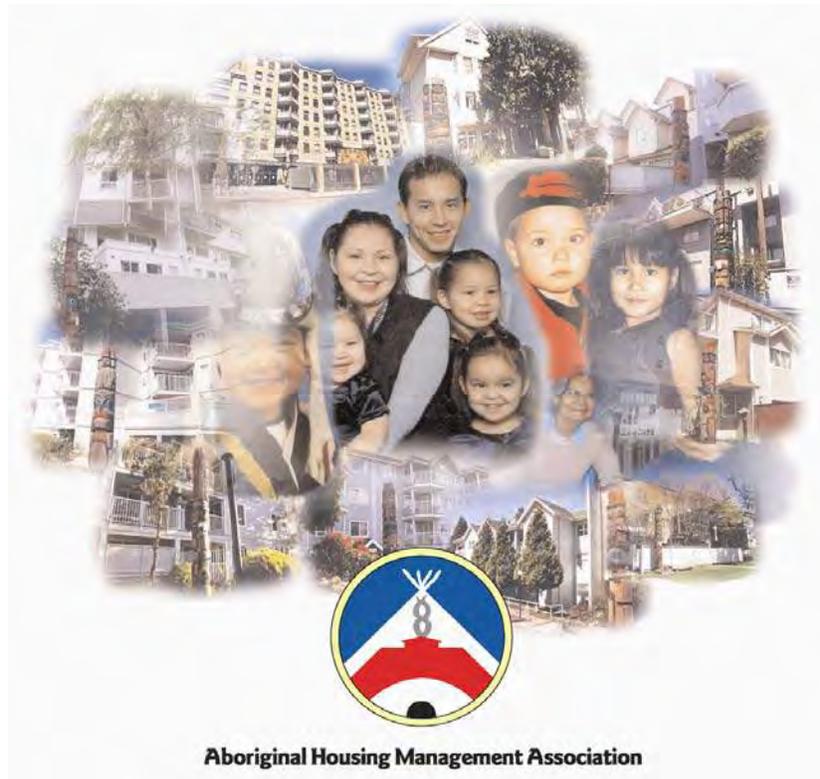


***Aboriginal Housing Management Association
presents***

**Closing the Gap
Housing Needs and Priorities of B.C.'s
Urban Aboriginal People**

Volume I



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BC Housing Management Commission***

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Closing the Gap: Housing Needs and Priorities of BC's Urban Aboriginals

Aboriginal Housing Management Commission

Report to BC Housing February 2007

Executive Summary

Introduction: This report reviews the needs and priorities for Aboriginal housing in urban areas of British Columbia in support of the Provincial Government's strategy for addressing Aboriginal housing need. It looks at special needs groups within that community, and details the characteristics of social housing solutions designed specifically for Aboriginal tenants living off reserve.

The information is drawn from interviews and community meetings in 13 BC communities in late 2006, supplemented by statistical information such as Census and rental vacancy data. This information is used to identify some important elements underlying the housing issues and challenges that face off-reserve Aboriginals, elements necessary to support and amplify a traditional needs and demand analysis.

The report sets out a framework and key priorities as a basis for moving forward to address the needs identified. The appendices contain the stated needs and priorities, and summary profiles, of each community, and information on homelessness among Aboriginal people in the province; a second volume contains a detailed profile of each community.

Urban Aboriginal Housing Need in BC: The need is shaped by three factors:

- Given the low social and economic status of urban Aboriginals, almost 30% of whom are in core housing need, most communities require more affordable housing targeted to them.
- Given demographic factors, the specific needs of youth – including students, those leaving foster care and young single parents – and elders need to be taken into particular account.
- Given Aboriginal cultures, and negative effects of historical (colonial) factors that have been overlaid on those cultures, housing programs must focus on helping tenants develop the capacity for managing their own lives in their own way.

Assets: The 14 AHMA member societies own and operate 3000 housing units; non-member societies own many more. This stock and the knowledge and experience of the Aboriginal housing societies is an important asset in expanding the number of affordable units, particularly since many of the housing developments are on sites with further development potential.

Although there is much emphasis on the needs of tenants and Aboriginal citizens in general, tenants' strengths and ability to work together to support each other in improving their lives and housing are also important assets of the Aboriginal housing community.

AHMA itself has the skills, knowledge and leadership position to create development and management tools, and to support and co-ordinate societies' steps forward; to do so will require time and resources.

Capacity-building on all these levels should be a major focus of enhancements to the Aboriginal housing programs.

Gaps: Five key themes were identified and are described fully in the report. The first four applied to housing problems and solutions:

- Emergency housing

- Short term housing, particularly for students, youth leaving foster care, and singles, and transitional housing for people trying to move to more independence; short term lodging is also needed for people needing to stay in urban areas for medical treatment
- Housing with long term supports for people, such as those suffering from FASD or mental illnesses and frail elders/seniors, who may never be able to live independently
- Affordable family and elders' housing configured to local needs.

The final theme, overarching all, was capacity-building for both societies and tenants, which should be integral to all activities within the Aboriginal housing sector.

Priorities:

1. Begin a Capacity-building Strategic Planning Process

This document establishes a framework and priorities for addressing Aboriginal housing need. It is clear that there is a great need for more off-reserve Aboriginal housing, that there are some obvious gaps, and some important assets in terms of land, buildings, and passionately committed societies and partners. We are confident that the framework is sound, but the consultation and planning process has just begun.

A more detailed strategic plan must be developed to confirm the direction and gather in all the partners. A first step would be to help communities gather accurate data about local needs, demands and available resources.

The general approach we recommend is to begin with projects and societies that can show early success, supporting AHMA in helping societies to bring them to fruition. The process of working with communities to gather better information and develop a clear strategic plan should run parallel to, and incorporate, this process of concrete achievement.

2. Expand the Stock of Non-profit Housing Units for Urban Aboriginals

An estimate of the actual number of new and redeveloped units required to meet Aboriginal housing need must await the completion of a strategic plan, but it is clear that many more units are required. Work should begin now on models and materials for future proposals. The CMHC practice of providing operating funds for tenant support should be continued.

All four of the above priorities should be addressed as feasible, but short term/transitional housing is perhaps the area where new models are most urgently needed. Housing targeted particularly for young people and elders was named as a priority in most communities visited. Crisis housing is urgently needed but communities may differ in whether it should be Aboriginal-specific, or whether it is more useful to focus on linkages with existing shelters and providing appropriate transitional housing for referral.

3. Build Capacity for Housing Development and Management and Tenant Support

Create models and materials for developing Aboriginal housing and provide a provincial advisory team for on-site consulting and technical assistance.

In addition, continue, enhance and expand AHMA's ongoing capacity-building initiatives, including assistance in helping tenants to develop self-sufficiency. BC Housing can also assist by incorporating the Aboriginal housing stock into its province-wide systems, such as the Housing Registry, as and where appropriate.

AHMA can help to integrate provincial and local social and health services on housing sites, and make them more suitable for Aboriginal clients. It can also help housing societies develop local partnerships for development and management of housing.

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“Our people are emerging from a difficult era in their history, an era of residential schools, economic unwellness, individual, family and community dysfunction – a post-colonial syndrome. It has been adequately documented that the solutions to address these issues must be culture-based.”

- Anishnawbe Health, Toronto (2006)

1 Introduction

This report presents findings of a study of 13 communities in British Columbia on the housing situation of Aboriginal¹ people living in urban areas. The study was conducted by staff and contractors of the Aboriginal Housing Management Association of BC (AHMA), as commissioned by BC Housing, in late 2006. This review will contribute to a larger study of all Aboriginal housing in the province that will result in a 10-year strategic plan. Both reviews are part of an ongoing effort by the Province of British Columbia to close the gap between the health and wellbeing of its Aboriginal citizens and that of the rest of the population.

1.1 Aboriginal Housing Management Association

AHMA is the umbrella association in British Columbia for societies that own and operate housing for Aboriginal people living off reserve. The 14 member societies manage developments ranging in size from 29 to 867 units, totalling about 3,000 units. Since October 2004, BC Housing has transferred administrative responsibility to AHMA for 322 units of provincially-subsidized social housing. Now, as set out in the Provincial Government's new housing strategy², the Association will assume portfolio administration of a further 2600 units under a devolution agreement with the federal government.

AHMA's purpose, like that of its constituent societies, is to ensure that affordable housing for Aboriginal tenants is delivered efficiently and in a culturally sensitive manner. This intention includes recognition of both the cultural and community diversity among Aboriginal groups, and the specific requirements of many Aboriginal people as distinct from those of their non-Aboriginal neighbors.

AHMA's new responsibilities include capacity-building for housing societies in housing management and development as well as in supporting tenants who struggle with “economic unwellness, individual, family and community dysfunction – a post-colonial syndrome”. AHMA must also plan to partner with BC Housing in the allocation of capital for new housing units.

Commissioned by BC Housing, AHMA staff therefore undertook this study to:

¹ The term *Aboriginal* includes Status and Non-status Indians (also referred to as First Nations), Métis and Inuit.

² Provincial Ministry Responsible for Housing. *Housing Matters BC – A Housing Strategy for British Columbia*. October 2006.

- determine the needs, priorities and existing resources in 13³ BC communities (all served by AHMA members), with a view to providing a framework for new housing and capacity-building initiatives, and
- identify housing and support initiatives that could be undertaken in the near future.

1.2 Goals of the Study

Goals

The goals of the study were generally to:

1. Research Aboriginal housing needs and priorities:
 - Provide detailed information on need and priorities for off-reserve Aboriginal housing in 13 urban and semi-urban areas throughout BC
 - Identify any special needs groups within those communities, including homeless persons and persons in temporary housing or shelters, concentrating on their housing/shelter needs.
2. On this basis, articulate a framework suggesting
 - Characteristics of housing solutions designed specifically for Aboriginal users.
 - General priorities for demographic and special needs groups in the Aboriginal population
 - Housing initiatives and programs that could be undertaken in the near future.

In sum, building on the knowledge and expertise of AHMA, this project focuses on 13 communities to gain a better understanding of Aboriginal housing needs overall and to begin to identify and understand priorities that may apply in other communities.

This document should be read in the context of a parallel process whereby AHMA works with Aboriginal housing societies to help them identify and define any land, partnerships, and/or projects that could be submitted to BC Housing for consideration in a proposal call.

Sector Planning and Development

The defined goals of the research focus on information to be gathered and reported. An equally important purpose of the research from AHMA's perspective was to begin a development and planning process with a group of societies that had experienced little change since the cancellation of the federal housing programs in 1994, except for those few societies who have participated in provincial housing programs. The very act of beginning the discussion in each community, particularly when funding is now likely to be available, highlights societies' strengths and opportunities, as well as the areas for improvement, and they have begun to look for partnerships with local Councils and other community representatives.

³ Because of timelines, the 14th AHMA member could not be fully represented in this paper.

This study is just the first step in an ongoing planning and capacity development process that AHMA, as the administrator for housing subsidies and the key stakeholder for Aboriginal housing in the province, is the natural leader. This report sets out the framework, and the initial steps, of that ongoing planning process.

1.3 Report Structure

This report presents our findings overall: the housing-related assets and gaps (need and demand) in each of the communities we surveyed, and the housing priorities they identified. It also proposes a framework for understanding how housing solutions for this population should be approached that we believe faithfully reflects what we heard in the communities.

This volume (Volume I) has four appendices that set out the statistical information about each community, abbreviated community profiles, and the issues, gaps and priorities each identified. Finally, it provides a snapshot of Aboriginal homelessness in those communities. Volume II contains the full information from each community we visited, from which the summaries are derived.

2 Research Approach

2.1 Scope

This research focuses on housing for Aboriginal people living off reserve, i.e., in the cities and towns of British Columbia. However, we recognize that there is considerable movement in most communities to and from the local reserves, as well as to and from BC's major urban areas.⁴ It is also important to recognize that Aboriginal people who are Métis and Inuit do not have reserves, nor do Métis have the same access to funding as First Nations peoples.

We reiterate that we surveyed only 13 communities that have AHMA-affiliated housing societies; we also have partial information for four more communities. On this basis we propose a general framework and a statement of assets, gaps and priorities that will need to be tested more generally as the Aboriginal housing sector develops.

Finally, we note that AHMA represents the subsidized housing sector in those communities, and the solutions proposed largely focus on housing needs and priorities that can be addressed by provincial housing supply programs. In some communities affordable market housing is available, and housing supports and assistance for

⁴ According to the 2001 Census, 38% of BC's young off-reserve Aboriginals (aged 15 – 24) had moved in the previous year, as opposed to 25% of the general population. BC STATS; Statistical Profile of Off-Reserve First Nations and Métis 2001.

Aboriginal people can be implemented effectively through that sector.⁵ However, the bulk of housing gaps identified in our community meetings can be better addressed through social housing programs because of the need for supports specific to Aboriginal tenants, including capacity-building through self-management and tenant programs, as will be discussed below.

2.2 Information Sources

This report is based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative data including information gathered from meetings in 13 communities across British Columbia, and statistics from Census, Canada Mortgage and Housing (CMHC), BC Stats and local sources.

Information from the Communities

Community consultation was an important element in this research. We asked each of the 13 Aboriginal housing societies taking part in the study to arrange a meeting of key local people who knew the Aboriginal community, and the local municipality, well. The meetings included Aboriginal participants and other knowledgeable individuals such as service providers, and municipal staff and Council members. In each meeting, we asked about: existing housing and supports, the issues that affected the ability of local Aboriginal people to access and keep housing, and the gaps in housing at the local level. As well, we asked each group to list their top local housing priorities.

We also met with the Aboriginal housing society staff to discuss potential housing opportunities, including their available land or properties, their project development plans, board directives, and possible partnerships. Staff also provided their waitlists to us for analysis.

As time permitted, we also interviewed other individuals or groups in the community who were involved in housing issues or had an interest in the Aboriginal community.

We later returned our record of each meeting to the participants for review, to ensure that we had included all that they wanted to say about their community. All participants were invited to respond and, if they liked, add to the information.

The communities we visited were: Cranbrook, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Kamloops, Kelowna, Merritt, Mission, Prince George, Quesnel, Terrace, Vernon, Victoria and Williams Lake. We also have limited information from Surrey, Prince Rupert, Vancouver and Northern Vancouver Island.

⁵ Two other housing programs assist community members with housing affordability only: Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) and the Rental Assistance Program (RAP), provide rent supplements for seniors and families, respectively, in private market units.

Statistical and Census Information

We added to the information from community visits by collecting demographic information from census materials and other statistical sources (national, regional and in some cases local) as well as reviewing existing reports on housing from all levels of government, including CMHC rental reports where available, and BC Housing's social housing database and planning data. To the degree possible, we drew on provincial or national data from these sources to estimate local demographics and housing need. The information available is in the brief community profiles in Appendices 2 and 3 of this report; data on Aboriginal homelessness in these communities appears in Appendix 4. Full community profiles are presented in Volume II.

