sovereignty, rights, and self-determination of BC First Nations governments;
- (c) support for the retention and revitalization of our diverse cultures through our respective cultures and traditions, ways of knowing and being, and respect for the land, through the development of culturally appropriate housing and services; and
- (d) housing must be provided to all URN Indigenous people on an equitable and as needed basis, in a *For Indigenous, By Indigenous* holistic manner.

ACTION ITEMS

We, the undersigned, agree to the following action items:

- (a) affirm our authority and the authority of AHMA with all levels of government as experts and primary stakeholders when it comes to the creation, consultation, development, and announcement of housing policies affecting URN Indigenous people;
- (b) support one another to provide housing for all Indigenous people living off reserve in URN areas of BC;
- (c) collaboratively advance the housing opportunities of all URN Indigenous people; and
- (d) hold federal, provincial, and municipal governments to their responsibilities relating to funding and facilitating the creation of housing solutions through *For Indigenous, By Indigenous* organizations such as AHMA for URN Indigenous populations.

Please send your logo to: communications@ahma-bc.org