



Foundational Document

Towards an Urban Aboriginal Housing and Wellness Strategy for Metro Vancouver 2015-2020

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Towards an Urban Aboriginal Housing and Wellness Strategy for Metro Vancouver 2015-2020

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Executive Summary

Change is coming. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the BC Representative for Children and Youth have both recently released reports summoning all levels of government, and citizens, to engage with the issues and injustices facing urban Aboriginal peoples across Canada. Securing accessible, adequate, and affordable housing is one of the critical areas of inequality facing Canada's urban Aboriginal peoples. With higher than average growth in population over the last 15 years, the supply of housing and cultural supports for Aboriginal residents in Metro Vancouver falls short. The need for appropriate housing, and a shift in the narrative around the urban Aboriginal population, has never been greater.

This 5-year strategy was created by the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) in response to the clear need for Aboriginal housing and cultural services across Metro Vancouver. MVAEC is comprised of Executive Directors from 23 diverse, urban, off-reserve Aboriginal organizations, providing a strategic and unified voice for urban Aboriginal people living in Metro Vancouver. In seeking opportunities through new partnerships and the acknowledgement of the unique housing needs of this growing demographic, this strategy looks to promote access to long-term, culturally reflective, and affordable housing for all Metro Vancouver urban Aboriginal residents. This strategy calls for a follow-up 10-year regional plan for urban Aboriginal housing in Metro Vancouver, while at the same time calling for the immediate development of 1500 units as a starting point while further planning efforts are underway.

The traditional territories and reserves of 11 different First Nations overlap the boundaries of the Metro Vancouver region. While they may work closely with some municipalities, First Nations with land bases located within Metro Vancouver are not responsible for, nor do they necessarily have the capacity to, house the urban Aboriginal population living off-reserve in Metro Vancouver municipalities. The question of housing for these residents falls directly into the hands of the federal and provincial governments in partnership with 'home' municipalities.

In 2011 the estimated total population of Aboriginal people living in Metro Vancouver was approximately 50,000; though some communities would argue this is an underestimate

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of the actual population. Metro Vancouver boasts the third largest population of urban Aboriginal residents across Canada, interestingly though, only 23% of Metro Vancouver Aboriginal residents live in the City of Vancouver. The annual growth rate of the urban Aboriginal population in Canada has remained steady at 4.8% between 2001 and 2011²; the current housing need is only going to increase.

Reflecting national trends, Aboriginal residents in Metro Vancouver are struggling to find adequate, secure, and affordable housing. Housing is not the only domain where Aboriginal residents fare worse than their non-Aboriginal counterparts; there is a clear gap between these two demographics in all areas related to urban life. While the need is great, the demand is accompanied by many opportunities for municipalities and government to seize in moving forward. This urban Aboriginal housing crisis is very much a ‘macro’ issue – that is, it emerges from distinct historical processes, cultural and economic structural causes, political decisions, and neglect. Urban Aboriginal housing, then, requires a macro-level solution, integrating across all areas related to overall wellness.

Given the diverse needs of Aboriginal residents in Metro Vancouver, a variety of approaches, models, and housing forms are required to meet the specific needs of youth, Elders, single-parent households, low-income individuals and families, etc. MVAEC calls for all urban Aboriginal housing projects to:

- Be owned and managed by urban Aboriginal housing and service organizations; or, in some cases a partnership as agreed upon by the Aboriginal organizations;
- Be culturally relevant and consider other aspects of health and wellness;
- Reflect the local need; and
- Be affordable.

The issue of housing and wellness in cities requires both a short-term and long-term plan. While considering the following high-level directions for priority areas, there are many additional areas for urgent and overdue action to take place; including a regional plan to build 1500 social housing units by 2020.

Consultation with MVAEC’s housing representatives, in conjunction with supporting data, has led to the development of the following high-level objectives and the long-term recommendations rooted below:

Strengthen Housing Leadership and Capacity at all Levels

- Improve Agency Collaboration
- Ensure Aboriginal Representation at all Levels of Decision-Making
- Refine and Adapt Municipal Policies
- Explore Funding Options
- Develop a Long-term Urban Aboriginal Housing Strategy

² Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, “Long Descriptions for the Demography Deck,” last modified June 5, 2013, <https://www.aadncaandc.gc.ca/eng/1370440209795/1370440350563 #fig9>.

Increase Access and Diversify Housing Options for Urban Aboriginal Residents

- Address the Needs of Diverse Demographics
- Integrate Health and Wellness
- Build Culturally Relevant Housing
- Maintain and Improve Existing Housing Stock
- Meet Immediate Social Housing Need
- Diversify New Housing Stock

Metro Vancouver is encouraged to undertake a comprehensive planning process that includes these recommendations to develop associated action plans that support urban Aboriginal residents. It is hoped that all levels of government, including municipalities, the Province, and the federal government will act on the immense housing need and the relevance of this Housing and Wellness Strategy and contribute to making urban Aboriginal housing a priority in their cities throughout Canada.

Why Now?

The Metro Vancouver Aboriginal population has experienced considerably higher growth than average. Despite this population boom and the demonstrated needs of the existing Aboriginal community, the supply of housing and cultural supports has not kept pace with demand. In addition to the discrepancies around housing, the urban Aboriginal population also fares far worse when considering all other social determinants of health. Housing and health services are one way to reduce this marked gap between the lived experiences of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal peoples and ensure that all peoples are afforded the opportunity for a just and healthy life.

This 5-year strategy is a result of dialogue and discussion by the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) in response to the clear need for Aboriginal housing and cultural services across Metro Vancouver. Through new partnerships and the acknowledgement of the unique housing needs and opportunities, MVAEC promotes access to long-term, culturally reflective, and affordable housing for all Metro Vancouver urban Aboriginal residents. It is hoped that all levels of government, including each Metro Vancouver municipality, the Province, and the federal government will act on the immense housing need and create policy that contributes to making urban Aboriginal housing a priority in cities throughout Canada.

The use of “Towards” in the strategy title is intentional. While this strategy provides an actionable planning framework for a short-term, regional strategy for 2015-2020, a more comprehensive and exhaustive planning process to address urban Aboriginal housing long-term is ultimately required from Metro Vancouver to call senior levels of government and other key partners to action. This report is limited in scope and as such, senior levels of government in partnership with Metro Vancouver and local municipalities are encouraged to continue seeking innovative and creative solutions to solve the issue of urban Aboriginal housing through their own processes, in direct partnerships with Aboriginal agencies and residents.