Data Limitations

- **Census Data.** Data available at the time of writing are from the 2001 Census and do not reflect the current situation accurately or fully, particularly given that Aboriginal people are known frequently to refuse or neglect to complete a census form.⁶ This issue is exacerbated by the fact that the Aboriginal population has a higher growth rate than that of the general population. It is probable that the census data available underestimates the Aboriginal population by a considerable margin.
- **Housing society waitlists.** We found that, since societies maintain their own waitlists by their own criteria, we could not aggregate housing society waitlists to give a comprehensive picture of the demand for subsidized housing units. We also found that informants themselves did not necessarily know all the housing resources available in their communities.
- **Project Timeline.** Given the four-month timeline for the study, we could visit each community to collect and verify information only once. The timeline also prevented our resolving communication issues with some societies, particularly in Vancouver and Surrey, and information from that quarter is limited. As well, we need more information about the communities on Central and Northern Vancouver Island, where there are few Aboriginal housing developments, and Prince Rupert. We have included available information on these communities in the appendices.

As mentioned above, this document contains a first approximation of the information required for good strategic planning for off-reserve Aboriginal housing. It is to be hoped that better data will be available as planning proceeds.

⁶ 2001 Census: analysis series Aboriginal peoples of Canada: A demographic profile Catalogue no 96F0030XIE2001007.

3 Framework

3.1 Continuum of Housing Need

Housing need is defined in Canada by measures of physical adequacy, crowding and affordability.⁷ However, needs vary by circumstance, and housing need is often described as a continuum from emergency shelter to affordable, uncrowded and adequate homes in the private rental or ownership market. The financial subsidy required at the beginning of this continuum may be accompanied by support services designed to help individuals and families progress to more financial and social independence. The continuum conventionally portrays increasing levels of housing consumption, stability and independence with, conversely, decreasing levels of public assistance in the form of financial subsidy and support services, as shown below.

Figure 1: Continuum of Housing and Support Services

	Crisis	Short Term/ Transitional	Supportive	Independent Subsidized	Market
Type	Emergency shelter (≤ 30 days)	Limited term (≤ 2 years)	Long term with supports	Long term rental or co-op	Private rental or owned
Typical Users	Homeless Detox Women leaving abuse	Hard to house Leaving abuse Health/detox Students	Frail elders Mentally ill Disabled	Families, singles, elders with low incomes	Moderate to high income households
Description	Highly subsidized Few supports Limited private space Referral to other services	Subsidized housing and supports Shared or Self- contained	Subsidized housing and services Common amenities Self- contained	Subsidized unit or rent allowance Few services Self-contained	Not subsidized No services Self-contained

A close look at this continuum shows that housing need reflects not only the lack of shelter but the lack of other hallmarks and enablers of personal independence, health and wellbeing. Housing programs have a twofold role: first, they provide stable shelter, a precondition for addressing social, economic and health problems; secondly, they can provide the site for an entire range of supports that enable people to heal, learn, and develop the strength and skills to take charge of their own lives. The continuum

⁷ A household that cannot find uncrowded (i.e., everyone except young children, same-sex siblings and couples has their own bedroom), physically adequate housing within 30% of income is said to be “in core housing need.”

describes a series of steps to independence based in stable housing, with supports enabling people to live as independently as possible at the moment and in the future.⁸

3.2 Factors in Aboriginal Housing Need

As mentioned above, we propose this framework on the basis of what we heard in the communities, for the purposes of understanding the priorities expressed there and addressing those priorities through viable housing initiatives. It is obviously not a comprehensive statement about Aboriginal history and living conditions in British Columbia, and we present it on the assumption that it is not necessary to document or analyze those here.

Poverty and Social Exclusion

Clearly the continuum of housing need is directly related to low incomes and social or health problems. From this perspective, the need of Aboriginal individuals and families for housing is not fundamentally different from that of other Canadians. However, the social and economic position of urban Aboriginals is below that of other citizens, a situation that contributes to their higher level of housing need across the spectrum.

Poverty and social issues for Aboriginal people are intensified and exacerbated by poor housing conditions and crowding both on reserve and in urban areas. A few statistics paint the picture: more than 28% of off-reserve Aboriginal households in BC, were in core housing need in 2001, compared to about 16% of non-Aboriginals; almost half of Aboriginal lone-parent households are in core housing need.⁹ Aboriginals make up 13% of people using homeless shelters in Vancouver, though they make up only 2% of the population.¹⁰

There are so many Aboriginal homeless in our town that when I see a homeless person who is not Aboriginal I do a double-take.

Taken on its own, the high level of poverty among urban Aboriginals in BC suggests that gaps likely exist at almost every point on the continuum of housing need. Our discussions in local communities confirmed this conclusion, and we heard that the situation is exacerbated by a shortage of decent housing on reserves that creates extremely crowded conditions and related health problems, as well as deterioration of the houses both leading people to move to urban areas in search of better housing.

⁹ BC Ministry Responsible for Housing. *Housing Matters: A Housing Strategy for British Columbia*. October, 2006.

¹⁰ Canadian Housing Observer. *Focus on Aboriginal Housing*. 2005.

Given social and economic factors, what is needed is generally: more housing at all points on the continuum.

Other factors also shape the particular needs and priorities of communities attempting to address Aboriginal housing problems. In some northern towns, for instance, employment is well-paid (although seasonal), but there is a severe shortage of housing that leaves people on the street. Some bands are receiving resource payments that some members do not know how to budget and spend wisely, and they may end up homeless.

Demographic Factors

The Aboriginal population of Canada is younger than the general population, and has half again the growth rate of its neighbors. This high growth leads to a relatively young population with a median age of 24.7 years compared to 37.7 years for non-Aboriginal Canadians; it turns this leads to higher levels of new household formation, and a corresponding need for more housing.¹¹ The high rate of poverty among young single parents of all backgrounds compounds the problem.

The youth of this population creates a need for supportive and transitional housing to address the challenges facing young people: teenaged single parents dealing with poverty and inexperience with parenting, the students who living in town on their own for high school, young people leaving care without further support, the many youth looking for work that is not to be found on reserves, or trying to find an affordable place to live in a costly resource community. These young people need not only housing but in many cases, far from their homes, they need support in finding their way to urban adulthood: access to child care, help with parenting, staying in school, finding and keeping work, dealing with the temptations around them, even the basics of adulthood such as managing money, meeting their daily needs for food and shelter, and finding friends.

In addition, the elder population is also expanding. Seniors/elders¹² often occupy scarce housing on reserves and in the limited social housing stock; alternatives that would allow elders to be supported near services in town would also free up housing for families. Older Aboriginals needing some health care and home supports often report that mainstream resources such as assisted living are not comfortable, especially for those who spent time in residential institutions.

¹¹ Canadian Housing Observer. *Focus on Aboriginal Housing*. 2005.

¹² We use this term to recognize that "elders" is a term of respect that does not apply generically to all seniors; elders are those whose knowledge and understanding of history has accorded them a special place of respect; further, age 65 is not a good index of being a senior among a population whose living conditions often haven't allowed them the excellent health experienced by many other seniors.

Given demographic factors, what is needed is more housing to meet the specific needs of young Aboriginals and seniors/elders.

Historical and Cultural Factors

While housing need and related supports follow a commonly described continuum, the housing solutions that will work for Aboriginal people must be shaped in terms of historical and cultural factors that differ from the mainstream. Not all Aboriginal groups have the same cultural characteristics; nor is it possible to disentangle specific cultural factors from the effects of two centuries of colonial rule, the impact of widespread poverty and the cultural and personal damage from specific initiatives such as the residential schools. However, several observations can be made about Aboriginal housing needs as distinct from those of non-Native society for which most housing programs are designed.

Extended family households

Aboriginal families very commonly prefer to live in households that include several generations and whose members – and numbers – may vary from time to time. For this reason they require homes that can be multigenerational: that is, more adaptable, and larger, than the norm set for standard housing programs. In addition, both housing design and occupancy policies must be flexible to allow for families' changing use and needs that differ from mainstream housing practice.

Examples of this divergence are the frequently expressed desire of elders to have room for grandchildren to live with them in seniors' housing, and the challenge faced by operators as extended family members come and go. Both these practices are contrary to conventional occupancy standards and operating practices, and difficult to maintain in standard social housing units designed for one senior or a couple and two children. Another disconnect is the practice in social housing of setting rents according to gross household income: since the household composition may change often, so does the household income. For this community, a set rent would work better.

This preference for larger households may also reflect a more holistic and integrated view of the world, coupled with a respect for the wisdom of elders, that differs from the more linear approach described in the standard housing continuum.

As a result, social housing for Aboriginal people needs to be managed by and for themselves, in ways that are comfortable and understandable to both society and tenants. It has been suggested that a “walk-with” approach to support is more culturally acceptable to Aboriginal people than a didactic one; housing is an excellent setting for such an approach.

Residential schools: loss of parenting skills

Many of the children who attended residential schools were removed completely from their families and communities. Many children lost their language; many faced abuse. In the same move, parental and community responsibilities to the children were taken away.

This situation could only result in alienation of child and parent, and indeed many people of that generation lost the experience of family life – the ability to parent effectively, and to maintain a household, according to their culture.

In addition, many learned the hard way not to question the authority of institutions, and in so doing lost the confidence to stand up for themselves and make decisions about their own lives and housing. Even the need to complete forms and provide documentation may still present a barrier to accessing housing or claiming their rights under the *Residential Tenancy Act*. Again, an environment consistent with people's needs can enable them to build their capacity for independence, and that can be provided by Aboriginal-managed housing.

A family living in a \$700 per month 3-bedroom house was evicted. The landlord turned around and rented each bedroom in the house for \$700 to men working in the oil patch. People do not challenge evictions like this because they are afraid that they, or their family, will be blacklisted from other lower-rent places.

Colonialism: loss of culture/identity

The residential schools were symptoms and instruments of colonialism which led, as intended, to loss of Aboriginal culture and identity. The exclusion of Aboriginals from mainstream society and the systemic racism they met when they tried to function within it, combined with the more specific abusiveness of the residential school system, has led to a high incidence of demoralization: family violence, alcoholism, ill health and poverty. The result is a population struggling with many challenges: a high incidence of children in care and of very young single parents; prostitution; street-entrenched people of all ages; abused women, elders and children; individuals disabled by accident or violence, and high numbers of homeless, "discarded", people.

It also leads to more people with FASD. On some reserves, many children were born with the serious mental challenges resulting from Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). A fair portion of today's Aboriginal children live with parents and grandparents affected by their residential school experiences or FASD, or both. Those children are not getting the parenting support and nurturing needed to become healthy adults, and have few models for maintaining and managing their families, households and communities. In this way, the cycle of demoralization continues.

Another legacy of colonialism is systemic discrimination against women with regard to housing title. Since legal title is usually in the hands of the husband or the band, women leaving a relationship must also leave the home. This situation often results in women and children returning to the abuser, or ending up homeless in nearby towns.¹³

Finally, inappropriate housing design and frequently shoddy construction, combined with tenants' lack of resources and education, experience in home maintenance, and incentives to make repairs, has left the societies and the reserves with large portions of their housing stock in poor repair or downright uninhabitable.

¹³ The federal government has recently hired Wendy Grant-John, former Musqueam chief, to study the legal issues that prevent women from claiming their family home.

Appropriate housing-based solutions

The remedy for these circumstances is much the same as for other marginalized populations – through measures like life skills development, education, training and employment opportunities, supported by stable and affordable housing, but those remedies must be implemented in ways (“walk-with” ways) that address the roots of the problem for urban Aboriginals. Above all, people must be treated with respect for who they are and for their ability, with assistance, to address their own personal and community challenges.

Remedies must address the cultural and political alienation – the powerlessness – of Aboriginal citizens by services provided in the context of self-determination and building capacity for independence. Housing interventions, the topic of this report, must be characterized by Aboriginal-directed design, development and management that address the need and willingness of Aboriginal people to take charge of their own lives. Support services provided must also be appropriately available and appropriately delivered.

Housing providers are in a good position to assist Aboriginal individuals and families trying to overcome the effects of a colonial past. Housing programs designed for urban Aboriginal people must both provide an environment suitable to the culture and lifestyle of tenants and make available the supports and education required to overcome the damage of the past.

Given cultural and historical factors that shape housing need, Aboriginal housing programs must focus on helping tenants develop the capacity for managing their own lives in their own way.

These key factors – poverty, demographics and the cultural/historical characteristics of Aboriginal communities – lead to a continuum of housing need specific to Aboriginal groups. A table showing the continuum of Aboriginal housing need identified in the communities we visited is shown in Appendix 1. Fundamental to the housing continuum for Aboriginal people is the requirement for a capacity-building strategy oriented to effective self-management of housing resources and people’s own lives. This principle does not preclude partnerships with other agencies in providing services; it simply means that the housing and services provided must be managed under Aboriginal direction and appropriate to Aboriginal needs.

4 Assets and Gaps

This study identifies assets and gaps in Aboriginal housing within just such a capacity-building framework. Each of the 13 communities in the study has described its housing assets, needs and priorities. The appendices to this report set out that information by community.

4.1 Assets

Existing societies, community partners and housing stock

One of the greatest assets of the off-reserve Aboriginal housing sector is the Boards and staff of the Aboriginal housing societies, those belonging to AHMA and those that do not. Our survey found excellent examples of societies that are expert in managing their housing operations and have plans for expanding to meet the needs they know so well in their own communities.

AHMA societies own and manage a portfolio of about 3000 housing units that provides a solid base for further use and development. Information on the units owned by those societies, and on their priorities and capacity, is summarized in Appendices 2 and 3, and fully presented in Volume II.

To support these societies – and their community partners – in building their capacity for both managing current operations and undertaking new development will be a priority for AHMA that is expected to leverage considerable housing and social investment in the future. AHMA members have historically supported each other and shared what they have learned so that one society can benefit from the successes of another, and there is now a good opportunity to expand that collaboration.

AHMA societies currently own about 3000 units of housing that can be used to leverage new development for housing that meets Aboriginal needs in an Aboriginal way.

AHMA is now well placed to strengthen its own members and offer leadership and services to other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal housing agencies. In taking this direction, AHMA is following the recommendations of the housing sectoral session that arose from the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable in April 2004,¹⁴ which called for capacity-building for societies and tenants on all aspects of housing supply and maintenance.

Development Capacity

Although there has been little development by this housing sector since 1994, some societies, having participated in provincial housing programs, are experienced and skilled in developing new projects. A few other societies have identified opportunities and are ready to respond to an anticipated proposal call. The first step in planning and capacity-building is to support these societies in moving forward with their immediate proposals, and AHMA, on request, will assist them to prepare their submissions. The second step is to develop models and materials – and advocate for qualified staff – to enable less-experienced groups to prepare submission-ready proposals for new opportunities that may arise.

