

A toolkit on

Innovative housing governance models for First Nations communities in BC

Prepared by: Ashli Akins, Sustainability Scholar, April 2022
Prepared for: Indigenous Home-Lands Initiative, Ecotrust Canada

This report was produced as part of the UBC Sustainability Scholars Program, a partnership between the University of British Columbia and various local governments and organisations in support of providing graduate students with opportunities to do applied research on projects that advance sustainability across the region.

This project was conducted under the mentorship of Ecotrust Canada's Indigenous Home-Lands staff. The opinions and recommendations in this report and any errors are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Ecotrust Canada or the University of British Columbia.

WHO IS ECOTRUST CANADA?

Ecotrust Canada is a non-governmental, not for profit organization that works with rural, remote, and Indigenous communities to build an economy that provides for a healthy and resilient natural environment. This includes sustainable and abundant energy, food, and housing; prosperous and meaningful livelihoods; vibrant cultures; and inclusive societies. One of *Ecotrust Canada's* five programs is the Indigenous Home-Lands Initiative, within which this toolkit sits.

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ecotrust Canada respectfully acknowledges the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), sə́lilw̓ətəʔl (Tseil-Waututh), and Coast Ts'msyen (Tsimshian) peoples on whose traditional territories our two offices are located.

Current partnering communities who work with Ecotrust Canada's Indigenous Home-Lands Initiative, and whose realities, challenges, and innovations have informed this toolkit, include:

Tsilhqot'in Nation (www.tsilhqotin.ca)

Huuayaht First Nations (www.huuayaht.org)

Yunesit'in First Nation (www.yunesitin.ca)

Nuxalk Nation (www.nuxalk.net)

CREDITS

This toolkit was created by Ashli Akins under the guidance of Anthony Persaud and Kia Dunn. Information in this toolkit includes research from literature reviews (primarily grey literature) and interviews with the following people and organizations, who generously contributed their ideas and case studies to this project:

Brandy Gallagher (O.U.R. Ecovillage)

Shelagh McCartney (Together Design Lab)

Shirley McLeod (Te Puni Kōkiri, Māori Housing)

Henrik Moller (Ecosystems Consultants, Aotearoa)

Katie Rabbit-Young Pine (Changing Horses Non-Profit Society)

Lyana Patrick (Faculty of Health Sciences, SFU)

Robin Phillips (JFK Law, Victoria, BC)

Crystal Sedore (Yale First Nation)

Tim Tailfeathers (Changing Horses Non-Profit Society)

CHANS Lab, Spring 2022 cohort (IRES, UBC)

This open-access toolkit is meant to serve First Nations across the Pacific Northwest as they navigate the creation and management of housing governance options for their communities. This includes an overview to better understand the housing system, a critical examination of why the current system does not work, and solutions for innovative community-centered housing governance models that are based in cultural wellbeing, economic security, and environmental sustainability.

TABLE OF CONTENTS (of full module)

Please note that the current public version only includes the Executive Summary. Once this project launches as a module of Ecotrust Canada's "Innovations in Indigenous Housing" toolkit in July 2022, this summary will be replaced with the full report, as well as links to other documents (including the FAQs and glossary) for open-access availability.

Overview

- Introduction

- What is "housing"?

Current Indigenous housing jurisdictions

- How does it operate?

- Who are the main players?

- Understanding the legislation

- Important reports

Lessons learned from around the world

- Overview (reflections from interviewees)

- Case Study 1: Changing Horses Non-Profit Society

- Case Study 2: Māori Housing

- Case Study 3: Nishnawbe Aski Nation

The future of Indigenous housing governance

- Housing governance models

- Holistic model of housing governance

- Sustainable supply chains

- Considerations when building a new housing model

Resources

- Annotated Bibliography

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Housing is not working for many First Nations across British Columbia because the system was set up to divide and dismantle rural First Nations communities, not to support them. Now, while much of the available funding comes from provincial and federal government agencies, some of it can only be used for certain types of physical housing structures and governance models that may not fit the needs of each community. This system also furthers the dependency cycle – that is, it locks communities into situations where they need to be reliant on (and at the whim of decisions by) the Canadian government, when in fact many communities' goals are to regain their autonomy and self-determination.

It is important to note that each community has specific needs and values, and not all housing models will work when adapted to each community context. That said, many community-based housing professionals agree that the following five principles are at the core of any successful Indigenous housing governance model:

- 1) **Community stewardship, involvement, and “buy-in”** of all processes and elements of the housing governance model
- 2) A **localized and circular supply chain**, (i.e., from forest to frame)
- 3) **Local resource capacity** to fulfill housing goals, both financially and in skillsets of community members
- 4) A plan that includes **long-term visions** of sustainable community development
- 5) Culturally, climatically and socially **relevant designs**

Many current Indigenous housing governance models see “housing” as simply the frame of a shelter, rather than a key part of a larger systemic approach to well-being and sustainable development. However, it is much more than this. In a sense, to have a “home” is to have access to both housing and homeland. For communities to be able to “return home”, housing needs to be at the core of holistic models of community wellness, resilience, and development. This includes understanding housing in relationship to health, education, economic development, culture, social cohesion, and the environment.