About MVAEC

The Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) was formed in 2008 to respond to the community's desire for a more collaborative, strategic, and unified voice to represent the 40-60,000 Aboriginal people living in Metro Vancouver.

MVAEC became a Society in 2009 and is comprised of Executive Directors from diverse urban off-reserve Aboriginal organizations. With 23 member organizations, MVAEC represents the vast majority of off-reserve, urban Aboriginal people in Metro Vancouver by supporting a diverse range of programs, services, and mandates across the region. Its members are recognized for their leadership, accountability, and ability to develop and deliver programs and services that are responsive to the unique needs and values of the urban Aboriginal community.

With a mission to strategically plan, advocate and positively influence outcomes that strengthen the service delivery and policies that impact the Metro Vancouver Urban Aboriginal Community, MVAEC plays many roles throughout the community to ensure that Aboriginal-specific priorities are identified. As the representative body for urban Aboriginal organizations, it works with all levels of government including agencies such as Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) and the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR), The City of Vancouver, First Nations leadership and the private sector. MVAEC thanks the local First Nations in the Metro Vancouver region for welcoming them as guests in their territory to do this important work.

Towards an Urban Aboriginal Housing and Wellness Strategy for Metro Vancouver reflects the needs of the urban Aboriginal population, as understood by MVAEC members. This strategy provides a framework to initiate dialogue between agencies and governments on the specific needs and challenges for urban Aboriginal residents and Aboriginal housing organizations, while providing some suggestions on possible immediate actions and emerging long-term directions. The information provided in the report is a result of MVAEC representatives' anecdotal and formal knowledge of this demographic, collected through two engagement sessions with the MVAEC Housing Table, and additional consultation with key MVAEC members. This information is supported primarily by statistical findings from the 2011 Canadian Census Survey and the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study. These statistics, however, are typically a vast underestimate both to the number of Aboriginal peoples living in cities, and to the needs of this community. Current data collection methods rely on voluntary participation and presume reliable access to this demographic. Moving forward, there is a strong need for specialized research to be completed to ensure that the actual needs of this community can be accurately quantified. A detailed list of references used is included at the end of the document. This strategy presents suggestions for action while planning and is intended to launch the more comprehensive consultation processes required to tailor all actions and policy to reflect the specific needs of each Metro Vancouver municipality.

It is hoped that Metro Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia and the Government of Canada adopt a collaborative approach and appropriate fiduciary responsibility to working with urban Aboriginal peoples and organizations to ensure that all plans reflect the complex and multidimensional nature of housing and wellness issues.

Guiding Principles

The principles used to approach the issue of urban Aboriginal housing and wellness in Metro Vancouver reflect international best practices in housing and multi-stakeholder governance to ensure that the vision, objectives and actions are provided with respect and in the spirit of reconciliation and self-determinism. MVAEC encourages all levels of government to engage with urban Aboriginal peoples following these same principles.

1. There must be recognition of the historical and ongoing effects of colonization in Canada and the resulting systemic discrimination and oppression experienced by all Aboriginal peoples;
2. Housing and services for Aboriginal persons must be culturally appropriate and respectful;
3. Housing and services must include some consideration to the social determinants of health and wellness and respond to the additional needs of residents;
4. Housing and services must be provided to all Aboriginal persons, regardless of their Constitutional status as an Aboriginal person;
5. Urban Aboriginal peoples must be provided the opportunity and right to be consulted and engaged in developing housing strategies and plans that directly affect the services they access;
6. Aboriginal organizations or individuals must either be consulted in the development of, or be responsible for delivering, all Aboriginal housing services;
7. A clear monitoring and evaluation plan is necessary to provide transparency and accountability at all levels of engagement.

Aboriginal Peoples in Canada

Aboriginal, or Indigenous, peoples are the first inhabitants of what is now Canada, living on these lands since time immemorial. Finding a universal definition of Aboriginality in Canada, however, can pose both a challenging and problematic task. While there are many community-based and informal definitions of Aboriginality across Canada, the most common definition, and the one used throughout this report, comes from Section 35(2) of the Canadian Constitution:

“In this Act, “Aboriginal Peoples of Canada” includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.”³

3 Constitution Act, 1982, s 35(2), being schedule B to the Canada Act 1982 (UK), 1982, c 11.

It is important to note that while these groups are connected and face many similar social, economic and environmental injustices across Canada, they remain unique and diverse in membership, culture, and relationship to Canada.

The Aboriginal population is growing rapidly at a rate that far exceeds the non-Aboriginal population in Canada. In 2011, there were an estimated 1,400,685 Aboriginal people living in Canada⁴, residing both on and off-reserve. Mid- growth population projections from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada show the Aboriginal population growing twice as fast as the overall Canadian population⁵, a trend expected to continue over the next two decades. Looking strictly at the off-reserve population, the urban Aboriginal demographic is set to increase at a rate of 4.8%⁶, which is faster than the average for the overall urban Canadian population. It is important to note that these statistics likely represent the minimum number, given that grassroots organizations report much larger numbers of Aboriginal peoples across the country. Further investigation is needed to accurately assess the projected population growth over the next decade.

Aboriginal Population in Canada: 1,400, 685

Between 2006 and 2011, the Canadian Aboriginal population increased by 232,385 people, or 20.1%, compared with 5.2% for the non-Aboriginal population.

There is an important growing trend of rural-urban migration for Aboriginal people, increasing the number of permanent Aboriginal residents in urban centres across the country. Recognizing there are now over 700,000 Aboriginal peoples, approximately 56% of the total Aboriginal population, living in Canadian urban centres with a population of 10,000⁷ or more, the majority of whom have no plans to move back to their home reserve, the diverse and unique needs of urban Aboriginal peoples must be addressed by municipalities.

4 Statistics Canada, Canada (Code 01) (table). National Household Survey (NHS) Aboriginal Population Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-011-X2011007. Released November 13, 2013, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/aprof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

5 Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC). "Fact Sheet: Urban Aboriginal population in Canada," last modified September 15, 2010, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014298/1100100014302>.

6 Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, "Long Descriptions for the Demography Deck," last modified June 5, 2013, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1370440209795/1370440350563#fig9>.