¹⁴ Canadian Housing Observer. *Focus on Aboriginal Housing*. 2005.

Through the consultation process we heard that that further work needs to be done in these areas:

- Design guidelines that take into account multigenerational households, changing needs (e.g., “Flex” housing and co-housing) and more mundane issues such as affordable heating for northern climates
- Toolkit for proposal development, including particularly the necessary legal and financial steps to preparing a development proposal
- Advice on ways to approach the local community, e.g. for rezoning. This is an area of considerable difficulty in most locations, since the common NIMBY system is frequently intensified by concern about housing for any group perceived to have special needs (such as homeless, people with mental illnesses, youth) and may also be overlaid with racism.

Ability to respond to development opportunities is needed to turn the asset represented by land and housing units into a larger supply of affordable housing targeted to meet a wider range of housing needs. An effective way to help with this would be to establish a provincial advisory team to provide technical support and assist with developing new models.

Operational Capacity

AHMA can expand its assistance to members by providing model operational standards, tailor-made skills-building packages for board development, staff training for property management and financial systems and model operating, finance and maintenance policies/procedures. Examples of basic operating policies that need to be addressed in some cases are: how to deal with overhoused tenants – especially if they are seniors/elders – when those tenants have nowhere to go, and how to maintain rent levels that cover property management costs in the face of their tenants’ poverty.¹⁵ Facilitating turnover helps use the affordable stock more efficiently. AHMA can also build on the Tenant Relations Co-ordinator model already in place, helping societies expand that service and clarify staff roles.

Some people do not know how to set up or look after their residence. For example, one staff person discovered that one of her clients did not know how to turn on her heat and had to be shown how. Another found a tenant trying to heat the water in her hot water tank with a blow torch.

For both of these purposes – development and operations – finding, creating and sharing best practice models and new models will be of great assistance to societies and communities.

One approach to model development that we recommend is to enable societies that have the skills to move ahead on projects they have identified, but treat each as a prototype or model-development initiative, with generous technical support and a strong evaluation component. Then each model can be finalized for sharing and replicated – modified for

¹⁵ It should be mentioned that these particular policy challenges are by no means exclusive to the Aboriginal housing sector.

local circumstances – by other societies. In this way an integrated and self-reinforcing set of best practices can be established over time.

Examples of new models now being considered are student hostels, supportive housing designed for families that also provides support to seniors and disabled people, and a Family Self-Sufficiency program.

Existing tenants and communities

We heard that there is a range of both strengths and challenges among existing tenants and communities, but we also found that social housing tenants, especially Aboriginal ones, tend to be described primarily in terms of their needs rather than their strengths. While recognizing that there is a great deal of scope for offering services such as counseling, job training, and drug/alcohol treatment in housing settings, it is important to look for the strengths of tenants in any capacity-building initiatives.

One woman needed to challenge her ex in court. She researched it properly, did what she needed to do and won. She taught another woman in the program what to do when her time came.

One thinks of the wisdom and respect held by elders, excellent leaders, the mentoring and good role models provided by people who have survived hard times¹⁶ and young people succeeding in high schools and universities, the creativity and skill of artists, the kindness of those who support elders, and the holistic, extended-family approach to both problems and solutions

that in many cases remains in Aboriginal communities. Certainly the non-Native community is beginning to realize that there is much to learn from a First Nations approach to restorative justice and conflict resolution.

AHMA can help tenants by initiatives such as curriculum and training that actively encourage tenants towards self-sufficiency. The continuum of housing options must incorporate transitional housing that enables people to move to more independence. Even in the regular family housing stock, financial education and home maintenance skills are needed. In some cases social supports such as counselling and parenting programs should be made available. Other programs may look at income generation, job training, building maintenance, self-advocacy.

In the past, CMHC funding for off-reserve Aboriginal housing programs included a budget line for tenant support. This item should be maintained and the amount increased to enable societies to implement appropriate support models locally. The housing problems faced by urban Aboriginals will not be solved by capital-only assistance, or even operating subsidies directed only at the property maintenance and management component of a housing development.

¹⁶ A little known fact is that the percentage of off-reserve Aboriginals adults in BC who attend school full time is higher than for the non-Aboriginal population. (BC Stats: Statistical Profile of Off-Reserve First Nations and Métis 2001)

Another resource available to societies is existing social and health services. While at the moment these are not particularly well integrated there is an opportunity, through the provincial Closing the Gap strategy, for provincial agencies to partner with AHMA and its member societies to develop integrated, culturally appropriate programs for off-reserve Aboriginals on housing sites.

AHMA could also provide programs (rent-to-own, or rebate programs, for instance) to help tenants move towards home ownership or alternative forms of housing such as co-housing. One comprehensive tenant program that has been used with good success is the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, which could likely be adapted to be comfortable for Aboriginal tenants. The Cariboo Friendship Centre in Williams Lake and Aqanttanam Housing Society in Cranbrook have both expressed interest in implementing this program.

Housing societies are also employers, and Aboriginal individuals should be helped, where necessary, to develop the financial/administrative and property management qualifications, and the trades training for construction, to take advantage of coming opportunities in this sector.

Finally, AHMA could assist Aboriginal community members with more general housing issues, such as utilizing the legal protections in place through the *Residential Tenancy Act* or helping people apply for rent supplement programs in areas that have a good supply of market rental units.

We discovered in many of the community meetings that other partners are willing to help with housing problems encountered by their Aboriginal citizens. In Mission, for instance, the mayor attended our meeting in search of ways for local government to assist. The opportunity posed by having funds available for new development should help societies to develop new partnerships, especially given the tendency of many communities to resist development in the rezoning and permit process. In addition new housing initiatives targeted to other needs, such as homelessness and seniors at risk, are also available to Aboriginal housing groups, either on their own or in partnership with other community agencies.

An important role for AHMA is to help facilitate partnerships of all kinds. For instance AHMA, working with BC Housing, can forge links with all provincial ministries engaged in the Closing the Gap strategy to:

- Develop sites and models for service provision to Aboriginal people, and
- Ensure that services are integrated and appropriate.

Initiatives to build on society and tenant strengths must use Aboriginal-appropriate and integrated models in partnership with the whole range of development partners and service providers.

AHMA

AHMA itself is a major asset for Aboriginal housing in BC. It has been drawing upon the strengths of the member societies since it incorporated in 1996; it has been administering subsidy for 322 provincial off-reserve units since 2004. With co-operation and funding from BC Housing, it has been developing a self-management system that can be a model for the rest of Canada, based on its own strengths:

- *We knew our tenants and the challenges they faced, as well as how to support them in overcoming these challenges*
- *We had heart – we cared deeply*
- *We knew how to develop housing*
- *We knew how to finance real estate*
- *We knew how to administer non-profit housing.*

What it has already accomplished, AHMA has done with a small budget and very few staff. It will need expanded financial support if it is to play its new role as leader and funding administrator of off-reserve Aboriginal housing in British Columbia.

In terms of capacity-building, what AHMA has done and will continue to do, the societies can do, and tenants and their families can also do, and both are the gateway to development in the larger community.

Key strengths of the off-reserve Aboriginal housing sector are the commitment and knowledge of the societies, the resilience and strength of tenants, and the vision and leadership of AHMA.

All housing initiatives and programs should be planned and implemented in such a way as to build on these assets. All development should be capacity-building in both purpose and method. All management should support tenants' confidence and skills in directing their own lives.

The Aboriginal Housing Management Association has a key role to play in guiding and facilitating initiatives, developing and delivering service models, and bringing together government, non-profit and private partners for appropriate sector and tenant capacity-building.

4.2 Gaps

Figure 1 above shows the general framework for our discussion of Aboriginal housing needs; it is spelled out more specifically in Appendix 1. The following is a general summary, using this framework, of the key issues raised in this review of Aboriginal housing need. (Information, waitlists, and priorities as stated by each community surveyed are found in Appendices 2 and 3; information on homelessness is in Appendix 4.)

Five key themes arose in our research on gaps in the spectrum of Aboriginal housing need. The first four applied to housing problems and solutions:

- Emergency housing for people who are homeless because of social ills ranging from substance abuse and mental illness to lack of housing on reserves
- Short Term and Transitional housing that would provide temporary housing and/or assistance in moving to more independent living for a variety of groups
- Housing with supports, again for a variety of groups who may or may not be able to move eventually to independent housing
- More, more appropriate and better quality affordable family and elders housing.

The final theme, overarching all, was;

- Capacity-building for both societies and tenants, which we have discussed above.

Suitable housing is particularly needed for: people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, youth especially students and those leaving foster care, very young single parents, people with mental and physical illnesses and addictions, those fleeing abuse, elders and families.

Work is already under way on housing and capacity-building initiatives across the AHMA membership. The descriptions below capture the type of housing that is being proposed, and notes the societies that are developing proposals for one or other, or sometimes a combination of types that meet local need.¹⁷

Emergency/Crisis Housing

The National Homelessness Initiative and the Premier's Task Force on Homelessness and Mental Health have helped many communities to take a serious look at their homeless population. Therefore, studies on homelessness were available for most of the study communities. Data on homelessness in each community are found in Appendix 4 and in the full profiles in Volume II. Although the numbers of "absolutely" homeless – people actually living on the street – are nearly impossible to quantify, it is clear that Aboriginal people are grossly overrepresented among shelter users.

Most of the Aboriginal housing stock in the province was developed for long term, affordable family or seniors' use and not many Aboriginal-run services provide emergency shelter. The Cariboo Friendship Society in Williams Lake is one of the few, with 29 emergency shelter beds and a 16-bed transition house for women fleeing abuse. This is also a priority for Dawson Creek Native Housing, who have submitted a proposal for mixed short-term and emergency housing. In most other cases, such as Kamloops, the society has identified other community agencies as the better choice for providing emergency shelter for Aboriginals.

¹⁷ Our list of plans being developed by societies is based on our knowledge at the time of writing; our examples may not be a full description of the work under way, particularly in the areas where we have not been able to finalize our information.

AHMA members as a group may wish to consider further whether to begin developing emergency shelter capacity in their communities or to work with other community agencies to ensure that shelters are easier for Aboriginal people to access and that appropriate post-shelter housing options are in place.

Short Term and Transitional Housing

Target groups

We found that AHMA's member societies tend to identify as a priority the housing needs of individuals who may or may not pass through the emergency shelters but are either "hidden" homeless (staying temporarily with family and friends) or at high risk of homelessness. Among these are:

- youth either moving into town for schooling or leaving foster care (a priority repeatedly mentioned in our community meetings)
- people working in high-cost/low-vacancy communities, or commuting from reserves for the work week
- people with mental illness, addictions or FASD
- people with physical illnesses including HIV/AIDS, or needing temporary housing during a medical stay in an urban area
- very young mothers (13+)
- people who are street-entrenched because of prostitution, or chronic homelessness
- people (women, elders or young people) fleeing from abuse.

Many of these groups are best assisted with specialized short term or transitional housing.

Short term housing

Short term housing is geared to providing a place to stay for a limited term, such as dorm-style housing or hostels for workers or students, or a medical stay lodge. Appropriate short term housing of this kind may prevent people from becoming homeless or street-entrenched from lack of having a safe, congenial and comfortable place to stay in town, especially for people whose normal home is a rural reserve.

This type of short term housing need not necessarily be single-occupancy or fully self-contained. Depending on the user group it can resemble hostels, group homes or university student housing and may have some of the same management/support arrangements, with on-site staff geared to ensuring a stable, comfortable and relatively social housing community.

Student housing and supportive housing for youth, in particular, were named as a priority by many communities. At least one society (M'akola on Vancouver Island) is moving ahead with a student housing proposal, in partnership with Camosun College, and another that requires renovating an older building they own for this new use. M'akola is also proposing a medical lodge following the successful prototype operated by Lu'ma Native Housing in Vancouver.

Transitional housing¹⁸

A more common concern is housing that enables people who have not been able to find and maintain stable housing because of personal problems to gain the necessary skills to do so, and prevent a return to homelessness. The ability to make this transition often develops in two stages. First is a short term stay of perhaps 30 days to address urgent problems such as becoming safe from imminent physical or mental abuse, or recovery from the immediate effects of substance abuse. This may also be the right type of housing for a pregnant teen or very young single parent while she gathers courage and supports to begin setting up her own household. Such limited-term housing with services arrangements is usually called First-stage Transitional Housing.

Second-stage transitional housing is also typically time-limited, but the term is more likely one or two years, possibly three. For this type of housing, the units may be ordinary self-contained family or singles housing, but services such as counselling, parenting support, life-skills and employment training are usually added to help the tenant gain the skills and confidence for long-term independence. In addition to second-stage housing for women leaving abuse, youth leaving care are a priority for many, as well as low-income singles.

A number of societies have identified transitional housing for specific groups as one of their priorities. The Cariboo Friendship Centre is submitting a proposal for second-stage units to complement its emergency housing. Mission Native Housing has also submitted proposals targeting elders/seniors and single people at risk of homelessness.

Housing with Supports

Some groups were identified who need permanent housing with supports. For instance, although some individuals with a mental illness or addiction may eventually be able to move into completely independent housing, others will always require a supportive environment and may need help with personal care, medications or behaviour management. People with FASD may also require a permanent supportive structure to help them make the most of their lives.

In Prince George, supportive housing for individuals with HIV/AIDS, or mental health/addictions issues was a stated priority.

It is increasingly recognized that many seniors can remain independent if hospitality services such as meals, housekeeping and recreation programs, and access to personal

¹⁸ We have used this term to indicate housing that can be used in this way by a variety of groups, reserving "Transition House" for settings that serve women and their children fleeing abuse.

care, are available on site. The province's assisted living program is available to Aboriginal seniors as to others, but the issue of environments that are culturally appropriate for Aboriginal people remains, especially for those who attended residential schools.

Seniors/elders' housing with or without supports was identified as a priority in a number of communities, for a variety of reasons: desire to be near urban services and amenities, imposition on well-housed seniors/elders for housing space and childcare assistance that sometimes verges on abuse, and the need to free up both on-reserve and urban housing for family use.

Housing with supports is typically, but not necessarily, made up of self-contained units with private bath and at least minimal food-preparation facilities (e.g., microwave, refrigerator, electric kettle, sink).

Dawson Creek has prepared an elders' housing proposal, designed by the renowned architect Douglas Cardinal, which may prove an excellent model.

Independent subsidized housing

Most of the 3000 units presently managed by AHMA societies are independent, affordable units for families, singles or seniors. Although much may be done to enhance and upgrade this stock, the primary need is to fund more of it to address the burgeoning need identified in most of the communities we visited. More family housing was particularly urgent in high cost, tight rental markets such as Fort St. John. In addition, many communities mentioned a need to develop units for seniors/elders to free up family housing.

