



ABORIGINAL HOUSING SOCIETY OF PRINCE GEORGE

Yunkawhut'en ba koo "houses for Aboriginal people"

1919 17th AVENUE, PRINCE GEORGE, B.C. V2L 5R2 * PHONE (250)564-9794 FAX (250)564-9793 - www.ahspg.ca

Executive Director's Report Christos Vardacostas

I wish to acknowledge the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, and Chief, Council, and Elders for their ongoing leadership and guidance. On behalf of our staff, I thank our Board of Directors for their tireless work. I would like to thank our staff for their dedication in these exciting and challenging times. I also wish to thank and acknowledge our departing Board members and wish them the best in their current and future endeavors, and hope they continue to stay connected and participate with our Society's activities in the future.

I started my position as Executive Director with the Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George (AHSPG) one year ago. Since that time, we have continued planning and begun the construction of our 27 Elders units residence at 1811 Spruce Street. As of October 2017, we have moved our office location to 1919 17th Avenue, the site envisioned for an Urban Aboriginal Village. Planning has begun towards Phase 1 of an estimated 50 residential units, and a pending master site plan as we lead into community engagement to shape this development.

The Society now has a new Constitution and Bylaws under the Province's Societies Act. Recognizing the increasing need for affordable housing in Prince George on Lheidli T'enneh Territory, our Bylaws clarify and focus the Society's mandate to this geographical area. Given the lack of sustainable and operationally feasible options for non-subsidized properties, particularly outside of Prince George, the Board has approved a property disposition plan for regional properties that works to finance new developments. The initial stage of this plan is to repay loan financing to provide equity for the Urban Aboriginal Village site and specifically for Phase 1 of development.

These directions and specific objectives are included in the Society's Strategic Plan developed in March 2017. Some priority objectives, include the focus on new development in Prince George, with an emphasis on the Urban Aboriginal Village, partnerships, and an expanded policy framework. As the Strategic Plan is focused on new developments and organizational changes through policy, many of the priorities translate to Operational Plan objectives. The Operational Plan is a living document, shifting as we identify appropriate pathways that facilitate necessary changes.

1919 17th Avenue

We spent much of the fiscal year on the rezoning process and securing financing - conditions for the purchase of the 1919 17th Avenue property. We engaged the neighbourhood and community partners, and had a thoughtful discussion with community members when presenting to City



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Council at the public hearing for rezoning on March 27, 2017. Upon rezoning approval and financing, we took possession of the property in June of this year.

The Urban Aboriginal Village vision for the 1919 17 Avenue site includes up to 250 residential units and spaces and services focused on quality of life – educational, recreational and spiritual spaces, primary health care services, day care, and community garden. Also, accessibility, student housing, assisted living and temporary lodging are all considered in the initial vision. A need and demand study in progress and upcoming community engagement sessions will help shape the elements and design of the Village development.

Following the initial vision, the Society partnered with UNBC's Environmental Design Planning class which resulted in a conceptual design being developed and presented at an engagement session in December 2016.

The need and demand study is to identify affordable housing needs. It is important for us to understand Aboriginal population, migration, trends, factors and data gaps. This study will include the results of a survey completed by 235 participants on National Aboriginal Day, and desktop research using existing data sources. The specific needs identified will influence the direction of Phase 1 development proposal and planning.

With support from our Society, the UNBC Planning Department will explore urban resiliency of Aboriginal youth, with funding from the Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network this fall 2017.

We are seeking sponsorship and grants to build cultural arts capacity for the 1811 Spruce Street development, the new office at 1919 17th Avenue building, and future Urban Aboriginal Village development.

The Urban Aboriginal Village will be a community effort and we will identify partners to participate and support all aspects of the development, services and operation. Phase 1 of residential development is the most immediate planning step. BC Housing and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporations have provided planning funds in support of 1919's initial planning. The Society will be submitting a proposal before 2018 to facilitate moving this development forward.

Our new office location at 1919 also includes event, kitchen, banquet and educational spaces. These spaces offer great opportunities for events and programming now and in future as we develop the site.



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1811 Spruce Street

More than three years in the making, working closely with M'akola Development Services and Boni Maddison Architects, through a construction management at risk approach, IDL Projects was hired to become the construction manager and primary contractor to build our new residence at

1811 Spruce Street. As of October 2017, at least five Aboriginal workers have been involved in this Project through IDL and its subtrades. We are very excited to see the property develop. We are working on operational planning for this new building in which, with consideration of other operations, we begin to identify operational efficiencies. An on-site office, property manager and potentially tenant support worker, will aid in supporting the building's community. This development is scheduled for completion by June 2018.

With input from local Elders, the Society's Cultural Committee has selected Clayton Gauthier to carve entrance house poles at 1811 Spruce Street. We are very excited to see the progress of this project which will involve the engagement of local youth. Additional artwork decisions for this development are pending.