7 Statistics Canada, Vancouver, CMA, British Columbia (Code 933) (table). National Household Survey (NHS) Aboriginal Population Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-011-X2011007. Released November 13, 2013, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/aprof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

“For most [Aboriginal people in city], the city is home, but urban Aboriginal peoples stay connected to their communities of origin. Six in ten feel a close connection to these communities – links that are integral to strong family and social ties, and to traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture. Notwithstanding these links, majorities of First Nations peoples, Métis and Inuit consider their current city of residence home (71%), including those who are the first generation of their family to live in their city.”⁸

Aboriginal Groups

First Nations

First Nations is a very broad category and includes many distinct Nations whose territories encompass much of Canada and cross into the United States. First Nations people (referred to as “Indians” under the Canadian legal and political system) fall into two distinct categories: status and non-status. Status Indians are First Nations individuals who are registered Indians under the Indian Act, while non-status Indians are those who have connections to First Nations communities or belong to a Nation, for example, but are not registered under the Indian Act.

Métis

The Métis (michif) are a unique Indigenous group with kinship connections to various First Nations including the Cree (nêhiyawak) and the Dene, as well as European settlers. The Métis formed a unique cultural identity rooted in these connections. Their traditional territory is typically considered to be the Prairie Provinces, but in some cases is expanded to include other regions.

Inuit

The Inuit are those Indigenous peoples who have traditionally, and largely continue to, inhabit the northern parts of Canada. They are distinct from both First Nations and Métis peoples.

⁸ Environics Institute, “Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Key Findings,” <http://www.uaps.ca/knowledge/key-findings/>.

The Metro Vancouver Landscape

Local First Nations

There are 614 different First Nations bands in Canada; 198 located in British Columbia⁹. The political landscape in BC is markedly different than most of Canada as few historical treaties were signed between the Canadian government and First Nations in this region. The Government of Canada and the Province of BC are now currently negotiating modern treaties with most First Nations located in the province, with varying degrees of success.

Within the Metro Vancouver region specifically, there exist the traditional territories and reserves of 11 different First Nations.

- Hwlitsum First Nation (without lands)
- Katzie First Nation
- Kwantlen First Nation
- Kwikwetlem First Nation
- Matsqui First Nation
- Musqueam Indian Band
- Qayqayt First nation (without lands)
- Semiahmoo First Nation
- Squamish nation
- Tsawwassen First Nation
- Tsleil-Waututh Nation

First Nations/ Reserves are not responsible for housing the urban Aboriginal population.

63% of Aboriginal people in Vancouver call it home.

56% of Aboriginal people live in urban centres, Metro Vancouver has the third largest Aboriginal population in Canada.

Each of these First Nations is unique, with their own governing systems, laws, and relationships to the federal, provincial, and municipal governments. These Nations are responsible for their own reserves and traditional territories and ideally municipalities should be proactive in forming relationships with these Nations, particularly those that fall within their municipal boundaries. While they may work closely with some municipalities,

⁹ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC). "Information: First Nations Peoples of Canada," last modified 2003, http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ/STAGING/texte-text/ach_lr_ks_rrds_fnpc_1302786002220_eng.pdf.

First Nations with land bases located within Metro Vancouver are not responsible for, nor do they necessarily have the capacity, to house the urban Aboriginal population living off-reserve in Metro Vancouver municipalities. The question of housing for these residents falls directly into the hands of the federal and provincial governments in partnership with 'home' municipalities.

Culture

Culture is an important, and positive, part of the lives of Aboriginal people living in Metro Vancouver. Studies reveal that the majority of Aboriginal people in Vancouver often, or at least occasionally, participate in cultural activities.¹⁰ Further to this point, 70% of Aboriginal residents in Metro Vancouver believe that Aboriginal culture is strengthening in the city and that maintaining Aboriginal culture and passing it on to the next generation is vital for healthy communities.¹¹

Vancouver Coastal Health noted that improvements to urban Aboriginal health are attributed to changes in the social determinants of health, improved access to health care services and greater emphasis on cultural teachings.¹² Municipalities, as well as the provincial and federal governments, must support initiatives that reflect the importance of Aboriginal culture and provide culturally relevant approaches to these social and economic inequalities.

Aboriginal people in Vancouver report that they often, or at least occasionally, participate in cultural activities.

Occasionally	Often	Rarely	Never
39%	38%	19%	4%

Source: UAPS

Population and Project Growth

Matching cross-country trends, Aboriginal people typically relocate to urban centres for family, city-life, or to seek education and employment opportunities. Urban Aboriginal people in Vancouver are not a transient demographic and most have no plans to return to their home communities on a permanent basis. This population is, much like any other demographic, a resident of Metro Vancouver.

¹⁰ Environics Institute, Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Vancouver Report, 2010, 23.

¹¹ Ibid, 31.

¹² Vancouver Coastal Health, A Health and Social Profile: Vancouver Citywide Summary, 2013, 13.

In 2011 the total population of Aboriginal people living in Metro Vancouver was 52,375.¹³ At the community level, the actual population far exceeds this conservative estimate and more work is needed to determine actual numbers. Metro Vancouver boasts the third largest population of urban Aboriginal residents across Canada; perhaps surprisingly, only 23% of urban Aboriginal residents reside in the City of Vancouver, with the rest of the population residing throughout other Metro Vancouver municipalities.¹⁴

In the City of Vancouver specifically, 33% of Aboriginal residents were born in Metro Vancouver. Though that means 67% of Aboriginal residents were born elsewhere, many of those residents have been living in Vancouver for at least 10 years.¹⁵ They are a relatively young population, given that 51% are under the age of 25, compared to just 34% for all Metro Vancouver residents.¹⁶ It should be noted that while the overall population is quite young, Elders are another important demographic within the urban Aboriginal population. Aging Elders have specific needs and opportunities for inter- generational living that should be explored.

Given the differences in population estimates between Statistics Canada figures and the knowledge amongst Aboriginal communities and organizations, there is much work to be done to identify the true scope of this demographic and the projected growth in the region over the next 20 years.

A Call to Action

The TRC aimed to guide and inspire aboriginal peoples and Canadians in a process of reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect. Following seven national events across Canada, the TRC released a Call to action, presenting 94 recommendations for all levels of Canadian government, and citizens, to take to begin the process of reconciliation between aboriginal peoples and Canada. While housing is not directly referenced in the recommendations, many related issues are highlighted such as child welfare, health, language, and culture. supportive and culturally reflective housing is a clear means to address many of the other determinants of health and wellness for aboriginal

13 Statistics Canada, Vancouver, CMA, British Columbia (Code 933) (table). National Household Survey (NHS) Aboriginal Population Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-011-X2011007. Released November 13, 2013, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/aprof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

14 Ibid.

15 Environics Institute, Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study: Vancouver Report, 2010, 18. and Statistics Canada, Vancouver, CMA, British Columbia (Code 933) (table). National Household Survey (NHS) Aboriginal Population Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-011-X2011007. Released November 13, 2013, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/aprof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

16 Statistics Canada, Vancouver, CMA, British Columbia (Code 933) (table). National Household Survey (NHS) Aboriginal Population Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-011-X2011007. Released November 13, 2013, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/aprof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

peoples and could begin to 'close the gap' and assist urban aboriginal residents on a number of socio-economic indicators. MVAEC calls upon municipalities to honour the spirit of reconciliation and respond to the TRC Recommendations put forward, including the provision of safe, secure, and affordable housing options for their aboriginal residents.