Ironically, given a cultural preference for living in extended families, some communities identified a need for smaller units, particularly for single parents. Combinations of family and elders/seniors' housing, some targeting subgroups like young single parents and individuals with a disability are being proposed by Aqanttanam in Cranbrook, Conayt Friendship Centre in Merritt, Mission Native Housing, Muks Kum Ol Housing in Terrace and Okanagan Métis and Aboriginal Housing in Kelowna.

Emergency or crisis housing is needed, but short term, transitional and supportive housing is also required, in addition to more traditional affordable family and elders housing.
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Capacity-building

Our suggested approach to capacity-building has been set out in the sections above but we refer back to it here for completeness. Societies and communities vary in their ability both to manage housing effectively and to undertake the task of developing more. The devolution of housing program administration to AHMA presents an opportunity for capacity-building in terms of development skills, basic housing operations and

education/skillbuilding for tenants. Some societies, such as those in Kamloops, Merritt, Quesnel, Kelowna and Cranbrook, are explicit in their plans to begin an internal planning process and, in some cases, outreach to their communities.

The varying condition of the housing units themselves presents repair and upgrade challenges but also great opportunities for redevelopment. Program administration by AHMA also opens up the opportunity to develop new design and management models that are appropriate to Aboriginal family constellations and cultural norms.

5 Key Priorities

This framework paper on needs and priorities for off-reserve Aboriginal housing is based on community consultations with 13 BC communities, convened by housing societies that are members of the Aboriginal Housing Management Association. We talked to people in those communities about the assets, gaps and priority issues they confronted, reviewed the available data, and began to see common threads that wove themselves into the picture presented here, and in community-by-community detail in Volume II.

Neither the numbers nor the consultation by themselves could have given us a full description of the needs and strengths within the communities we consulted. Together, the two methods helped to identify some important elements underlying the housing issues and challenges that face off-reserve Aboriginals, elements necessary to support and amplify a traditional needs and demand analysis.

The following are the key priorities to emerge from our research.

5.1 Capacity-building Strategic Planning

It is clear that there is a great need for more off-reserve Aboriginal housing, that there are some obvious gaps, and some important assets in terms of land, buildings, and passionately committed societies and partners. The details of those assets and gaps need to be understood in more depth.

The overarching requirement is to develop a long-term strategic plan to address the admittedly major needs of urban Aboriginal people in BC. However, the nature of the planning that must be done – that is, the importance of using a highly collaborative and capacity-building methodology – requires considerable time, time that would likely be perceived as more delay and more inattention from the long-starved Aboriginal societies involved unless some actual projects begin to appear. Planning that builds capacity must build the hope that something real and lasting will come from the efforts of housing societies, their tenants and communities and AHMA itself.

The general approach we recommend is to begin with projects and societies that can show early success, supporting AHMA in helping societies to bring them to fruition. The process of working with communities to gather better information and develop a clear

strategic plan should run parallel to, and incorporate, this process of concrete achievement.

5.2 Expand the Stock of Non-profit Housing Units

Proposals for new non-profit housing for a range of tenant groups are being prepared in anticipation of a proposal call. We understand that the available funding will provide capital only, for fewer than 200 units. These units should be allocated on the basis of their quality and chance of succeeding, rather than the particular target group or geographic area they address, because more housing stock of all kinds is needed in most communities.¹⁹

However, a capital-only subsidy will not be sufficient to provide the amount of society and tenant support required for successful operation. We reiterate our recommendation above that the CMHC practice of providing operating funds for tenant support be continued.

While an estimate of the actual number of new and redeveloped units required to meet Aboriginal housing need must await the completion of a detailed strategic plan, it is clear that the initial proposal call must be followed by further expansion of off-reserve Aboriginal housing. As the process of renewing and expanding the housing stock continues, new models and materials for Aboriginal housing should be brought into play, and work on those models and materials should begin immediately. Models from the first call that are proving successful can be used as the basis for future development. Technical assistance and consulting can help less-experienced groups to prepare submission-ready proposals.

An initial proposal call should focus on quick-start projects in priority areas that have a good chance of success. Since more units will be required, work should begin now on models and materials for future Aboriginal housing proposals.

The particular types of housing that should be developed are:

Short term and transitional housing

Develop short term and transitional housing where each is identified as a community priority, as follows:

- hostel or dorm-style housing for students and working adults living off-reserve
- housing with supports for young people leaving foster care
- lodging for individuals and families during medical treatment in urban hospitals
- first and second-stage transitional housing for people fleeing abuse

¹⁹ In some Northern communities a high vacancy rate in the market stock makes it worth considering an expansion of rent supplements, coupled with community initiatives that help both market landlords and Aboriginal tenants to understand and carry out their landlord-tenant rights and responsibilities.

- first and second-stage transitional housing for people with mental illnesses and addictions.

Supportive Housing

Develop supportive housing where it is identified as a community priority, as follows

- housing for elders/seniors (independent/supportive)
- housing to meet the needs of individuals with long-term mental and physical illnesses or disabilities, or people with FASD.

In recommending the three priorities above, we are aware that many communities identified emergency housing for the homeless as a priority as well. Some Aboriginal groups have made proposals and are well able to carry them out if funded. However, we suggest further discussion on this matter among the AHMA membership. Shelter provision is quite a different business from operating other kinds of subsidized housing. In some places it might be more effective to provide culturally-appropriate support and outreach to other community shelters than to segment off the large portion of homeless who are Aboriginal. It could be that the better use of resources is to provide appropriate transitional housing to which Aboriginal homeless individuals can be referred from the shelters.

Family and elders/seniors housing

Expand the stock of non-profit family and seniors' housing, leveraging new development and redevelopment from existing assets.

This housing should reflect the priorities of the communities in both design/unit configuration and skilled, culturally appropriate management; it may be appropriate to include housing with a mix of units for seniors, young single parents and singles such as students or working adults, and provision for housing extended family members. As is customary in social housing, all developments should include units adapted for individuals with mobility impairments.

Opportunities: Redevelopment and Leveraging

Plans to develop new housing must also include redeveloping the existing non-profit stock, much of which is not in good condition and/or underuses the development potential of its sites. The resource constituted by these urban sites can be used to leverage financing for new development that will typically provide more and better quality housing. There is also considerable community benefit for both tenants and neighbors in producing new homes where old, run-down housing stood before.

5.3 Build Capacity for Housing Development and Management

Create models and materials for developing Aboriginal housing as the basis for a future development. These materials should include:

- Assistance in community needs assessment
- Design guidelines

- Toolkit for proposal development including the complexities of legal and financial procedures and decisions, navigating municipal approvals, and advice for community relations.

These materials should be supplemented with the support of a provincial advisory team for on-site consulting and technical assistance.

Continue, enhance and expand AHMA's ongoing capacity-building initiative in order to help societies to:

- bring their housing development and property management skills to a high degree of proficiency and cultural appropriateness
- develop a strong set of supports to help tenants improve their lives and their housing as they see fit
- develop strong linkages with other service providers so that services delivered on Aboriginal housing sites are well integrated and culturally appropriate, and
- build relationships with the larger communities they live and operate in for improvement and exchange of models, skills and understanding.

Building capacity requires a collaborative and respectful approach, supporting organizations and individuals in decision-making and accomplishment. This work must be led by AHMA as the voice of many Aboriginal housing operators. However, there is an important role for BC Housing, as the provincial housing agency that channels funds to AHMA for administration, in offering funds, technical and planning expertise and organizational support. BC Housing can also assist by incorporating the Aboriginal housing stock into its province-wide systems, such as the Housing Registry, as and where appropriate.

Build capacity for development and management of Aboriginal housing stock and programs. Build linkages with community partners and service providers for integrated and culturally appropriate support initiatives.

6 Conclusion

This document sets out a framework and key priorities for addressing Aboriginal housing need. We have based the framework on what we heard in community meetings on local needs and priorities drawn together by 13 Aboriginal housing societies, as well as extensive statistical information.

We are confident that the framework is sound and reflects what we heard, but the consultation and planning process has just begun. A more detailed strategic plan must be developed to confirm the direction and gather in all the partners.

Further information about each community, its assets, gaps, priorities and capacity for improving both management and development skills must be gathered. This is work that can be taken on, with appropriate funding, by the communities themselves. All

stakeholders must be engaged: the urban Aboriginal housing societies, the tenants, the concerned members of their communities, and the institutional and corporate partners that will wish to share the process.

We would suggest beginning that process immediately, with the circulation of this report and the results of the initial proposal call, and setting a one year deadline for its completion.

We have a belief that it is when all four colours come together, we will start to solve our problems.

First Nations in BC

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www.ahma-bc.org/

Assembly of First Nations
www.afn.ca/

Congress of Aboriginal People
<http://abo-peoples.org/>

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng>

BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
www.bcaafc.com

**A Continuum of Housing Needs
Identified by Aboriginal Communities in British Columbia**

Culturally Appropriate Solutions needed				
Crisis: Immediate Needs	Short term housing	Housing with supports	Long term housing – minimal or no supports	Long-term housing options
Emergency shelter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singles • families 	Hard to house and those at-risk of homelessness	Assisted housing for elders	Single and two parent families	Home ownership
Transition Houses for women leaving abusive relationships	Second stage shelter for women	For disabled and those with mobility problems	Youth housing	Flex housing
Crisis Interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health • Detox 	Transitional housing for people moving towards stable housing	Addictions and Mental Health	Low income singles	Rent sups
	Student housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post secondary • High school (coming from the reserves) 	People moving on and off reserve because of jobs, lifestyle, family responsibilities	Elders, seniors, and baby boomers needing no supports	Easily accessible waitlists
	Medical stay (e.g. post operative, high risk pregnancy)	Developmental disabilities including FAS and FASD	Foster families and adoptive families	Alternatives to traditional heating (especially up north)
	Relief and respite for foster parents	Children whose parents have FASD or residential school syndrome	Grandparents looking after grandchildren – legal custody or not	
	For people who have home on reserve but do not stay there	“Discarded people”, older people with addictions who live outside	Large and extended families needed 4+ bedrooms	
	Detox centre	Post-jail	Parents with just one child	
	After detox or mental health/attempted suicide	Those suffering from residential school syndrome		
	Very young pregnant girls	Women at risk who may lose children to care		
		Seniors/elders needing complex care		

Aboriginal Housing Societies: Synopsis of Housing Assets, Gaps, and Plans

Appendix 2.0

Housing Society	Total pop. (2001 Census)	Aboriginal pop. % of total	Total Aboriginal low income [^]	Long term housing	Short term or emergency	Wait list (dependants)	Housing Priorities as Identified by the Community	Next steps for the Housing Society
Aqanttanam, Cranbrook	24,270	1,425 (5.9%)	389	29	none	150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single seniors • Singles (especially men) • Women leaving transition houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with BC Housing on project • Strategic planning in Jan 07
Cariboo Friendship Centre, Williams Lake	25,122	3,250 (12.9%)	887	72	45	95 (152)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Shelter • Moving from rural to urban • Low income singles • Youth • Mental Disabilities and Mental Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission of EOI for 2nd stage housing. • Desire to develop Family Self-Sufficiency program for tenants
Conayt Friendship Society, Merritt	7,090	890 (13.8%)	268	41	none	195 (105)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • Lone parents • Emergency housing with supports for men, women, and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission of preliminary proposal • Capacity building to create development knowledge
Dawson Creek Native Housing	17,444	2,090 (12.0%)	570	53	none	18 (43)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elders/seniors housing • Women living on low incomes • Young families, both lone-parent and 2-parent. • Second stage housing – single men and women • Emergency shelter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elders/seniors housing 12-14 units • Submitted EOI Provincial Homelessness Initiative for Emergency Shelter Units
Fort St. John Native Housing	16,035	1,785 (11.1%)	487	29	none	19 (51)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family housing including for small families • Elders housing to release space in present housing stock for new families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help develop capacity within the organization

Closing the Gap: Housing Needs and Priorities of BC's Urban Aboriginals

Housing Society	Total pop. (2001 Census)	Aboriginal pop. % of total	Total Aboriginal low income	Long term housing	Short term or emergency	Wait list (dependants)	Housing Priorities as Identified by the Community	Next steps for the Housing Society
Kamloops Native Housing Society	86,490	5,470 (6.3%)	1,493	83	none	121(173)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single Parent dwellings for homeless and at-risk parents and their children • SAFE housing for families – long term • Transitional housing for those with multiple barriers • Aboriginal students housing (about 500 or 7500 students are aboriginal) 	Internal planning based on community information
Kekino Native Housing, Surrey	347,825	6,895 (2.0%)	1,882	199	none		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth supportive housing • Family Housing • Elders/seniors housing 	
M'akola Society, Victoria	311,902	8,695 (2.8%)	2,374	166	8	210 (408)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty nesters • Supportive for youth w. care agreements and post-care • Emergency family housing w supports • Extended families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student housing • Medical stay • Family Housing
M'akola Society (up island)		15,775	4304	388	none	502	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Shelter • Family Housing 	Further work needs to be done to define the needs of each community
Mission Native Housing	31,270	1,490 (4.8%)	407	83	none	650 (1430)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive and transitional housing • Youth housing with supports • Family housing with in-house support. 	2 submitted through the Provincial Homelessness EO: seniors, single young adults, lone parents

Closing the Gap: Housing Needs and Priorities of BC's Urban Aboriginals

Housing Society	Total pop. (2001 Census)	Aboriginal pop. % of total	Total Aboriginal low income	Long term housing	Short term or emergency	Wait list (dependants)	Housing Priorities as Identified by the Community	Next steps for the Housing Society
Muks Kum Oi Housing, Terrace	19,980	3,090 (15.5%)	844	148	14	211(411)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detox housing. • Housing for people with development disabilities, including FASD. • Youth housing with support especially for those coming out of foster care • Housing for the “discarded” people. • Housing for those who will soon become seniors 	Build units for seniors and disabled people with some supports but designed for family members to be major support
Okanagan Metis and Aboriginal Housing, Kelowna	147,740	3,950 (2.7%)	1078	79	none	195 (328)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing for elders/seniors • Extended families • Single parent and child • Physically disabled 	Developing proposal for a 40 unit complex to include 14 1 bdrm, 12 2 bdrm and townhouses with 3 and 4 bdrm
Prince George Metis Housing	85,035	7,985 (9.4%)	2,180	168	none	2461 (1862)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive housing for special populations: at-risk women, perinatal women, HIV-AIDS, Mental Health and Addictions • Long term housing for families and seniors 	Will submit to the RFP. Need for community capacity building so that all agencies can work together to fill the continuum of housing
United Aboriginal Housing, Quesnel	24,415	2,140 (8.8%)	584	64	none	73 (86)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family housing. • Housing for single men. 	Capacity building within organization
Vancouver Native Housing	1,986,965	36,860 (1.9%)	10,063	444	none	no info	Information not available at time of writing	Holistic Aboriginal Family Housing Healing Lodge
Vernon Native Housing	51,530	2,290 (4.4%)	625	65	none	300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Transition • Single parent • Second stage housing 	Discussions with the City of Vernon about acquiring land