Policy and Planning Direction

A policy framework has been developed and we are moving forward with specific policy priorities. For example, Tenancy Policy revision is to be completed by early 2018, as we prepare for the opening of 1811 Spruce Street by summer of 2018. With a thoughtful orientation to the Society's Constitution, research on best practice Aboriginal organizational structures, succession planning, staff collaboration and Board governance, we will develop appropriate policy and continue to learn as an organization.

Affordable housing is one of several service provisions amongst cultural, health and wellness, educational, employment and training, justice, and other services. As we look forward, AHSPG will facilitate and provide a greater level of services within a holistic framework. Planning continues to provide dedicated tenant support and maintenance management capacity. The Society applied to Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) for multi-year tenant support funding, and will pursue additional avenues as required to ensure that effective tenant support capacity can be developed and/or facilitated as of 2018. Similarly, maintenance management is currently under review.

Our staff is critically important and reflective of the health of the Organization. We recently created a new Project Coordinator position in August 2017. In addition to renewal of our project-based Building and Business Advisor position, we have the additional capacity that was needed to



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navigate our office move, renovations and repairs for our 1919 17th Avenue Centre, initial commercial operations, and programs fund development.

Property Management

The Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George has hosted and participated in a number of community activities over the past year such as Tenant Appreciation Day/BBQ and National Aboriginal Day celebration and office open house. We have also implemented a program for tenants that gives rewards such as gift certificates for continuing to be a great tenants by paying rent on time, taking care of the units, no neighbouring complaints or disturbances and exterior holiday displays to name a few. We feel that it is very important to not only converse with the tenants during issues but also show recognition and appreciation when things are going right. Over the past year we have weathered a dramatic amount of good and exciting change for the organization and we are very excited for the years to come.

The property managers' priorities over the past year have been focused on tenant health and home wellness. This year we have worked very closely with a number of community committee's addressing homelessness and housing and have been able to help in a number of different ways. We have had a very successful working relationship with Housing First and with great excitement can say that over the past year we have housed five Housing First clients who are still currently successfully housed and doing very well. Of course, we still at times, have the same challenges with addictions and mental health but have definitely seen a decrease in the number of tenants that have lost housing due to these situations. We will continue to advocate for tenants and their continuation of housing. Thank you to our staff, our partners, our community and our clients that have helped make this year as successful as it has been. We look forward to what 2017/2018 is going to bring us.

Lindsey Antosko

Senior Property Manager

Community Voice Mail

The Community Voice Mail (CVM) program has been connecting people needing phone access for employment, training, medical and housing opportunities since February 2014. This is achieved by utilizing 25 partner agencies around Prince George to distribute the free voice mail phone numbers to their clients that are hindered because they have no phone, computer or internet.

The CVM program has connected 531 people to CVM services. Almost 300 people continue to use these services at this time. The Program also supported 28 families with CVM services during wildfire evacuations this past summer. We set up the program at the College of New Caledonia



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for one week, to ensure that everyone had access to their families, friends, animals and emergency services. AHSPG also hosted a CVM campaign kick-off in early 2017 that recognized our funding partners.

The CVM program provides a weekly broadcasts to about 300 clients and partner agencies to announce community events. We look forward to another successful year of connecting service providers to people and people to service providers, in and around Prince George.

Kay Robinson
CVM Coordinator

Research Leadership and Social Enterprise

Significant time has been spent researching appropriate building technologies to meet future building codes. We are currently working with Master of Engineering students towards determining potential cost effective housing technology to employ. We must focus our attention on building residences that are suitable for today's needs for seniors, youth, family and individual occupancy. At the same time, housing designs need to be flexible to ensure that the Society's future housing portfolio is still appropriate 50 years from now. There may be opportunity to engage more specialized graduate students to conduct cost analysis for example.

We continue to explore potential ways in which we could support future developments through the possibility of direct involvement in development, and/or repair and maintenance. Objectives include minimizing net costs, maximizing energy efficiency, generating revenues, and facilitating employment and economic opportunities. Upon further research and review, the Board will consider strategic options for social enterprise involvement in these areas.

Planning for the commercial spaces at the existing building at 1919 17th Avenue will develop into a social enterprise as we explore all viable and appropriate options to service this site, the Society's tenants and community. The building's lobby area also presents the opportunity to engage local groups to hold events.

Skoo Finance was established as an arm's length corporation to facilitate supported home ownership options. This venture remains in the planning stages as financial institutional support, contractual and other revenue potential are explored.

This past year has represented a new beginning for the Society, as our housing portfolio shifts, and the capacity of the Society is focused on our new developments, policy and partnerships. Our orientation to continuously learn as an organization and to put research into practice will help us navigate our new path. Also, it will be a community effort. I wish to thank our partners, their



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leaders, staff, volunteers, and our local community members. I am excited for the work we have ahead of us.

Respectfully,

Christos Vardacostas