A Clear Gap

The urban Aboriginal population shares many of the same qualities as the overall Canadian population, but as a community also face unique challenges. Many of these challenges stem from the colonial history that has left lasting and damaging effects at both the community and individual levels, such as around issues related to health, poverty, family units, and cultural connections. Many of these socio-economic indicators, and efforts governments can take to redress the colonial legacy, are presented in the recent Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) summary report entitled *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*. Among these determinants, and others, there are marked discrepancies between Aboriginal peoples and the mainstream Canadian population. Urban Aboriginal residents fare far worse across all social determinants of health including income, employment, home ownership, homelessness, and the number of youth in care. MVAEC asserts that urban Aboriginal peoples be afforded the same opportunities as non-Aboriginal peoples, with a focus on bridging this unjust gap between these two demographics.

Conservative estimates show at least 50,000 Aboriginal People in Metro Vancouver.

76% OF METRO VANCOUVER ABORIGINAL RESIDENTS have lived here for at least 5 years.

87% of Metro Vancouver Aboriginal residents live outside of the city of Vancouver.

Discrepancies between Aboriginal people living in Metro Vancouver and the region's non-Aboriginal population also exist with regard to income and employment. The average unemployment rate for Aboriginal people in Metro Vancouver is 12.6%, nearly double the Metro Vancouver overall average of 7.1%.¹⁷ There is also a sizeable difference between individual and household incomes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents. The average annual household income for Aboriginal residents in Metro Vancouver is \$69,223 compared to the total Metro Vancouver average of \$83,666.¹⁸ At the individual level, the average income for Aboriginal residents in Metro Vancouver is \$31,799, compared to the

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Metro Vancouver average of \$41,031.¹⁹ Based on the most recent data available, 27% of Metro Vancouver's Aboriginal residents were living under the low income cut-off indicator, a threshold noting families who devote a larger share of their income (typically over 50%) to the necessities of food, shelter and clothing. For non-Aboriginal people, this number is much lower at 17%.²⁰

The devastating reality is that Aboriginal children and youth represented over half of the 8,106 children and youth in care in BC in 2012/13.²¹ Vancouver Coastal Health Authority has the highest rates of Aboriginal children and youth in care, with Aboriginal children being 12 times more likely to enter care than their non-Aboriginal counterparts.²² The main reasons for Aboriginal children going into care are rooted in systemic poverty, poor housing, and substance misuse.²³ Given these disheartening statistics, Aboriginal children and youth, as well as Aboriginal families, deserve particular attention when addressing issues around housing and wellness.

The transition from being in care to becoming self-reliant at the age of 19 is especially difficult when the transition process is relatively abrupt as compared to the transition process experienced by the general population. Furthermore, insecure or weak support networks only add to the difficulty of transitioning, making this demographic particularly vulnerable. With approximately 550 youth aging out of care every year, this demographic is an important one to consider.²⁴

Paige's Story

In May, 2014, the BC's Representative for Children and Youth (The Representative) released the findings from an intensive investigation into the life of a young aboriginal woman named Paige. Paige's story: abuse, indifference and a Young Life Discarded documents the collective failure and missed opportunities for organizations and individuals to help Paige, who died from a drug overdose at age 19 in April 2013. Directly connected to many of the TRC recommendations to eliminate the over-representation of children in care, and to provide more health and wellness supports to families in need, Paige's story also highlights the inadequate, unsafe and poor housing options available to many urban aboriginal

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Representative for Children and Youth, and BC Office of the Provincial Health Officer, "Growing Up in BC - 2015," 43.

²² Ibid.

²³ National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, "Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Children in Child Protective Services," http://www.nccahccnsa.ca/docs/fact%20sheets/child%20and%20youth/NCCAH_fs_childhealth_EN.pdf.

²⁴ Pieta Woolley, "Aging Out: Tough Road for Teens Too Old to be In Care," *The Tyee*, April 8, 2013, accessed August 31, 2015, <http://thetyee.ca/News/2013/04/08/Aging-Out/>.

peoples, in particular youth. the report notes that over just a few years, Paige moved more than 50 times – living in homeless shelters, safe houses, youth detox centres, couch surfing, foster homes, and a number of Single Room occupancy hotels in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.²⁵ sadly, there are too many “Paiges” in Metro Vancouver and collectively, municipalities and senior governments need to respond to the Representative’s call to action and ensure that all urban aboriginal youth have affordable, safe, and secure housing options.

The Interdependent Nature of Housing

Housing is related to many other social determinants of health and wellbeing. The interdependent nature of these broader categories have direct affects on health and wellness and are closely tied to public policy.

- Education
- Labour Market
- Equity in policing and redress
- Transportation
- Health Services
- Urban Migration and Mobility
- Food Systems
- Self- governance
- Sociocultural Wellbeing

The Indigenous Cityscape

4.8% = urban Aboriginal Population Growth Rate

70% of Vancouver’s Aboriginal residents believe that Aboriginal culture is strengthening in the city

The Average Metro Vancouver Unemployment Rate

- 12.6% Aboriginal
- 7.1% Aboriginal Metro Vancouver

What the Interdependent Nature of Housing looks like in Metro Vancouver

Aboriginal children are 12x more likely than their counterparts than their non-Aboriginal counterparts to be in care.

²⁵ Representative for Children and Youth, “News Release,” May 14, 2014, accessed on August 31, 2015, https://www.rcybc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/reports_publications/rcy_news_release_pg_final.pdf.

~550 aboriginal youth aging out of care in BC every year, in need of homes and support.

Within Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Residents are 7% more likely than non- aboriginal to use public transit, walk, or bike.

The average total household income for aboriginal people in Metro Vancouver is almost \$ 14,500 less than the Metro Vancouver average.

