



BC FIRST NATIONS  
HOUSING &  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
COUNCIL

## **First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Council – Progress Report to BC FN Leadership (Sept 2022)**

First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Council was formed in 2017 to explore the concept of creating a First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Authority. On March 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> in Songhees Territory, the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) hosted the BC Housing and Infrastructure Forum: Moving Forward on First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Reform in BC.

Following the March 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Forum, the BCAFN widely distributed the Forum Report, “Creating a First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Authority: From Concept to Design”, which provides a summary of thoughts and input from Housing Forum delegates regarding the creation of a First Nations controlled housing and infrastructure authority in BC.

As a result of these activities, the three First Nation organizations that make up the BC First Nations Leadership Council each created and passed resolutions to support the creation of a First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Authority: First Nations Summit (June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018), the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (Feb 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018), and the BC Assembly of First Nations (Oct 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017). The purpose of the resolutions ensures the organization will lead and provide needed Housing and Infrastructure Services to BC First Nations. Indigenous Services Canada is providing funding to the organization on a year-to-year basis so that we can develop a “made in BC” First Nations approach to housing.

### **Activities Report**

**Phase 3 Report Completed 2020:** FNHIC has completed the Phase 3 report that was based on various engagement sessions held throughout BC. We continue to engage with First Nations communities, and we have received 34 Band Council Resolutions indicating support for FNHIC and the eventual transfer of responsibility for housing programs and services from the federal government. Please see the attached Phase 3 report.

**Executive Director:** FNHIC seconded Michael Sadler from BC Housing to lead the organization in the areas of program and service development and transfer of authority and responsibilities. Michael Sadler was the Director of Indigenous Relations for BC Housing from 2015 until taking on this new responsibility. This arrangement was part of BC Housing’s commitment to the Indigenous community and to assist in the strengthening of the Indigenous housing sector. Mr. Sadler created and implemented numerous initiatives while at BC Housing, which included opening up provincial housing funding to First Nations reserves, a first for a province in Canada as well as creating an on-reserve Asset Management program that is being implemented through MOUs with 5 First Nations groups in BC, also a first for a provincial government in Canada.

**FNHIC Programs and Service Development:** FNHIC is first and foremost a service organization for First Nations communities in BC. BC First Nations have needed an organization such as this for many years now as housing is a First Nations priority, a social determinant of health, and fulfills a basic human need. Infrastructure is needed to support housing and other needed services such as water, waste management, transportation, and access to reliable and sustainable energy resources. FNHIC will also fulfill the responsibility of exploring



the idea of transfer of Housing Authorities from Indigenous Services Canada and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. One caveat would be that we are also aware that housing and infrastructure programs/services within each of these organizations are inadequate and need First Nations development to fully address housing and infrastructure needs in our communities which means that the transfer will include existing programs and services that we feel work for us, but more importantly, we are appropriately resourced, in both human and fiscal terms, to develop a made in BC First Nations approach to Housing and Infrastructure.

## **A. Core Services to First Nations**

First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Council endeavours to be a service organization first and foremost. We want to add value to the First Nations Housing and Infrastructure through program and service delivery. The services we are beginning with will be: Establishment of the First Nations Housing Managers Association, Asset Management, Building Maintenance training, and establishment of regional and sub-regional Housing Hubs in no less than five areas of the province – Lower Mainland/Coast, Vancouver Island, Stolo/Fraser, Interior, North.

1. First Nations Housing Managers Association: The need for a First Nations Housing Managers support organization was clearly identified in our engagement sessions. With the assistance of a small group of FN housing managers from around the province, FNHIC is establishing a First Nations Housing Managers Association to provide the following:

- Professional Development and Training
- Support through a Peer Network
- Mentorship
- Communications

2. Asset Management: In order for First Nations to fully realize their housing desires, it was identified in the engagement sessions that we need to better understand our current housing situation and be able to accurately manage our current housing assets through a robust Asset Management system. Currently, First Nations are not provided any training, data management systems, or staffing to manage 50,000 units of housing, buildings, and infrastructure in our communities. We will establish an Asset Management program that BC First Nations can access if they so desire. We will work in partnership with BC Housing as well as qualified consulting services to provide the following:

- Conditions Assessments
- IT and Data Management
- Capital Planning
- Procurement
- Renovation and Project Management
- Funding Acquisition



3. **Skills Plus Building Maintenance Training:** It was also identified in the engagement sessions that there is a need for accessing quality Building Maintenance services, especially in the more remote and isolated First Nations communities. FNHIC will be working with the BC Post-secondary institutions, Industry Training Authority, and Aboriginal Employment programs (ASETS) to access and/or train local building maintenance workers.

4. **Housing Hubs:** There is a need to have more discussions, information, professional development, collaboration, and partnerships in housing for our communities. The more we can do this, the better we can meet our collective housing needs. FNHIC is establishing housing hubs and sub-hubs across the province:

- Establish 5 areas for the Housing Hubs led by Housing Hub Coordinators (Vancouver Island, Vancouver Coastal, Fraser, Interior, North). Which could also be broken down into “Sub Hubs” in regions that require it
- 4 main meetings a year, with the possibility of committee meetings
- The main purpose is to disseminate information, network, ongoing grassroots engagement, identify and meet needs
- Areas of discussion: Homelessness, Women and Children Housing, Funding, Coordinated Access, Indigenous Cultural Safety, On/Off Reserve Housing, Transfer of Housing responsibility from Government

**B. Programs** - There are a number of program areas that need attention, two in particular, that FNHIC can begin working on immediately: Homelessness and reducing the number of Indigenous children in care.

**Homelessness (Indigenous Street Family)** - The FNHIC Executive Director, in his position at BC Housing, has established an Indigenous Homelessness Steering Committee which is putting the finishing touches on an Indigenous Homelessness Strategy that hopefully accesses the necessary resources to begin addressing this need.

**Reducing Indigenous Children in Child Welfare System** – Our Executive Director, in his work at BC Housing, has established five projects both on and off reserve with First Nations and Indigenous Housing providers with the ultimate goal of keeping Indigenous parents with their children while assisting them with the necessary supports to keep their families together and to keep Indigenous children out of the child welfare system. FNHIC will continue this work in partnership with BC Housing.

**C. Transfer of Housing and Infrastructure Responsibilities and Authorities** - BC First Nations have a desire to be responsible for developing, implementing, and maintaining a housing system that is controlled and managed by them. The current system, which is not a system, does not work and is mainly responsible for a need for an increase in affordable/sustainable housing, the establishment of a robust asset management system, increased capacity in the areas of new developments, maintenance, and operations of housing. With this in mind, we will not only transfer from ISC and CMHC their housing authorities but also be provided the human and fiscal resources to transform and develop a housing system that works for BC First Nations, both on and off reserve. FNHIC is developing frameworks for transfer of housing and infrastructure from federal responsibility to BC First Nations, with the FNHIC to oversee through a First Nation governance structure.



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- Establish Frameworks, and secure 3-year funding arrangement from ISC through their implementation funding program (November 2022 first drafts, February 2023 final draft)
- Establish responsibility and authority to design a BC First Nations Housing and Infrastructure system that will include but not limited to: New Developments, Asset Management, Operations, Research and Data Management, Communications, Professional Development, Funding Development
- Develop a workable governance system for the new entity