



ABORIGINAL HOUSING SOCIETY OF PRINCE GEORGE

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

Society Report

On behalf of the Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George, we wish to acknowledge and thank the Lheidli T'enneh Nation for allowing us to live and work on this amazing land. We thank our tenants – the residents that we support and that support us, themselves and the community - living, working and celebrating each day. We thank BC Housing and the Aboriginal Management Housing Association for supporting housing development and operations. We wish to thank our staff for their ongoing dedication and resiliency. We also wish to acknowledge community partners and funders: the Prince George Nechako Employment & Training Association (PGNAETA), United Way, Province of BC, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and other federal agencies, the City of Prince George, Northern Development Initiative Trust, and the First Peoples' Cultural Council for their support.

2017-2018 was another exciting transitional year for the Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George (AHSPG). It took about 10 months to construct Ts'oo Yoh, an Elders and Seniors house of 27 apartments at 1811 Spruce Street which opened in July 2018. With PGNAETA's support, Aboriginal clients seeking construction and trades employment were referred to and involved in the construction of Ts'oo Yoh. The suites are adaptable and accessible, for moderate-income levels. Aging in place is the purpose. Current and future work includes leveraging appropriate supports for these tenants.

The overall vision of the Society has not changed, as we dare to dream. We continue to focus on the pathway to ensure success – measured through successfully housing people affordably, working towards developing new housing and remaining fiscally responsible. The current vision and plan includes what has been described as an urban village. The vision for the site is that it is universal in principle, welcoming local Lheidli T'enneh, all regional and other First Nations members, Métis, other Aboriginal peoples and cultures, making urban Prince George home now and in the future. We will thoughtfully move forward with affordable housing development at 1919 17th Avenue. This land is to potentially include a community of up to 200 residences on 6.8 acres, with daycare, health and wellness centre, and residences that serve all ages and family sizes. The site is to include gathering, spiritual, ceremonial and natural outdoor spaces.

In 2017, we moved our offices to this location, a building that represents our future, as a new centre for the community and neighbourhood, including a gathering event hall, kitchen, and classroom available for use at this time. We will continue to learn how to best use the building and land and organically develop the plan to continue a site plan that provides as much affordable housing, services and spaces as possible.

Governance

Our service focus continues to be in and around Prince George on Lheidli T'enneh traditional territory. The Society's strategy calls for a shift in housing within a narrow geographical area. A regional property disposition strategy continues, shifting and increasing Society housing assets in the urban centre and specifically 1919 17th Avenue.

This was a year for governance, where the Board of Directors established a Governance Sub-Committee to establish a new governance manual for the organization. This manual is pending review and



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implementation, expected in early 2018-2019. Transparency and accountability are critical to AHSPG's success moving forward. The Board will continue to increase its governance mandate through regular Board and Sub-Committee participation.

1919 17th Avenue

Phase 1 includes fifty new townhouses, which have been proposed for construction on our main office site. Much of this planning began in November 2017 when we held a community engagement session to gather input, clarifying what type of development and services are needed. This input has provided direction for the site's first phase and a master site plan. As these plans are further developed, more community and member input will be critical to shaping this vision and elements of development.

Research & Partnerships

A Need and Demand Study was completed by M'akola Development Services, identifying the increasing Aboriginal population and need for housing now and into the future. Knowing that the Aboriginal population is expected to double in the next 25 years is critical information in understanding our role, to continue to be part of the solution to housing affordability. We also continued our relationship with UNBC, supporting research on the needs of youth in the community.

A community includes families, Elders and individuals that share common principles, background, family lineage, and gathering. There is also diversity in peoples' needs. We entered into an MOU with the College of New Caledonia to mutually support student housing. We continue to explore and learn the gaps in housing that can support a person going to school, and how we engage in committing residential units for this purpose. We look forward to additional partnerships with community service partners to shape the diversity of our households.

As an organization it is critical that we find ways to support Aboriginal training and employment. We look in the coming year to find ways to partner with training institutions in providing apprentice opportunities in existing housing and employment in new developments.

Organizational Capacity

Navigating the changes of developing new housing and also harnessing more support directly and through the community calls for a shifting organizational structure. In 2017-2018, two key shifts included establishing an Indigenous Support Program and re-establishing a dedicated Maintenance Manager position.

Programs to apprentice painters and subsidize wages led to a trial of two new general assistants to address maintenance and workload issues. A one year Project Coordinator position was replaced with a Cultural Coordinator hired for an Indigenous arts project, funded by the First Peoples' Cultural Council, which led to commissioning of artworks for 1811 Spruce Street and 1919 17th Avenue from seven local artists. Additionally, a new Executive Assistant position has been created to address workload.



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Properties and Households

We currently own and operate 170 residential units in Prince George, of which 102 receive subsidies, and another 45 units in the region. Some additional units are still being managed in agreement with M'akola Group of Societies. We serve over 500 household members. Areas of improvement include rent arrears collection, minimizing vacancy time between rentals, and providing access to more comprehensive household education, support resources and programming.

Programs

With a five year funding commitment from Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, AHSPG has started an Indigenous Support Program for its tenants, to address the most prevalent areas of need.

The Community Voice Mail program has more clients listening to weekly broadcasts to find out about training opportunities, then signing up for the training and accessing secure employment. This program continues to help people move off the street, out of shelters or off couches and into homes of their own. We have provided a connection to over 600 people so far, and this number continues to rise. The program has proven its worth, not in dollars but in sense. We will continue to work hard to provide this vital service to the City's most vulnerable citizens.

AHSPG has participated in Homeless Action Week events. Staff volunteered to serve at a holiday lunch at the Fire Pit Cultural Drop-In Centre. Many of our tenants showed up for Tenant Appreciation Day at 1919 17th Avenue for the first time on June 1st (2018). We shared soil, plants and lunch. On June 21st, we celebrated National Indigenous Day festivities at Lheidli T'enneh Memorial Park. We continue to support all causes relevant to our tenants and the Aboriginal community in general.

AHSPG continues to participate in partnership with the community's Aboriginal groups, the City, and various other tables at all levels to address housing and homelessness. All levels of collaboration, especially with the people we serve will help us accomplish our goals of establishing more affordable housing, fostering community and empowering Aboriginal families, Elders and individuals.

Respectfully,



Ruby Baptiste
President



Christos Vardacostas
Executive Director