Urban Aboriginal Housing

Aboriginal households in Metro Vancouver are more likely (40%) to spend 30% or more of their household income on shelter than the average (33%).

Though Aboriginal people only comprise 2% of Metro Vancouver's total population, 31% of homeless individuals identify as Aboriginal.

44% of Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Residents own their home. However, Aboriginal people in Metro Vancouver are 21% less likely to own their home than the average.

Reflecting national trends, Aboriginal residents in Metro Vancouver are struggling to find adequate, secure and affordable housing. Unhealthy housing conditions and overcrowding is a reality for many urban Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people living in Metro Vancouver are a diverse population with unique and specific housing and wellness needs. Housing providers, municipalities, and others are encouraged to partner with Aboriginal housing and service agencies to develop strategies and specific actions to address the unique needs of Aboriginal Elders, students, families, single parent households, low income individuals and households, and youth transitioning out of care. The urban Aboriginal housing crisis is very much a 'macro' issue – that is, it emerges from distinct historical processes, cultural and economic structural causes, political decisions and neglect. Urban Aboriginal housing, then, requires a macro-level solution, integrating across all areas related to overall wellness.

“A significant proportion of housing occupied by Aboriginal Peoples in urban areas is inadequate and not affordable, and Aboriginal homelessness in major urban area ranges is disproportionate.”²⁶

Aboriginal households are also more likely than non-Aboriginal families to be single parent households, with one third of urban Aboriginal children raised by a single parent. Additionally, with approximately 1,100 youth aging out of care in BC every year, there is a sizeable number of Aboriginal youth in need of services and housing as they transition to adulthood in the Metro Vancouver region.²⁷ This is an important consideration when developing housing solutions for numerous reasons, particularly when considering income levels and housing affordability.

As defined by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, affordable housing costs less than 30% of before-tax household income.²⁸ Aboriginal households in Metro Vancouver are more likely (40%) to spend 30% or more of their household income on shelter than the average Metro Vancouver household (33%).²⁹ Earning less than their non-Aboriginal counterparts, and experiencing higher levels of unemployment, it is clear that many Aboriginal residents are struggling to meet their housing costs.

Looking at discrepancies in the rate of home-ownership in Metro Vancouver, approximately 44% of urban Aboriginal residents own their home, in contrast to the 66% of non-Aboriginal people who are home-owners.³⁰ In Metro Vancouver, across both home rental and ownership, urban Aboriginal peoples' housing fails to meet national occupancy standards at a slightly higher rate of 11% compared to non-Aboriginal housing at 9%.³¹ Furthermore, 11% of Aboriginal dwellings in Metro Vancouver are in need of major repair, compared to just 6% of dwellings lived in by their non-Aboriginal counterparts.³²

Homelessness is on the rise across Metro Vancouver, and Aboriginal people are drastically over-represented within this demographic. Though Aboriginal people only comprise 2% of the total regional population, 31% of homeless individuals identify as

26 Caryl Patrick, *Aboriginal Homelessness in Canada: A Literature Review* (Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press, 2010), 18.

27 Representative for Children and Youth, and BC Office of the Provincial Health Officer, “Growing Up in BC - 2015,” 12.

28 Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, “Housing in Canada Online,” accessed August 31, 2015, http://cmhc.beyond2020.com/HiCODefinitions_EN.html#_Affordable_dwellings_1.

29 Statistics Canada, Vancouver, CMA, British Columbia (Code 933) (table). National Household Survey (NHS) Aboriginal Population Profile. 2011 National Household Survey. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-011-X2011007. Released November 13, 2013, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/aprof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

Aboriginal; an alarming proportion that has remained unchanged since 2005.³³ According to the 2014 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, this translates to a total of 582 Aboriginal people who are homeless.³⁴ Furthermore, 60% of Aboriginal respondents, compared to 44% of non-Aboriginal respondents, were unsheltered.³⁵ While these statistics are shocking, unfortunately they are likely large underestimates of the number of Aboriginal peoples who are homeless.

Finally, it is worth acknowledging that Aboriginal peoples are disproportionately subjected to the criminal justice system and incarcerated at higher rates. As a result, prisons do “house” a notable Aboriginal population that is typically excluded from homeless and other housing counts.

Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Housing Organizations

There are a number of housing organizations supporting the housing needs of urban Aboriginal residents in Metro Vancouver. While the mandate of these organizations is to meet basic housing needs, most also include a dynamic and holistic approach to housing and include other aspects of wellness. For these organizations, the mission extends beyond physical housing units; they aim to build stronger and more cohesive communities for urban Aboriginal peoples.

These organizations seek to address housing issues for the urban Aboriginal community:

- Vancouver Native Housing Society
- Lu'ma Native Housing Society
- Kekinow Native Housing Society

These organizations primarily focus on service-delivery, but also offer transitional and social housing:

- Helping Spirit Lodge Society
- Aboriginal Mother's Centre
- Circle of Eagles Lodge Society
- The Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre
- Urban Native Youth Association
- Cwenengitel Aboriginal Society Centre

33 Greater Vancouver Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness, Results of the 2014 Homeless Count in the Metro Vancouver Region 2014 Metro Vancouver Homeless Count, ii.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid, 19.

Note: The local organizations are at times supported by, or work with, the provincial Aboriginal housing administrative body, the Aboriginal Housing Management Association.

Health and Wellness

Urban Aboriginal peoples are at greater risk for experiencing a significantly lower health status than other Canadians. Socio-economic indicators regularly position Aboriginal peoples to be at a greater risk of inequity including lower rate of employment, higher levels of victimization and violence and lower income security. Among the social determinants is also the increased likelihood for living in inadequate housing and poorer access to health services.³⁶

Housing is not an isolated issue. It is one part of a larger web of social, economic and environmental issues that all affect the health and well-being of Aboriginal residents. There is significant opportunity to address housing need holistically with consideration to all aspects of individual and community-wide health and wellness.

Health concerns among the urban Aboriginal population are a manifestation of the social, political, economic and cultural experiences of Aboriginal people residing in urban areas.³⁷ To address these issues, an equally holistic view must be used to tailor programs and services to the specific needs of this vulnerable demographic. Urban Aboriginal housing initiatives are in a unique position to address multiple principles of wellness in each program and respond to the various needs of urban Aboriginal residents while meeting their needs for safe and secure housing.