Housing Units Owned and Managed by Aboriginal Housing Societies

Appendix 2.1

Housing Society	Aboriginal pop	Total Housing Units	bach/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	6 bed	Disabled units
Aqanttanam, Cranbrook	1,425	29	0	6	6	14	3	0	0
Cariboo Friendship Centre, Williams Lake	3,250	73	16	11	26	18	2	0	2
Conayt Friendship Society, Merritt	890	41	1	10	21	9	0	0	3
Dawson Creek Native Housing	2,090	53	0	8	19	16	7	1	2
Fort St. John Native Housing	1,785	29	0	2	22	3	2	0	0
Kamloops Native Housing Society	5,470	84	12	16	33	18	5	0	4
M'akola Society, Victoria	8,695	174	8 beds	44	76	41	5	0	nd
M'akola Society (up island)	15,775	388	10	92	216	49	9	2	10
Mission Native Housing	1,490	83	14	21	29	15	4	0	8
Muks Kum OI Housing, Terrace	3,090	124	28	22	7	57	4	0	6
Muks Kum OI Housing, Prince Rupert	4,625	55	11	6	12	21	3	2	2
Okanagan Metis and Aboriginal Housing, Kelowna	3,950	79	0	0	28	28	23	0	0
Prince George Metis Housing	7,985	168	6	63	51	36	9	3	nd
United Aboriginal Housing, Quesnel	2,140	64	23	28	12	1	0	0	3
Vernon Native Housing	2,290	65	6	19	22	5	4	3 portable rent sups	6

Wait list Information by Aboriginal Housing Society

Appendix 2.2

Housing Society	Aboriginal pop.	Total Housing Units	Wait list (dependants)	bach/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	6 bed	Lone parents	Singles	Elders /Seniors	Disabled	Comments
Aqanttanam Cranbrook	1,425	29	72(82)	23	12	22	11	3	0	nd	nd	nd	1	
Cariboo Friendship Centre, Williams Lake	3,250	73	95 (152)	18	29	34	7	3	4	32	22	8	5	Many others have not kept their files active.
Conayt Friendship Society, Merritt	890	41	90 (65)	38	25	13	14	0	0	nd	nd	nd	3	culled every 6 mon
Dawson Creek Native Housing	2,090	53	18 (43)	0	7	3	7	0	1	12	0	0	nd	187 in dormant files
Fort St. John Native Housing	1,785	29	19 (51)	0	5	9	3	1	1	12	0	0	1	not accept applicants with only 1 child
Kamloops Native Housing Society	5,470	83	121 (173)	26	31	36	20	0	0	42	25	6	8	115 inactive as well
M'akola Society, Victoria	8,695	174	210 (408)	5	83	67	40	15	0	nd	21	nd	2	culled yearly
M'akola Society (up island)	15,775	308	502	39	160	158	101	43	0	0	0	0	46	uses BCH registry

Closing the Gap: Housing Needs and Priorities of BC's Urban Aboriginals

Housing Society	Aboriginal pop.	Total Housing Units	Wait list (dependants)	bach/1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	6 bed	Lone parents	Single	Elders /Seniors	Disabled	Comments
Mission Native Housing	1,490	83	657 (1430)	186	322	0	93	56	0	nd	nd	nd	nd	
Muks Kum OI Housing, Terrace	3,090	124	212 (421)	11	17	39	78	26	10	0	nd	16	31	
Muks Kum OI Housing, Prince Rupert	4,625	55	280 (466)	54	58	88	60	13	7	nd	nd	nd	nd	Listed is no of adults rather than households
Okanagan Metis and Aboriginal Housing, Kelowna	3,950	79	190 (328)	14	82	51	32	8	3	nd	nd	nd	2	
Prince George Metis Housing	7,985	168	2,461 (1,862)	321	79	1640	321	54	46	1380	321	483	23	Culling practices not known.
United Aboriginal Housing, Quesnel	2,140	64	72 (86)	30	15	14	13	0	0	30	18	nd	16	82 in dormant files
Vernon Native Housing	2,290	65	384	174	92	82	23	6	7	318	nd	6	28	includes both aboriginal (60%) and non aboriginal (40%)

**Community Consultations: Issues, Gaps and Priorities
for Urban Aboriginal Housing in 13 Communities in B.C.**

Cranbrook	Aqanttanam
Williams Lake	Cariboo Friendship Centre
Merritt	Conayt Friendship Society
Dawson Creek	Dawson Creek Native Housing
Fort St. John	Fort St. John Native Housing
Kamloops	Kamloops Native Housing Society
Victoria Region	M'Akola Housing Society
Mission	Mission Native Housing Society
Terrace	Muks Kum OI Housing
Kelowna	Okanagan Métis & Aboriginal
Prince George	Prince George Métis Housing Society
Quesnel	United Native Housing Society
Vernon	Vernon Native Housing

Cranbrook

The population of Cranbrook is 24,200 (2001 Census) and it serves close to 70,000 from the surrounding area. An International Airport is set to open in February 2007 and will bring substantial trade and commerce into the area. Already, major companies are moving into the area and real estate has nearly doubled in the past 4 years. The aboriginal population is 1,425 or 5.9% of the total population and, of that, there are at least 389 people living on low incomes. In the last year, 36.1% or over 1/3 of the population moved. The median income about \$6,000 less than the general population and well over half of all aboriginal people are under 25 years old. Aqanttanam will be holding a strategic planning session early in the New Year.

Aqanttanam Housing Society

The primary purpose of the society is to construct, hold, manage, provide and maintain non-for-profit rental housing for low income persons of native ancestry which shall include non-status/status aboriginals, Métis and Inuit aged 19 years or over and who reside in the area of Cranbrook within a twenty mile radius and are in need of housing. Aqanttanam has 29 units – 24 single family homes and 5 duplexes. The wait lists are consistent at about 150 per year (including family members). About 50% are seniors and 50% families.

*“Our goal for the Society is to provide safe and affordable housing for all aboriginals. We encourage tenant involvement and try to offer all resources available for them. One of our future goals is to build a singles unit for the elderly and youth. We also have a pilot project called *AMy Home@*. This project is intended to assist/advise tenants who would like to set goals to one day own their own home”.*

The Community's Comments on issues affecting aboriginal housing

- With only 29 units of aboriginal housing in town, and the turnover rate extremely low, there is a shortage of housing available.
- When the children move out, some people do not move and become over housed. Because they have nowhere to go, they remain in their units, stopping families from moving into those units.
- No emergency shelters or units for hard-to-house in town for adults or youth
- Even though not allowed, because of the housing crunch, there is a lot of couch surfing in the housing units.
- People with mental health and addictions challenges are limited with their housing options.
- Single men and single fathers with one or two children have a much harder time getting housing. *“A single man and his 12 year old daughter are looking for housing. He works, has letters of reference and has gone to the rental offer weekly for 5 months hoping something will open up.”*

Priority needs

- Emergency and short term shelters
- Single seniors' housing
- Single men/single women
- Single women w/children leaving the transition house

Other suggestions

AHMA can support Aqanttanam with capacity building

- within the organization
- training on how to get a project from start to completion.
- partnering with like-minded organizations, especially as they look for solutions to the emergency shelter needs.

Continuum of Local Housing Assets and Priorities

The following table shows the available housing that exists within Cranbrook along the full housing continuum. This includes both BC Housing funded units and Aboriginal managed housing units. The table also lists housing priorities and housing gaps as identified in the community consultations. AHMA invites community feedback to expand on the information set out in this table.

	Cranbrook	Funded Through BC Housing	Aboriginal Managed Housing	Aboriginal Community Priority	Target Population Identified as High Need
No. of Cold Wet Weather Beds					
No. of Emergency Shelter Beds				✓	Single men, youth
No. of Supported Recovery					
No. of Transition House Bed					
Short term with supports					
At Risk and Hard to House		23		✓	Second stage transitional (women)
Youth					
Special Needs Housing		57			Mental health
ILBC for Seniors		32			
Long-term Social Housing		156			
No. of Aboriginal Social Housing Units		29	29	✓	Low income single
No. of seniors receiving SAFER		128		✓	Elders/seniors no support
No. of families receiving RAP		4			
Other Aboriginal Housing					
Total Inventory of Housing Options		429	29		

Williams Lake

Williams Lake is a city of approximately 11,150 people (Stats Can 2001) in the Cariboo region of British Columbia. The total population in 2001, including surrounding areas and four reserves, was 25,122. of which 3,250 were identified as Aboriginal. As well, the Aboriginal population draws from a further 11 reserves. There are a total of 7,949 registered members in these 15 reserves, 55% or 3,992 of those people live on the reserve.

In the Williams Lake (city), the median income was \$10,924 or nearly \$1000 per month less than that of the general population and 520 (36%) moved in the last year. Vacancy rates have been dropping. From 2004 to 2005, the vacancy rates dropped approximately 12% from 20% to 8% and a further drop to virtually 0% occurred in 2006.

Cariboo Friendship Centre

"The Cariboo Friendship Society is a First Nations organization committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and to fostering fellowship and understanding between people by providing programs and services to anyone who needs our help." (Mission Statement)

As a Friendship Centre and a housing provider, the Cariboo Friendship Centre provides the full spectrum of housing, from emergency shelters to transition houses to long-term subsidized units. The Cariboo Friendship Centre manages a total of 45 emergency and short term beds and long term housing for 73 households.

The Community's Comments on issues affecting aboriginal housing

- Some people who struggle with addictions have a home on their reserve stay in town, where they have no housing. Others, such as ex-offenders, are not allowed on reserve and also end up in town without housing.
- Aging population including residential school survivors are noticed among the shelter users and living in substandard housing
- Travelling and moving on and off reserve for services, education or lifestyle causes strain on housing and need for emergency shelter.
- Life skills issues: Some people with limited independence skills or knowledge do not know how to set up or look after their residence.
- Heating costs: Natural gas costs are so high and winters so cold. Heating costs can top \$800 every two months.
- Suicidal youth or those who are waiting for detox space have no supportive place to stay.
- Support for people with developmental disabilities including FASD

Top priorities for housing in Williams Lake

- Emergency shelter
- At-risk and homeless people
- Moving from rural to urban (transience)
- Mental disabilities and mental health
- Low-income singles
- Youth

Other Suggestions

- All work should be done within the cultural traditions and with the advice of the elders.

- Work with the Cariboo Friendship Centre to develop tenant capacity to progress throughout the spectrum of housing (They are interested in the Family Self-Sufficiency model)
- Supports should include ways to engage in the community in a healthy manner as well as the teaching of life skills and practical skills to help them thrive.

Continuum of Local Housing Assets and Priorities

The following table shows the available housing that exists within Williams Lake along the full housing continuum. This includes both BC Housing funded units and Aboriginal managed housing units. The table also lists housing priorities and housing gaps as identified in the community consultations. AHMA invites community feedback to expand on the information set out in this table.

	Williams Lake	Funded Through BC Housing	Aboriginal Managed Housing	Aboriginal Community Priority	Target Population Identified as High Need
	No. of Cold Wet Weather Beds	7	14		
	No. of Emergency Shelter Beds	7	14	✓	All at-risk and homeless
	No. of Supported Recovery	0	1		Detox units
	No. of Transition House Bed	0	16		
	Short term with supports				
	At Risk and Hard to House	9	9	✓	Second stage transitional
	Youth			✓	Young pregnant or young moms, all youth
	Special Needs Housing	11			Developmentally delayed, alcohol/drugs, mental health
	ILBC for Seniors	74			
	Long-term Social Housing	147			
	No. of Aboriginal Social Housing Units	64	64	✓	Low income singles
	No. of seniors receiving SAFER	61			Seniors/elders no support
	No. of families receiving RAP	4			
	Other Aboriginal Housing	20	20	✓	Moving urban to rural
	Total Inventory of Housing Options	404	138		

Merritt

Merritt is in the Nicola Valley. Its population is 7090 people, 980 or 13.8% of these are Aboriginal. As well, there are a number of reserves that are close to Merritt which, when taken into consideration, the Aboriginal population is 30% of the total population. The median income is \$12,232, about \$6,000 lower than that of the general population. 72.1% of residents rent as compared to 33.2% in the general population. Over half (54.6%) of Aboriginal people in this community are under 25 years old and nearly half (42.2%) of the aboriginal population moved within the past year. Youth and transient lifestyles lead to many who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless. With no housing alternatives, many become “street entrenched” and develop additions and/or trauma that lead to mental health problems.

Conayt Friendship Society

The Society's Mission Statement is to improve holistically the quality of life, cultural distinctiveness and the strengthening of friendship and cooperation between the First Nations/Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people in the Nicola Valley.

Its mandate is to improve holistically the quality of life, cultural distinctiveness and the strengthening of friendship and cooperation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the Nicola Valley.

Conayt owns and manage 41 housing units, all family housing. There is no housing for youth, singles, and those at-risk of homelessness.

Issues affecting aboriginal housing

- The rate of transience is higher than elsewhere in the province.
- The youth population is greater than elsewhere in the province.
- There is no housing for youth, singles, and those at risk of homelessness.
- The Conayt Friendship Centre runs a range of successful programs, including prenatal nutrition, alcohol and drug counselling, employment, and training.
- To become more sustainable, the Aboriginal housing program is starting to move towards more environmentally friendly and sustainable housing, including the use of energy-efficient lighting, low-flow toilets, electric baseboard heater replacements, energy-efficient appliances, and installation of low-maintenance hard-surface flooring.
- Surrounding bands own land within Merritt and are interested in developing housing for their members (seniors/elders).

Housing Priorities for the Aboriginal Population in Merritt

- Students housing (NVIT is presently building housing for 72-80 students)
- Emergency shelters with supports for a full range of people from youth to transient to single men and women who are hard-to-house due to mental health and/or substance issues.
- Lone parents

Other Suggestions

AHMA can take an active role in supporting capacity building of the housing development of the Friendship Society and supporting programs that build capacity among tenants – lifeskills and knowledge about being a good tenant.

Continuum of Local Housing Assets and Priorities

The following table shows the available housing that exists within Merritt along the full housing continuum. This includes both BC Housing funded units and Aboriginal managed housing units. The table also lists housing priorities and housing gaps as identified in the community consultations. AHMA invites community feedback to expand on the information set out on this table.