“The need for urban housing for Aboriginal people in Canada is based not only on the fundamental population shift, but also because of... the need to provide Aboriginal families, especially young, single mothers and individual adolescents, with the protective factors of stable housing in a stable neighbourhood with access to triaged resources, including education, hospitals, and employment.”³⁸

Case Study: Art Zoccole Aboriginal Patients’ Lodge And Family Housing

The Art Zoccole Aboriginal Patients’ Lodge and Family Housing is an innovative example of an aboriginal housing provider addressing the unique housing needs of aboriginal peoples. Located at 1254 E 8th avenue in Vancouver, BC, and operated by Lu’ma Native

36 National Association of Friendship Centres, Urban Aboriginal Women: Social Determinants of Health and Well-Being, accessed on August 20, 2015, <http://www.laa.gov.nl.ca/laa/naws/pdf/NAFC-UrbanAboriginalWomen.pdf>.

37 Jessica Place, The Health of Aboriginal People Residing in Urban Areas, (Prince George, National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2012), accessed on August 20, 2015, http://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/53/Urban_Aboriginal_Health_EN_web.pdf.

38 Peter Dinsdale, Jerry White, & Calvin Hanselmann. Urban Aboriginal Communities in Canada: Complexities, Challenges, Opportunities. (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 2011), 118.

Housing society, the lodge services aboriginal patients traveling to Vancouver from British Columbia and the Yukon. the lodge was developed through a partnership with BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre, and made possible through financial support from BC Housing. it features 22 apartments, 15 of which are affordable housing for aboriginal families, and the other 7 are left available for aboriginal patients and their families while accessing health services in Metro Vancouver. Revenue from patient bookings allows the lodge to continue operations and maintain their role as an important housing and health service provider in the region.

Housing Options

There are a number of available housing approaches for governments, non-profit organizations, Urban Aboriginal organizations and residents to consider when looking at the housing issues facing urban Aboriginal residents. Given the diverse needs of Aboriginal residents in Metro Vancouver, a variety of housing approaches, models, and forms are required to meet the specific needs of youth, Elders, single-parent households, low-income individuals and families, etc.

- Aboriginal housing organizations go beyond simply just building housing units and aim to build strong and cohesive communities.
- These organizations know the urban Aboriginal community best and with this in mind, MVAEC asserts that all urban Aboriginal housing projects should:
- Be owned and managed by urban Aboriginal housing and service organizations; or, in some cases a partnership as agreed upon by the Aboriginal organizations;
- Be culturally relevant and consider other aspects of health and wellness;
- Reflect the local need; and
- Be affordable.

Given the current housing market in Metro Vancouver and the rates of under and unemployment, and overall household income disparities amongst Aboriginal residents, there is a clear need for the development of numerous social housing units throughout the region. Though social housing is only one of many solutions to the housing crisis, it is one that warrants immediate action given the clear social and economic need. Most typically, social housing is developed through a combination of:

- Land or sites provided by municipalities
- Land or sites redeveloped on existing non-profit sites
- Partnerships with senior levels of government (i.e. land, capital dollars, financing, health supports, etc.)
- Funding contributions from private foundations such as Streethome
- As part of a mixed-use project achieved through a negotiated Community Amenity Contribution (CAC) or inclusionary zoning requirement
- Social Purpose Real Estate (SPRE) initiatives
- Other innovative partnerships between non-profit agencies, private sector agencies and government

Some of these options are detailed in the handout Options for Urban Aboriginal Housing Delivery.

Additional benefits of Social Housing

Secure, stable and affordable housing has social, economic and environmental benefits. A credible approach to capturing these additional benefits is known as the Social Return on Investment (SROI), which attempts to quantify social outcomes (positive, negative, and neutral) by looking at the economic impacts of a wide variety of actions, including social housing projects. While difficult to determine, the SROI ratio of benefits to cost is extremely valuable as it incorporates a much wider scope of benefits to those people who are accessing the services. Some of these additional benefits may include: reduced reliance on hospital services, reduced use of the criminal justice system, increased resident income, increased education levels, increased employment opportunities, promoting economic and social integration, increased opportunities to move through the housing spectrum, etc.³⁹

Another potential benefit of mixed-use Aboriginal social housing projects is affordable and secure spacing for service providers, non-profits, and social enterprises. These organizations would provide many benefits to not only the building's residents, but also to the wider community. Like many Metro Vancouver residents, non-profits, service providers and social enterprises are also struggling to secure space in an increasingly unaffordable real-estate market. Currently, many non-profit organizations operate in program and office spaces that are too small, which results in a decline of successful program delivery and availability. Furthermore, many successful social enterprises are unable to grow because of a shortage of appropriate spaces and locations. Looking at housing holistically, as an increased number of urban Aboriginal residents face housing-related issues, increased services that impact overall wellness are also needed to support residents.⁴⁰ Supporting Aboriginal-led projects through the long-term sustainability of Aboriginal agencies is a key component to achieving many interconnected outcomes for all urban Aboriginal residents.

The Return on Investment

The Return on Investment (ROI) is a performance measure used to evaluate the financial efficiency of particular investment, determined by comparing the financial gain from, to the cost of, the investment. Social housing cannot be viewed exclusively through a financial lens; however, it is still an important factor when evaluating the success and viability of a particular social housing project. For example, in the City of Vancouver, the approximate cost associated with an individual living on the street is \$40,000/year, while the cost for

39 Urban Matters, "Exploring SROI at the Central City Foundation," April 10, 2015, <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/54fd43d6e4b0edea648f5439/t/556cccdee4b0466e6f444682/1433193694722/2015-04-10+Central+City+Foundation+Report+Final.pdf>.

40 Investopedia, "Return on Investment – ROI," accessed August 25, 2015, <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/returnoninvestment.asp>. and Citizens for Public Justice, "Infographic: Affordable Housing in Canada," accessed on August 25, 2015, <http://www.cpj.ca/infographic-affordable-housing-canada>.

social housing is \$28,000/year. Leaving someone homeless costs nearly 43% more than housing.⁴¹

Additional Development Opportunities

Other types of affordable housing, such as secure market rental housing and affordable homeownership, may be developed using incentive programs (e.g. City of Vancouver's Rental 100 program). Using a combination of these approaches would maximize the success of housing initiatives and increase the capacity of groups working to meet the housing and wellness needs of Aboriginal residents.

Municipalities who actively look to establish partnerships with Aboriginal housing organizations, and are open to new innovative solutions will be the most successful in housing Aboriginal residents. Furthermore, social enterprises and community contribution companies (C3s) can be utilized to offset the costs associated with creating and sustaining social housing projects. Ultimately though, it is still essential that the federal and provincial governments support these initiatives through programs with allocated dollars to urban Aboriginal housing.

A list of potential funding opportunities for new housing is provided in the handout Options for Urban Aboriginal Housing Delivery. Municipalities are encouraged to explore all of these possibilities within their communities to best address the multitude and diversity of housing need.

A Vision for Metro Vancouver

We envision a future where all urban Aboriginal peoples in Metro Vancouver are able to access culturally appropriate, affordable, safe, suitable, and secure housing opportunities that foster conditions for health, wellness, and sense of community.

With over half of the entire Aboriginal population now choosing to live in urban centres and experiencing an exponential population growth in Metro Vancouver and across Canada, there is a clear need for a targeted and comprehensive housing strategy for urban Aboriginal residents. MVAEC represents a vast number of urban Aboriginal residents through their organizations and considers it imperative for Metro Vancouver municipalities to prioritize urban Aboriginal housing and provide long-term, culturally reflective, and affordable options for its Aboriginal residents. This 5-year strategy is the first step in developing a housing strategy and provides some high-level objectives and possible actions to assist municipalities in reaching MVAEC's long-term vision of accessible housing for all.

There are two key objectives that provide high-level direction for priority areas of housing governance, policy, development, and implementation. These comprehensive

41 Central City Foundation, "Unaffordable Spaces: How rising real estate prices are squeezing non-profit organizations and the people they help," accessed on August 17, 2015, https://www.centralcityfoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/CCF-Community-Report-_low-res.pdf.

categories include various preliminary recommendations that support municipalities to move to action and support long-term planning processes.

1. Strengthen Aboriginal Housing Leadership and Capacity at All Levels

Without clear plans, policy, diverse funding options, collaborative partnerships and Aboriginal representation at all levels of decision-making, it would be impossible to fulfill the overall objective of creating enough housing to house the urban Aboriginal population in Metro Vancouver.

2. Increase access and Diversify housing options for Urban Aboriginal Residents

This strategy also features recommendations for the provision of new and diverse housing options for urban Aboriginal residents. Looking at the recent statistics and lived experience of this demographic, there is a clear need for diverse and innovative housing options in Metro Vancouver. While social and affordable housing are top priorities to respond to the current housing crisis, there are many additional opportunities for municipalities to deepen affordability within social housing and expand housing stock to meet the specific needs of urban Aboriginal residents.

Long-Term Recommendations

The following recommendations are emerging strategies to achieve MVAEC's long-term housing vision. These strategies are part of a long-term vision that includes the planning and prioritization of urban Aboriginal housing in each of Metro Vancouver's municipalities. Some of the strategies are directly related to the urban Aboriginal context outlined in this strategy, while others are a result of experiences and feedback from MVAEC members, who provide on the ground support to this demographic through their various organizations.

1. Strengthen Housing Leadership and Capacity

» Improve agency Collaboration

There are a multitude of opportunities for Aboriginal organizations, non-profit organizations, the private sector and all levels of government to collaborate and support each other to better meet the housing needs of urban Aboriginal residents. Drawing from examples across Canadian and international urban centres, inter-municipality exchanges can serve as platforms to discuss best practices and lessons learned, capitalizing on previous successful initiatives. Furthermore, collaboration and cooperation between groups can also lead to more accurate data collection and sharing, filling in some of the existing knowledge gaps needed to successfully move forward with effective housing planning.

» Ensure Aboriginal Representation at all Levels of Decision-Making

MVAEC calls for all Aboriginal housing projects to be owned and managed by Aboriginal housing organizations. Furthermore, every project or plan that affects Aboriginal residents should include Aboriginal residents, or an Aboriginal representative, in every planning stage; from initial discussions to evaluation post-completion. There are many ways this can happen and MVAEC is available to provide connections, suggestions and guidance in ensuring appropriate Aboriginal representation in housing projects.

» Explore Funding Options

As detailed in the accompanying document options for aboriginal Housing Delivery, there are many funding opportunities and sources for municipalities to consider when looking at building Aboriginal- specific housing. Municipalities are encouraged to think outside of the box, and to explore as many funding options as possible in order to meet the housing need. Aboriginal housing organizations are ready and able to take on additional projects, where funding is provided.

» Refine and Adapt Municipal Policies

MVAEC members working in housing throughout Metro Vancouver have identified some key areas to improve the efficacy of municipal housing projects. While municipalities have traditionally been a strong partner by supplying land for housing development, there is opportunity to improve the internal functions so that all departments work together to support the creation of housing units in a timely manner. Providing ample support to minimize barriers for Aboriginal non-profit organizations applying for redevelopment and other rezoning is a clear way municipalities can demonstrate sound support for Aboriginal housing initiatives. An additional way for governments, professionals and institutions to support urban Aboriginal residents is to create more opportunities for staff to participate in cultural competency training, an important step to address the inequity in policy-making and provide staff with a more holistic understanding of the lived realities of urban Aboriginal peoples in Metro Vancouver.

» Develop a Long-term Urban Aboriginal Housing Strategy

The objectives and strategies in this report are meant to act as a preliminary step in future planning efforts for urban Aboriginal housing in Metro Vancouver. While they are helpful in framing the current situation and providing some initial considerations, a more comprehensive and exhaustive housing strategy is required to effectively meet the long-term housing demand. Municipalities are encouraged to create a regional 10-year strategy that includes a detailed monitoring and evaluation plan to measure the plan's success and re-assess future housing needs.

2. Increase Access and Diversify Housing Options

» Address the Needs of Diverse Demographics

Within the urban Aboriginal population, there are many demographics requiring additional consideration. Elders, youth, single-parent families and those experiencing homelessness are just a few of the groups who have very particular housing needs. Municipalities are encouraged to consult with these demographics to ensure that their specific housing needs are met in any future housing plans.

» Integrate Health and Wellness

As described in the body of this report, urban housing does not exist in isolation and is only one part of the larger spectrum of various social determinants of health. The link between traditional notions of health with overall wellness is important, and there are numerous opportunities for health-focused agencies to enter the conversation around Aboriginal housing. There are many exemplary case studies of housing that include aspects of health and wellness in housing and service design and there are many local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal service-delivery organizations willing to partner with government to ensure that health and wellness becomes a core component of new housing projects.