	Merritt	Funded Through BC Housing	Aboriginal Managed Housing	Aboriginal Community Priority	Target Population Identified as High Need
	No. of Cold Wet Weather Beds				
	No. of Emergency Shelter Beds			✓	
	No. of Supported Recovery				
	No. of Transition House Bed				
	Short term with supports				
	At Risk and Hard to House			✓	Second stage transitional Other groups
	Youth			✓	
	Student Housing		72-80 planned at NVIT		
	Special Needs Housing			✓	Alcohol and drugs
	ILBC for Seniors	13			
	Long-term Social Housing	98			
	No. of Aboriginal Social Housing Units	41	41	✓	Low income singles, Lone parents
	No. of seniors receiving SAFER	46			
	No. of families receiving RAP	2			
	Other Aboriginal Housing				
	Total Inventory of Housing Options	200	41		

Dawson Creek

Dawson Creek is the largest city in the Peace Country. According to the Stats Can census, 17,444 people lived in the Dawson Creek and surrounding community in 2001, a 3% decrease from the 1996 census. The Aboriginal population (2001) at 2,090 or 12% of the population of Dawson Creek is much higher than 4.4% of the total population of BC who are Aboriginal. Within the aboriginal population, 62% are Métis and the rest are First Nations. As well, Dawson Creek serves another 1,064 First Nations people who live on the 8 reserves in the Peace Country.

In the Dawson Creek CA, at least 229 households had core housing needs and 500 households (24%) moved in the last year. The vacancy rate dropped about 7% from 2004 to 2005 or from 10% to 3% and continues to decline in 2006 to just over 2%.

Dawson Creek Native Housing Society (DCNHS)

“The Dawson Creek Native Housing Society will provide safe, healthy, and affordable housing for low-income people of Native Ancestry, 18 years of age and over, who reside in the city of Dawson Creek and surrounding area who are in need of housing. In addition, the Society is committed to buy, lease, hold and build, develop or improve any lands and buildings necessary for the carrying out of the said objectives.”

The Dawson Creek Native Housing Society presently manages 53 units of housing. There are 47 units of scattered housing and 2 triplexes.

The Community's comments on issues affecting aboriginal housing:

- Need for cultural sensitivity and respect of customs for elders and for extended families.
- Multiple families living together. Because of costs of housing and cultural expectations, often 3 or 4 families live in single-family units.
- Young families cannot find housing and sometimes live in tents in people's yards.
- Tenants of slum landlords don't complain, in part because they don't know their rights and in part because they are afraid they will not be able to rent another place and will become homeless
- Although the Aboriginal population in Dawson Creek is only 12%, one survey (2005) notes that over 54% homeless or at-risk were Aboriginal.
- Lack of continuity of service between on-reserve and off-reserve. The town-based organizations would like the bands to take more responsibility for their band members who live in town. Some members get good support, but many don't.
- The heat bills can be as high as \$800 or \$900 for two months in the winter. One staff came across a tenant without heating who was using a *“blow torch and heating up the hot water tank.”*

Priority housing needs for Dawson Creek aboriginal people

- Elders housing.
- Single adults, couples, and students.
- Women living on low incomes Young families, both lone-parent and 2-parent.
- All housing complexes should have some units that can support those with disabilities.
- Emergency housing and housing for low income at-risk singles.

Additional Supports needed

- Training tenants on life skills, house maintenance, financial management, and tenants rights for tenants and prospective tenants.
- The Elders' Housing Project can be used as a prototype that combines Aboriginal culture with needed housing.

Continuum of Local Housing Assets and Priorities

The following table shows the available housing that exists within Dawson Creek along the full housing continuum. This includes both BC Housing funded units and Aboriginal managed housing units. The table also lists housing priorities and housing gaps as identified in the community consultations. AHMA invites community feedback to expand on the information set out on this table.

	Dawson Creek	Funded Through BC Housing	Aboriginal Managed Housing	Aboriginal Community Priority	Target Population Identified as High Need
	No. of Cold Wet Weather Beds				
	No. of Emergency Shelter Beds	8		✓	All groups
	No. of Supported Recovery				
	No. of Transition House Bed				
	Short term with supports				
	At Risk and Hard to House			✓	Second stage transitional
	Youth			✓	
	Special Needs Housing				Alcohol and drugs, mental health
	ILBC for Seniors				
	Long-term Social Housing	216			
	No. of Aboriginal Social Housing Units	58	58	✓	Low income single women, families
	No. of seniors receiving SAFER	62		✓	Seniors/elders no support
	No. of families receiving RAP	1			
	Other Aboriginal Housing			✓	Moving from rural to urban and return
	Total Inventory of Housing Options	345	58		

Fort St. John

Fort St. John is in the Peace District in Northeast British Columbia. The population was 16,035 in 2001 (Stats Can) and grew to 17,781 in 2005, an increase of almost 10%. The Aboriginal population in 2001 was 1,785 people or 11.1% of the total population. There are 5 reserves near to Fort St. John. Many who have homes on the reserves come to Fort St. John regularly and often have no place to stay. The vacancy rate is virtually 0% and those looking for low cost housing find none.

Fort St. John Native Housing Society

Purpose of the Society:

- *To construct, hold, manage, provide and maintain housing for low-income persons of Native Indian ancestry, 19 years of age and over, who reside in the area of Fort St. John, B.C. who are in need of housing.*
- *To buy, lease, hold and build, develop or improve any lands and buildings necessary for the carrying out of the said objectives.*
- *To do all such things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objectives.*

The housing society has a total of 29 single-family units that are scattered around the city. They generally house large families. The turnover is very small. There have only been 6 vacancies in the last 8 years.

Community's Comments on Issues affecting Aboriginal Housing

- Because of the booming economy and plenty of well-paying jobs, people have been moving into Fort St. John in the past year. As vacancy rates decrease, the rents increase, leaving those with little or no income without housing.
- People of all ages make frequent moves on and off their reserves. This includes:
 - Youth. In order to continue with their education, youth must go to a city school after grade 7. Many travel on the bus for up to 4 hours per day. Others board in town and often do not get the supervision they need. Other families move into town to be with their children. They generally do not have enough money to live.
 - Young girls (13+) who get pregnant. If they want to leave the reserve, they cannot get Income Assistance because the provincial welfare says that the reserve (which is a federal jurisdiction) is responsible for them.
 - Abuse victims. Women use transition houses. They return to the abuse because of lack of housing and their lack of knowledge.
 - People with substance abuse and mental health issues. A substantial number of people, men in particular, come to town to buy alcohol and/or drugs. Because they don't have enough help to deal with their addictions, the result is often homelessness for them in the city.
- About 50% of those using homeless facilities are aboriginal.

Priority housing needs for Fort St. John

- Family housing of all kinds
- Family housing for small families
- Elders housing to release space in present housing stock for new families
- Youth housing with supports

Additional supports needed

- BC Housing and AHMA should work with all housing and related organizations to create more housing for aboriginal people in Fort St. John.
- AHMA could work with Fort St. John Housing Society staff and board to strengthen the organization and to build their capacity to manage the changes they are facing during this time of rapid growth in the community. AHMA can help strengthen policies based on its own experience and the experiences of its member agencies.

Continuum of Local Assets and Priorities

The following table shows the available housing that exists within Fort St. John along the full housing continuum. This includes both BC Housing funded units and Aboriginal managed housing units. The table also lists housing priorities and housing gaps as identified in the community consultations. AHMA invites community feedback to expand on the information set out on this table.

	Fort St. John	Funded Through BC Housing	Aboriginal Managed Housing	Aboriginal Community Priority	Target Population Identified as High Need
	No. of Cold Wet Weather Beds				
	No. of Emergency Shelter Beds	16		✓	
	No. of Supported Recovery				
	No. of Transition House Bed				
	Short term with supports				
	At Risk and Hard to House	32			
	Youth			✓	Young pregnant and young moms, youth in general
	Special Needs Housing			✓	Alcohol and drugs
	ILBC for Seniors				
	Long-term Social Housing	300			
	No. of Aboriginal Social Housing Units	33	33	✓	Low income single women, families
	No. of seniors receiving SAFER	33		✓	Seniors/elders no support
	No. of families receiving RAP	0			
	Other Aboriginal Housing				Moving from rural to urban
	Total Inventory of Housing Options	414	33		

Kamloops

Kamloops is a growing city of 86,490, 6.3% claim aboriginal heritage (Census 2001). As well, Kamloops is in the middle of a number of First Nations communities – Okanagan, Shuswap and Thompson. The outward migration of people from the Lower Mainland who are moving north to Kamloops in search of work and less costly housing are affecting people's ability to find affordable housing. Pressures on housing affordability have pushed the vacancy rate to virtually zero. Nearly one third, (30.6%) of the aboriginal population moved within the past year, much higher than that of the general population. The median income is \$14,832, about \$5,600 less than that of the general population.

Kamloops Native Housing Society

The mandate is to provide affordable, quality and safe housing for Aboriginal families living in Kamloops. They own 84 units- 60 are for families and 24 for seniors. This includes 4 units for those with physical disabilities. There are 121 people on the wait lists and another 115 who have inactive files. Those on wait lists include students (19%), those on income assistance (26%), pensions/disability (23%), lone parents (24%) and those employed (40%).

Community's Comments on issues that affect aboriginal housing

- Low rent apartment blocks are being bought up, renovated and sold as condos. This depletes the low cost housing stock
- Nothing available for those with multiple barriers (mental health and addictions). They are left to fend for themselves. The Friendship Centre offers Drug and Alcohol outpatient support but find it hard to work with someone with no housing.
- If a parent loses their children to care, they cannot bring them home unless they have acceptable housing. If there is none, the kids are not returned.
- The wait to access detox or other mental health treatments can take up to 6 months. There is no supportive housing before and after treatment causing many to slide back into addictions.
- NIMBY causes great difficulty to get building permits and to help Aboriginal people find housing.
- Racism makes one's ability to find housing in a tight market nearly impossible
- Navigating the system – especially seniors to find appropriate, affordable housing. They are not able to do it on their own and need help.
- Because students who live on reserve only get living costs while parent in school, then at the end of the semester, they must go back home, uprooting the children in the middle of each year.
- Children in care are in need of housing. About 45% of these are aboriginal

A homelessness study (2005) stated that the following was needed:

- Aboriginal residential treatment facility
- Aboriginal long-term supportive housing
- Aboriginal support services for FAS/FAE
- Aboriginal support services for high-profile offenders, including Aboriginal food services within the prison system
- Aboriginal family and child care services
- Culturally sensitive Aboriginal shelter services

Priority Housing

- Housing for single people
- Families' long term housing
- Assisted living and supportive housing for people with multiple barriers.
- Short term housing for all
- Students: both family and lone parents.

Continuum of Local Assets and Priorities

The following table shows the available housing that exists within Kamloops along the full housing continuum. This includes both BC Housing funded units and Aboriginal managed housing units. The table also lists housing priorities and housing gaps as identified in the community consultations. AHMA invites community feedback to expand on the information set out on this table.

	Kamloops	Funded Through BC Housing	Aboriginal Managed Housing	Aboriginal Community Priority	Target Population Identified as High Need
	No. of Cold Wet Weather Beds				
	No. of Emergency Shelter Beds	46		✓	Those this multiple barriers
	No. of Supported Recovery				
	No. of Transition House Bed				
	Short term with supports				
	At Risk and Hard to House	65			
	Youth				Youth
	Student housing			✓	Especially for the school term
	Special Needs Housing			✓	Recovery beds - detox
					Mental health, alcohol and drugs, FASD
	ILBC for Seniors	76			
	Long-term Social Housing	582			
	No. of Aboriginal Social Housing Units	84	60	✓	Families
	No. of seniors receiving SAFER	457			
	No. of seniors/elders in Aboriginal housing		24		
	No. of families receiving RAP	9			
	Other Aboriginal Housing				
	Total Inventory of Housing Options	1319	84		

Victoria Capital Region

The Victoria CMA is comprised of 13 municipalities on southern Vancouver Island. In 2001, there were 311,902 residents according to Stats Canada census results. Of those, 8,695 or 2.8% are Aboriginal. According to the 2001 census, 43,420 Aboriginal people were living on Vancouver Island, which is 20% of the province's Aboriginal population. There are 41 First Nations on the island, as well as a Métis population of over 7,700 and Inuit population of approximately 300 people.

Homeowners made up 42% of the total Aboriginal population in the Victoria capital region, as compared to 64% of the general population who owned their homes. This is higher than in most communities and critical for housing stability as the Victoria rental market is one of the tightest in Canada with a vacancy rate of just over 0.5%.

M'Akola Housing Society

The Vision of the M'Akola Group of Societies is to provide homes primarily for Aboriginal people, where they can have pride and feel connected to traditional values and a community.

The Mission is to provide affordable and appropriate homes primarily for Aboriginal people on Vancouver Island and to enhance community partnerships.

M'Akola Housing has a total housing portfolio of 867 units on Vancouver Island, including 174 in the Capital Regional District. The agency's remaining units are in Duncan or further up-Island.

Priority housing needs

The group agreed that all Aboriginal housing must take culture into consideration in order to support families. This means:

- alternative housing designs for extended families that have members moving in and out of the units.
- development of housing that can support grandparents whose grandchildren stay for extended periods of time.
- inclusion of cultural programs and structures in all housing complexes to reduce isolation that rural people feel when they move to the city.
- Empty-nesters – those who live in subsidized housing but whose children have left home. They are over housed but have nowhere to go and M'Akola has no alternative to offer them.
- Youth who have care agreements (16-19 years) and those 19 and 20 with no agreement but no skills and offered little support.
- Emergency family housing with supports
- Medical lodge for those needing to stay in town for medical treatment
- Student housing - no place to stay so students return home and quit education/training
- Housing adaptation for people with disabilities. M'Akola has some disabled units, but people are not applying. It is believed best to keep those people in their own homes and provide \$10,000 to \$15,000 for modifications.

Closing the Gap:

Other Suggestions

- To respond to all of the Aboriginal housing needs on Vancouver Island, M'Akola will need to increase its capacity to build and manage complexes over a vast region or to create a sister organization for the northern part of the island.
- One community participant said that the key issue is about sharing responsibilities and resources, and further suggested that Aboriginal groups need to develop a comprehensive plan of services needed together rather than waiting for someone else to come up with it. AHMA can support community capacity building.

Continuum of Local Assets and Priorities

The following table shows the available housing that exists within the Victoria capital region along the full housing continuum. This includes both BC Housing funded units and Aboriginal managed housing units. The table also lists housing priorities and housing gaps as identified in the community consultations. AHMA invites community feedback to expand on the information set out on this table.