» Meet Immediate Social Housing Need

Without clear statistical data, it is difficult to know how many social housing units are needed to meet demand. Further specialized data research on the urban Aboriginal population will be required as part of any long-term strategy to explore data challenges and identify a suitable methodology to understand and articulate the need for social housing. While it will not meet the demand, or the annual growth in demand, the construction of 1500 units by 2020 represents a necessary starting point and an attainable action while planning for a longer-term solution. These units should include both transitional and long-term tenancy, and be specific to the needs of the most vulnerable and under-housed populations. There are many funding options available to municipalities seeking to build social housing for their residents.

» Maintain and Improve Existing Housing Stock

There are many exciting opportunities to redevelop existing housing or building stock to be used for urban Aboriginal housing projects. Renewed federal funding for operating agreements and funding is important for non-profit housing providers and co-ops to sustain deep levels of affordability for Aboriginal residents. Some Aboriginal organizations already own buildings they would be interested in redeveloping to include additional housing and services -- federal funding plays a significant funding role in terms of housing, health and wellness support. Collaboration between local organizations and municipalities would allow for clarity around the potential options for efficient and culturally relevant redevelopment of the built environment.

» Build Culturally Relevant Housing

Urban Aboriginal residents remain connected to Aboriginal culture and believe that culture is an important aspect of urban life. Housing for Aboriginal peoples should reflect Aboriginal culture in a respectful and appropriate way. Aboriginal housing organizations advocate that housing be about community, not just units. To reflect this, municipalities are encouraged to partner with Aboriginal organizations, architects and planners to ensure that new housing is culturally relevant and reflects the lives of urban Aboriginal peoples.

» Diversify New Housing Stock

New housing stock should be owned and managed by Aboriginal housing and service organizations, be culturally relevant, integrate aspects of health and wellness and reflect the local need. MVAEC members reference the need to explore project developments that share partnerships, informal and formal support services, and foster different types of housing design that reflect the need for gathering space; both as public space and unit configurations that shift depending on need (eg. student housing, spaces for youth transitioning out of care or for grandparents caring for their grandchildren).

Considering that urban Aboriginal people also earn lower incomes, experience higher rates of unemployment and are less likely to own their own homes, there is an evident need for housing solutions such as housing co-operatives, purpose-built rental apartments and homes, and affordable housing beyond social housing. Mixed-use and/or mixed-income buildings are also encouraged as creative ways to fund projects and create more accessible, liveable communities for everyone.

Suggestions For Immediate Action

MVAEC envisions a region where urban Aboriginal residents are afforded opportunities for accessible housing in the municipalities they call home. While the emerging strategies to achieve this are part of a long-term vision, there are some potential immediate actions municipalities can take to begin working to find solutions for urban Aboriginal housing needs.

1. Support MVAEC's leadership and capacity through secured core funding contributions. Through its member organizations, MVAEC represents the vast majority of urban Aboriginal peoples. MVAEC is a valuable resource to be consulted and involved on all housing plans and planning processes for the region.
2. Invite Aboriginal housing organizations to the table. Aboriginal housing organizations want to own and manage housing development projects for their communities. These organizations should be a part of all discussions around urban Aboriginal housing.
3. Fill the data gaps. There are large gaps in data collection around the housing needs of urban Aboriginal residents, including information around land ownership. Many Aboriginal organizations own land and are willing to partner with government to

- redevelop these sites. There are also marked gaps in data around population and projected growth. Further work is needed to ensure that plans are informed by accurate and timely data.
4. Find funding. There is a high demand for housing, which requires additional and creative funding measures. Municipalities, senior levels of government, and private partners should start exploring all available funding opportunities to see how each might play a role in supporting Aboriginal housing plans.
 5. Create an immediate plan to construct 1500 new social housing units across Metro Vancouver by 2020. As a region, municipalities, senior levels of government, and other partners need to collaborate to develop a plan to build the 1500 new social housing units to begin to address immediate demand and initiate learning and reconciliation through action.
 6. Launch the planning process for a 10-year regional housing strategy for Metro Vancouver. A 10-Year Aboriginal Housing and Wellness Strategy is needed for the region that includes specialized methodologies and partnership frameworks for moving forward. This should be integrated alongside the Metro Vancouver Affordable Housing Strategy, including setting targets, actions and objectives to ensure the ongoing commitment of municipalities to meeting the housing needs of Aboriginal residents.
 7. Continue engagement efforts. Aboriginal residents need to be included in all aspects of housing planning to ensure that the collective voice of this population is heard.

Concluding Remarks

The majority of Aboriginal people live in cities and this population is growing faster than the average. Once perceived as a transient population with intentions to return to rural communities or reserves, Aboriginal peoples are increasingly relocating to urban centres for family, city-life, education and employment opportunities. The off-reserve Aboriginal population is amongst the fastest growing demographic in Canada, with a growth rate of 4.8% over the next two decades.

Urban Aboriginal residents have unique needs. Though sharing the same city, urban Aboriginal residents face many additional challenges compared to the average resident. It is essential that any plan to address the housing crisis for urban Aboriginal residents also considers additional aspects of culture, health and wellness.

Aboriginal people want to be involved. There is a huge opportunity for municipalities, the provincial and federal government to engage Aboriginal organizations and communities to develop plans that reflect their needs and lived realities.

1500 social housing units by 2020 will only begin to meet housing demand. There is an undisputable need for additional social housing units across the region to ensure adequate housing for urban Aboriginal residents. 1500 units will not solve the housing crisis, but is a necessary first-step while governments come together to develop a long-term strategy.

Urban Aboriginal housing needs to be prioritized. With a growing population, there is a

role for all sectors, including senior levels of government, Metro Vancouver, municipalities and non-profit and private partners in providing safe, secure, stable and affordable housing for Aboriginal residents in partnership with Aboriginal agencies.

This short-term strategy synthesizes the need and urgency for Aboriginal-led, culturally relevant housing to meet the needs of Metro Vancouver Aboriginal residents. Housing needs and markets are ever-changing, and this strategy acts as a high-level foundation for future housing planning in the Metro Vancouver region, with a focus on efforts until 2020.

This initial phase of planning is intended to kick-start future community engagement efforts, allowing MVAEC and residents to continue to make decisions that reflect their community and specific needs. Though the recommendations in this report focus on the short-term future, they also lend to a longer-term vision of safe, secure and stable housing for all Metro Vancouver Aboriginal residents.

There are multiple means to achieve the housing and wellness vision laid out by MVAEC representatives. In the spirit of reconciliation, the long-term objectives and strategies support the development of specific action-plans to ensure that each Metro Vancouver Aboriginal resident is provided an opportunity for appropriate housing, supporting their right to a positive, respectful and equitable livelihood in the community of their choice.