	Victoria	Funded Through BC Housing	Aboriginal Managed Housing	Aboriginal Community Priority	Target Population Identified as High Need
	No. of Cold Wet Weather Beds				
	No. of Emergency Shelter Beds	141			Multi barred
	No. of Supported Recovery				
	No. of Transition House Bed				Women fleeing abuse
	Short term with supports		8		
	At Risk and Hard to House	238	7	✓	Second stage transitional
	Youth			✓	Youth
	Student housing			✓	
	Special Needs Housing			✓	Medical stay
					Mental health, detox, alcohol and drugs
	ILBC for Seniors	135	58		
	Long-term Social Housing	2921			
	No. of Aboriginal Social Housing Units	72	166	✓	Families
	No. of seniors receiving SAFER	846			Elders/seniors no support
	No. of families receiving RAP	21			
	Other Aboriginal Housing				
	Total Inventory of Housing Options	4374	239		

Mission

Mission, with a population of 31,270 is in the Upper Fraser Valley. The closest large centre is Abbotsford, a city of 144,990 people. This whole area is considered an area of primary growth and will expand nearly twofold by 2031. Most of the regional services, such as the new regional hospital, are being built in Abbotsford. Services are expected to service both cities, yet the two communities are about 30 min apart and limited public transportation makes travel between the two communities, especially for those on low incomes, difficult.

The Aboriginal population of Mission is 1,490 and of Abbotsford is 4,210 people. The median income for Aboriginal people in Mission is \$14,681, approximately \$7000 less than that for the general population. In Abbotsford, the median income is only slightly higher at \$15,502. There is no aboriginal housing in Abbotsford.

Mission Native Housing Society

The mandate is to provide safe, secure and affordable housing for low to moderate income First Nations and other families living within the Lower to Central Fraser Valley. Mission Native/To'o Housing Society has a secondary, and unofficial, mandate to create capacity building amongst our families and to encourage our First Nations people to become self-reliant and to provide the stepping-stones to a better life. Mission Native Housing has 83 units of long term housing (14 seniors, 8 modified, and 69 family units) 60 of these are aboriginal specific and the other 23 are open to anyone who fits the housing criteria.

Community's Comments on issues affecting Aboriginal Housing

- Development in the Upper Fraser Valley's housing and commercial sectors is growing rapidly. Land is very expensive, and partnerships with both the private and public sectors will be needed to build new affordable housing units.
- Possibilities for using crown land and waiving development costs charges to be explored.
- NIMBY prevents re-zoning land in some communities.
- Each community in this region is different, and transportation from community to community is difficult for those on low incomes. Emergency shelters in one community may not be accessible to those who need it but live in another community.
- Supports are needed for those with multiple barriers to housing so that they can have more stability.
- Youth housing with supports is high priority, especially for those in care or those aged 19 who are just leaving care.
- Homeless and at-risk youth are approximately 50% aboriginal and 50% non-aboriginal
- A new partnership is being formed to look at collaborative approach to regional planning and will include aboriginal housing society.
- There is need for a "holding place" for people who are waiting to get into addiction treatment centres so they don't give up.
- Too many people fall through the cracks, are not supported and become or remain homeless.

Closing the Gap:

Priorities for Housing in the region

- Recognition that housing needs in Mission and Abbotsford must be considered separately. There is no Aboriginal housing at all in Abbotsford, and it also should be recognized that at-risk housing in Abbotsford cannot serve Mission residents.
- Supportive and transitional housing for the at-risk population
- Youth housing with supports
- Family housing with in-house support.
- Housing for those who are “spinning” get kicked out of housing due to addictions and mental health issues
- Family housing with some in-house support.
- Housing for working poor.

Continuum of Local Assets and Priorities

The following table shows the available housing that exists within Mission and surrounding communities and along the full housing continuum. This includes both BC Housing funded units and Aboriginal managed housing units. The table also lists housing priorities and housing gaps as identified in the community consultations. AHM.A invites community feedback to expand on the information set out in this table

	Mission	Funded Through BC Housing	Aboriginal Managed Housing	Aboriginal Community Priority	Target Population Identified as High Need
	No. of Cold Wet Weather Beds				
	No. of Emergency Shelter Beds	64			
	No. of Supported Recovery				
	No. of Transition House Bed				
	Short term with supports				
	At Risk and Hard to House	23		✓	Second stage transitional Many at-risk needing supports
	Youth			✓	Youth (especially those leaving “care”)
	Special Needs Housing		8	✓	Physical disability
				✓	Mental health, alcohol and drugs, post-crisis
	ILBC for Seniors	58			
	Long-term Social Housing	183			Families - the working poor Families – in house support
	No. of Aboriginal Social Housing Units	65	69	✓	Low income singles
	No. of seniors receiving SAFER	101	14		
	No. of families receiving RAP	4			
	Other Aboriginal Housing				
	Total Inventory of Housing Options	498	91		

Terrace

Terrace is a city with a population that was 12,109 in 2001, and when the surrounding areas were included, the population reached 19,980 (Stats Canada 2001). Terrace is located in the northwest part of the province and is one of the 2 main urban hubs for 15 First Nations bands. **Within the Terrace CMA, census figures showed that 3,090 claimed Aboriginal heritage.**

The median age in the Aboriginal community is 24.8, which is 9.3 years lower than the median age of 34.1 in the general population. The 2001 median income of Aboriginal people was \$11,055 which was \$11,333 lower than that of the general population of Terrace, and 844 people lived on low incomes.

Muks Kum OI Housing Society

The purpose of Muks Kum OI Housing is to provide affordable housing to urban Native and Métis people throughout the northwest region of BC. The target group is Aboriginal people, but Muks Kum OI does not limit their housing to only those with Aboriginal ancestry. Anyone can apply.

In Terrace, Muks Kum OI Housing has 110 units of long term housing plus 10 units of youth housing and 4 of elders housing for those with disabilities.

Community's Comments on Issues Affecting Aboriginal Housing

- Terrace draws from 4 First Nations communities nearby and another 19 in surrounding communities. As overcrowding increases on the reserves, people will be moving away from their villages into town
- Need to work with band on reserves to support off-reserve housing needs of its people.
- Extended families are part of the Aboriginal cultures, and housing policies must recognize that it is not uncommon for 2 or 3 families to live together under one roof. Because there are too many people for the size of house, houses get into disrepair more quickly, and mould is common. As a result, renovations are needed, or housing must be replaced. Overcrowding also can lead to social problems, which must be addressed.
- Unscrupulous landlords and unfair rental practices for both housing- and welfare-related issues are prevalent. Youth are being targeted by older men – predators who take advantage of them for a place to live. They do not deliver on their promises, and youth are left stranded.
- Residential school syndrome fallout is common because there is not enough support for those who had bad experiences.
- Loss of private low-income housing stock. For example, Keystone Properties have bought old stock and are renovating leaving gap in low end of rental market
- Need for energy-efficient housing as heating oil is very expensive in the north.
- The two emergency shelters are both used well above capacity.

Housing Priority

- Housing for the “discarded” people.
- Housing for those who are seniors/elders as this population is growing.
- Detox housing.
- Housing for people with development disabilities, including FASD.

Closing the Gap:

- Youth housing with support.

Other considerations

- Consider flex housing designs will allow the changes needed as family structure and demand shifts according to the ages and composition of the family.
- Look at alternative ways to decrease heating and electricity costs
- Develop self-sufficiency program among tenants including life skills and house management skills

Continuum of Local Assets and Priorities

The following table shows the available housing that exists within Terrace along the full housing continuum. This includes both BC Housing funded units and Aboriginal managed housing units. The table also lists housing priorities and housing gaps as identified in the community consultations. AHMA invites community feedback to expand on the information set out in this table.

	Terrace	Funded Through BC Housing	Aboriginal Managed Housing	Aboriginal Community Priority	Target Population Identified as High Need
	No. of Cold Wet Weather Beds				
	No. of Emergency Shelter Beds	14			
	No. of Supported Recovery				
	No. of Transition House Bed				
	Short term with supports				
	At Risk and Hard to House	18		✓	FASD
	Youth		10	✓	
	Special Needs Housing			✓	Developmentally disabled
	ILBC for Seniors		4	✓	Seniors with disabilities
	Long-term Social Housing	231			
	No. of Aboriginal Social Housing Units	117	110		Families
	No. of seniors receiving SAFER	13			
	No. of families receiving RAP				
	Other Aboriginal Housing				
	Total Inventory of Housing Options	393	124		

Kelowna

Kelowna is in the centre of the Okanagan Valley. Its population is 147,740 and rising rapidly with 3950 (2.7%) from Aboriginal ancestry. This is a high retirement area. Services including assisted services for First Nations elders are found. (Westbank Reserve owns and manages the units). Fifty-five point eight percent (55.8%) of aboriginal households are owned and 43.2% are rented. This is high compared to other communities. Still 73.4 % of the general population in Kelowna own their homes. Median income is \$15,685, about \$5,500 less than that of the general population. The vacancy rate in Kelowna is about 1% and for those with low incomes or with no references, housing is very difficult to find.

Okanagan Métis and Aboriginal Housing Society

The OMAHS's main objective is to make affordable rental housing available to people of native ancestry and focusing primarily on families with dependent children.

They have 79 units but 188 people are on the wait list. This includes 328 children. Presently, OMAHS has a waitlist of 96 applicants who request either one or two bedroom units. They have none.

Community's Comments on Issues affecting Aboriginal Housing

- Homelessness is a big concern in Kelowna. Over 1/3 of homeless people have lived in this area for over 20 years and about 24% are Aboriginal.
- Housing for small families (one or 2 bedroom), lone parents, singles, and elders/seniors.
- There is a good university college in Kelowna but minimal housing
- There are a number of emergency shelter spaces and half-way houses but none specifically for Aboriginal people.
- Racism and NIMBY attitude
- City council is interested in working with OMAHS to create more housing

Housing Priorities

- Small housing units for small families and singles
- Housing for elders
- Extended families
- Housing for disabled (severely handicapped)

Other supports needed

AHMA work with OMAHS to build capacity and to support any partnerships can be developed with the City of Kelowna and others. A follow up community meeting by AHMA staff would benefit both AHMA and OMAHS.

Continuum of Local Assets and Priorities

The following table shows the available housing that exists within Kelowna along the full housing continuum. This includes both BC Housing funded units and Aboriginal managed housing units. The table also lists housing priorities and housing gaps as identified in the community consultations. AHMA invites community feedback to expand on the information set out in this table.

	Kelowna	Funded Through BC Housing	Aboriginal Managed Housing	Aboriginal Community Priority	Target Population Identified as High Need
	No. of Cold Wet Weather Beds				
	No. of Emergency Shelter Beds	45			Full range of people
	No. of Supported Recovery				
	No. of Transition House Bed				
	Short term with supports		12		Parents at risk of losing children
	At Risk and Hard to House	56		✓	
	Youth		8		Youth (female)
	Student housing			✓	
	Special Needs Housing		2	✓	Physical disability
				✓	Alcohol and drugs
	ILBC for Seniors	105			
	Long-term Social Housing	1473		✓	Small families
	No. of Aboriginal Social Housing Units	79	63	✓	Low income singles
	No. of seniors receiving SAFER	752	14	✓	Elders/seniors no support
	No. of families receiving RAP	20			
	Other Aboriginal Housing			✓	Moving from rural to urban
	Total Inventory of Housing Options	2530	99		

Prince George

Prince George is situated at the crossroads of two major highways that lead to all northern communities. Stats Canada figures for 2001 indicated good employment opportunities in Prince George, with a median family income of \$60,927. However, the data shows that Aboriginal people live a different reality; their median household income was \$37,155 and individual income median is \$13,565. The Aboriginal population of Prince George in 2001 was 7,985, or approximately 9.4% of the population.

Within the Aboriginal community, at least 2,180 lived on low incomes and 2,620 people or 33.5% moved in the last year, which was substantially higher than 17.3% rate for the general population of Prince George. The vacancy rate dropped in 2005 about 5% to between 2-3%. In 2006, it dropped further to about 1%

Prince George Métis Housing Association

“Our mandate is to provide safe and affordable housing that is modest and liveable for low-to moderate-income Métis, First Nations, and Inuit people and/or families residing in the City of Prince George.

A second, unofficial, mandate is to support and encourage our tenants to become self-reliant by providing stepping-stones to a better life.”

Since its beginnings in 1984, PGMHS has expanded to the present 241 units. The mixture of tenants is approximately 1/3 Carrier Sekani, 1/3 Métis, and 1/3 other Aboriginal people who live in Prince George. As well, the resident population is generally 1/3 working people, 1/3 on income assistance, and 1/3 seniors.

The Community’s comments on issues affecting affordable housing

- Transient people coming from smaller communities in the north have no place to stay.
- There is a detox centre, but there are no follow-up supports in Prince George or in other northern communities. Everywhere in the north, many people are ending up back on drugs and homeless and often remain in Prince George.
- The homeless population has many health-related issues, including Hepatitis C and AIDS. At present, there is no special housing service available for them, so they stay with the general shelter population if they cannot find other housing.
- With a large student population attending post-secondary institutions in Prince George, there is a particular need to offer housing and support to Aboriginal students so that they can have a positive educational experience.
- Women who are street entrenched, some of who are pregnant have no place to go if they want to leave the streets.
- 60% to 70% of those who are homeless are aboriginal.

Priority Housing

- Supportive housing for special populations: at-risk women, peri-natal women, HIV-AIDS, Mental Health and Addictions
- Long term housing for families and seniors

Other suggestions

- Support a collaboration of agencies to develop a strategic plan for priority housing initiatives.
- Provide support for more than one housing society to work with Aboriginal people in Prince George. Services needed range from long-term housing to emergency

Closing the Gap:

shelters, and a strategy which uses more than one organization to provide these services would be more likely to have success, given the dynamics in this particular community.

- Build capacity within the community to support the development of strategic partnerships, including the private sector.

Continuum of Local Assets and Priorities

The following table shows the available housing that exists within Prince George along the full housing continuum. This includes both BC Housing funded units and Aboriginal managed housing units. The table also lists housing priorities and housing gaps as identified in the community consultations. AHMA invites community feedback to expand on the information set out in this table

	Prince George	Funded Through BC Housing	Aboriginal Managed Housing	Aboriginal Community Priority	Target Population Identified as High Need
	No. of Cold Wet Weather Beds				
	No. of Emergency Shelter Beds	55	6		Youth
	No. of Supported Recovery				
	No. of Transition House Bed				
	Short term with supports				
	At Risk and Hard to House	91		✓	Street entrenched pregnant women
	Youth			✓	Youth
	Special Needs Housing			✓	HIV-AIDS (emergency and long term)
				✓	Mental health, alcohol and drugs
	ILBC for Seniors				
	Long-term Social Housing	754			
	No. of Aboriginal Social Housing Units	176	176	✓	Families
	No. of seniors receiving SAFER	269		✓	Elders/seniors no support
	No. of families receiving RAP	5			
	Other Aboriginal Housing				
	Total Inventory of Housing Options	1350	182		

Quesnel

The Quesnel area has a population of 24,415 people (2001 census) in the Caribou region of British Columbia. According to those census figures, 2140 Aboriginal people claimed Quesnel as their home, and another 828 were living on the four reserves that are nearest to Quesnel.

United Aboriginal Housing Society

The sole purpose of the Society is to carry out programs with those of a charitable organization for the provision of low-rental housing to low-income families and/or individuals of native Indian Ancestry in the Quesnel area and specifically:

- a) to acquire, construct, hold, supply, operate, manage and maintain housing accommodation and incidental facilities for low-income families and/or individuals having low-income who reside in the city of Quesnel;*
- b) to receive, take, hold, enjoy and manage all grants, gifts, devises, bequests, legacies and donations of goods, property and money that are made or given to it.*

Long-term family housing includes 33 units, single family housing and 31 units in a mixed complex for families (3 are handicapped units). United Aboriginal offers the only long term, subsidized housing in Quesnel.

Community Meeting's Comments on Issues affecting Aboriginal Housing

- Many households comprise of extended families and overcrowding is common. Many Aboriginal grandparents look after their grandchildren on a regular basis. This can be supportive, but may also foster abuse in situations where the grandparents are expected to look after the children, but are not capable of doing so.
- Heating costs are very high in winter.
- Older people can no longer maintain their yards and need to move.
- Young families live in small apartments but have growing children.
- Mould is a frequent problem in low-income, private residences.
- Violence is causing women to move out of their homes.
- People afraid of the Ministry of Children and Family Development because of the possibility of having their children removed, so they often don't report housing problems such as sewer backup and other health and safety matters.
- There needs to be a process to move people out of subsidized housing if they are over-housed. In small communities, because people are related, this can prove difficult, especially to evict elders.
- Families do not have money management skills causing that are financially instability. They, then, do not pay their rent on time.

Priority Housing

- Family housing located away from the main highway that goes through town.
- Housing for single men.

Other supports needed

- That AHMA work with United Native Housing staff and board to build internal capacity.
- Explore opportunities to work with Friendship Centre's land to build housing attached to the Friendship Centre for supports/programming

Continuum of Local Assets and Priorities

The following table shows the available housing that exists within Cranbrook along the full housing continuum. This includes both BC Housing funded units and Aboriginal managed housing units. The table also lists housing priorities and housing gaps as identified in the community consultations. AHMA invites community feedback on the information set out in this table

	Quesnel	Funded Through BC Housing	Aboriginal Managed Housing	Aboriginal Community Priority	Target Population Identified as High Need
	No. of Cold Wet Weather Beds				
	No. of Emergency Shelter Beds	5			Homeless people (youth and seniors)
	No. of Supported Recovery				
	No. of Transition House Bed				
	Short term with supports				
	At Risk and Hard to House Youth				Alcohol and Drugs
	Special Needs Housing		3		Physical disability
	ILBC for Seniors	6			
	Long-term Social Housing	134		✓	Families
	No. of Aboriginal Social Housing Units	46	74	✓	Low income singles (especially men)
	No. of seniors receiving SAFER	43			
	No. of families receiving RAP				
	Other Aboriginal Housing			✓	Moving from rural to urban
	Total Inventory of Housing Options	234	77		

Vernon

Vernon is a city of 51,530 people, just north of the Okanogan Valley. Two thousand, two hundred and ninety (2290) or 4.4% are of aboriginal descent. Of the 1130 aboriginal households in the city, 271 or 24% face core housing need. Six hundred and forty (640) or 28.3% of the aboriginal population moved within the past year compared to 18.4% of the general population of Vernon. The median income of \$12,083 is \$7800 less than that of the general population and the median age of 29 is 11 years younger than the general population. Vacancy rates seem to be holding steady at from 0% – 2%, depending on the size of unit.

Vernon Native Housing Society

The purpose of the Vernon Native Housing Society is to enhance the living conditions of the Urban Native People in the City of Vernon. This goal will be carried out with the cooperation of the Board of Directors, Membership, staff and other interested individuals and groups to ensure safe, clean comfortable and affordable rental housing.

Vernon has 65 units of housing - all for families and 6 of those are disabled family units. There are 384 households on the wait list (174 are looking for bachelor or one bedroom units). About 60% of those on the wait list are Aboriginal families.

Community's Comments on issues affecting Aboriginal Housing

- The City of Vernon is committed to the challenge of finding measures which will increase the supply of affordable housing in Vernon – the housing will need to be open to everyone, not Aboriginal specific.
- There is zoning for affordable home ownership. Social Planning is working on this concept.
- There is no housing for those who are hard-to- House. The closest is 30 min away in Kelowna. Agencies cannot cover 24/7 staffing costs needed. There are many who have mental health, FASD, and/or addictions that make them difficult to house. As the services are very limited, this population does not receive the support needed.
- There is no housing for those living with addictions.
- Life skills and other basic living skills are needed to support those people.
- Extended families in subsidized housing units: There is a strict provision that tenants can not have members of their extended family stay with them. Yet, it is common and expected that the family house other family members if needed. There is a tension between following policy and following family expectations.
- Single parent families: there is a huge need for safe affordable housing. There was an example of women crying on the phone because they are pregnant with no where to go.
- NIMBY

Top Priorities for Aboriginal Housing in Vernon

- Transitional, supported housing for youth. There is a range of needs including children in care, student housing, youth at risk.
- Single parent housing
- Second stage housing for those with multiple barriers to accessing housing and who need support to help them stabilize while they find long term housing. The need is for youth, adults, and young parents.

Continuum of Local Assets and Priorities

The following table shows the available housing that exists within Vernon along the full housing continuum. This includes both BC Housing funded units and Aboriginal managed housing units. The table also lists housing priorities and housing gaps as identified in the community consultations. AHMA invites community feedback to expand on the information set out in this table.

	Vernon	Funded Through BC Housing	Aboriginal Managed Housing	Aboriginal Community Priority	Target Population Identified as High Need
	No. of Cold Wet Weather Beds				
	No. of Emergency Shelter Beds	20	12 to 14		
	No. of Supported Recovery				
	No. of Transition House Bed				
	Short term with supports				
	At Risk and Hard to House	20		✓	Second Stage Transitional and other
	Youth			✓	Young pregnant and young moms as well as all youth
	Special Needs Housing			✓	FASD, Mental health
				✓	Alcohol and Drugs (post-crisis)
	ILBC for Seniors	78			
	Long-term Social Housing	710			Families - especially lone parents
	No. of Aboriginal Social Housing Units	22	65	✓	Low income singles
	No. of seniors receiving SAFER	537			
	No. of families receiving RAP	2			
	Other Aboriginal Housing				
	Total Inventory of Housing Options	1389	77 to 79		

Aboriginal Homelessness: A Snapshot by Community

Appendix 4

Community	Homeless Study/date	Total homeless	Total aboriginal homeless	% of total	Special features	Name of study/web site
Cranbrook	2004	no data	no data	no data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent with problems in rural Canada in general. Increased reliance on tourism has caused housing and rental costs to rise leaving a decreased stock of affordable housing Unable to gather information on numbers. Info is anecdotal. Also mention issue of homelessness for FASD individuals. 	<i>Kootenay Homelessness Research Project Final Report</i> October 2004 http://www.cmhakootenays.org/Kootenay%20Homelessness%20Research%20Project.PDF
Williams Lake	2005	51	29	57%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.8% respondents in Williams Lake identified as Aboriginal/First Nations, but 51% identified as Metis. 19.6% of the respondents said they were living homeless near Williams Lake, perhaps couch-surfing, camping or sleeping rough. 40.5% of the general homeless population identified having a mental illness. 44% of the general homeless population have children under the age of 18. 	<i>Profile of the Homeless and Those at Risk of Being Homeless</i>
Merritt	none	no data	no data	no data	no homeless study but people have high mobility rate, especially among youth.	
Dawson Creek	2005	144	78	54%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disproportionately high Aboriginal homeless population (54%) given that the total Aboriginal population is only 12% of the general population. 65% of identified homeless (inclusive of general and Aboriginal population) had been living in Dawson Creek for over 5 years. 	One week snapshot (local information)
Fort St. John	none	no data	no data	no data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only area shelter is Fort St. John's Salvation Army Share and Care Centre 20 bed facility. Salvation Army director observes that about half of the shelter users are Aboriginal. Some of the homeless Aboriginal population remain off-reserve because on no-alcohol policy on reserve. Shelter already at capacity in winter months. 	

Closing the Gap:

Community	Homeless Study/date	Total homeless	Total aboriginal homeless	% of total	Special features	Name of study/web site
Kamloops	2005	168	49 of 147 reporting	39%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 89% without a home for at least a month most stayed in someone else's house. • Disproportionately high Aboriginal homeless population (39%) given that Aboriginal population is only 6.3% of the general population. • 17 people (35% of Aboriginal Ancestry) said they stayed with someone else compared to only 12 people (16% of non-aboriginal origin). • Aboriginal people were less likely to sleep outside than non-aboriginal people and less likely to use a shelter. • Aboriginal people (71%) were more likely to use a drop in centre. 	<p><i>Kamloops Homeless Count</i> http://www.city.kamloops.bc.ca/pdfs/homelessness/2006/Phase1-ProjectReport.pdf</p>
Surrey	2005	395	no data	no data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtually all of the homeless found in the South Fraser sub-region of the 2005 GVRD Homeless Count were located in the Surrey and the City Township of Langley. • 21% of the GVRD Homeless population were counted in this region • The numbers of homeless in this region are increasing rapidly. From 2002 to 2005, the numbers increased by 132% going from 160 total homeless people counted in 2002 to 311 counted in 2005 	<p><i>On our streets and in our shelters...</i> <i>Results of the 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless Count</i></p>
Victoria	2005	700/174 detailed survey	76 surveyed	34%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly 50% identified as aboriginal. • There were no differences between the rates of alcohol use reported by Caucasians (40, 57.1%) and First Nations participants (33, 56.9%). • 30% of shelter users at Streetlink and Sandi Merriam were Aboriginal. • 55.1% had no housing for less than a year • 35% gets employment assistance. 	<p><i>Cool Aid Homeless Count</i> http://coolaid.org/publications/Homeless_Survey.pdf See also City of Victoria Assets and Gaps data base</p>

Closing the Gap:

Community	Homeless Study/date	Total homeless	Total aboriginal homeless	% of total	Special features	Name of study/web site
Mission	2005	411 in Upper Fraser Valley	41 in the Upper Fraser Valley	14.60 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reason for homelessness, one comment: "being kicked out of Aboriginal Safe House" Homeless Aboriginal people is slightly higher in the Upper Fraser Valley (14.6%) than in the GVRD (12%). A focus group participant noted that Aboriginal people are not accepting services from white people because of concern for bias. Mission Indian Friendship Centre is the only area service specifically for homeless Aboriginal people 	<i>Homelessness in the Upper Fraser Valley</i>
Terrace	2005	no data	12 permanently homeless	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific study information available, however, there are 12 known individuals living on the street and perhaps many more in the bush. Despite lack of information about homeless people in Terrace the shelters are often pushed to capacity. Some of the homeless are unemployed youth and they are ending up in high risk situations with older individuals who take them in. 	<i>Anecdotal and Aboriginal Homelessness: Prince Rupert and Port Edward for the Prince Rupert Steering Committee on Aboriginal Homelessness</i>
Prince Rupert	2002 Prince Rupert Study	no data	75 (homeless & at-risk) responded to the study.	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 67% between the ages of 35-54. 63.5% on income assistance. 35% of the respondents had never lived on a reserve. 50% paid 50.7% or more of their income on rent and this may not account for additional housing costs such as hydro, heat or gas. 37% constantly worry about paying rent on time. 9.6% were unable to afford a suitable living space. 35.7% said they occasionally went without food over a few months time period, 20% said they went without food during once a month or more. Many suffering from financial stress, 71.4% (out of 70 respondents) had no job for a long time. 25.4% said they have a chronic disability. 	<i>Aboriginal Homelessness: Prince Rupert and Port Edward for the Prince Rupert Steering Committee on Aboriginal Homelessness</i>

Closing the Gap:

Community	Homeless Study/date	Total homeless	Total aboriginal homeless	% of total	Special features	Name of study/web site
Kelowna	Nov-04	420	68 of 251	27%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two homeless counts conducted in one year (April and November 2004) and the November count showed numbers 100% higher than the April count. Most common homeless groups • Aboriginal homeless , • Female youth from 16-19 years • Aging homeless a disproportionate number are staying on the street rather than in shelters. 74% of the combined First Nations and Métis homeless population are between the ages of 50 and 69. • homeless population with Aboriginal ancestry is nearly 12 times the population representation with the community as a whole. • 74% of First Nations and Métis people have been homeless in Kelowna for more than one year and 50% for more than 3 years. 	Census of Homeless Individuals in Kelowna
Prince George	2003	no numbers		60-70%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal men, women, and youth • Youth – esp. if they faced family conflict and lack of support • Women (single mothers and those in abusive relationships) • Women and men with mental illness • Those with addictions • Hugely disproportionate number of homeless people are Aboriginal (60-70%), with the total Aboriginal population of Prince George at 9.4%. 	<i>Community Partners Addressing Homelessness 2003</i> http://www.city.pg.bc.ca/rec_culture/grants/scpi/cpah_final_plan.pdf

Closing the Gap:

Community	Homeless Study/date	Total homeless	Total aboriginal homeless	% of total	Special features	Name of study/web site
Quesnel	2005	76	25	32.9 %	<p>Populations most experiencing homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal men, women, and youth • Youth – especially if they faced family conflict and lack of support • Women (single mothers and those in abusive relationships. • Women and men with mental illness • Those with addictions • 2.6% respondents in Quesnel identified as Aboriginal/First Nations, but 30.3% identified as Metis. 	Profile of the Homeless and Those at Risk of Being Homeless
Vancouver	2005	2174	515	30% of those surveyed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comments on the need for more aboriginal run services • Aboriginal homeless women (35%) non-aboriginal women (27%) • Approximately 70% of those with Aboriginal identity were street homeless (357 persons). • Aboriginal people were highest among the street homeless (357 people or 34% of the total population of street homeless) and smallest among the sheltered homeless (158 people or 23% of the total sheltered homeless). • Aboriginal population were more likely to be long term homeless (over one year). • There are few Aboriginal run homeless services and the capacity of emergency accommodations. 	<p><i>On our streets and in our shelters...</i></p> <p><i>Results of the 2005 Greater Vancouver Homeless</i></p> <p><i>http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/homelessness/pdfs/HomelessCount2005Final.pdf</i></p>
Vernon	2006	86 absolutely and 125 relatively	no data	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No aboriginal content • Service providers have different philosophies 	Based on report due 2007. Last report 2005

Closing the Gap: