



BC FIRST NATIONS  
HOUSING &  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
COUNCIL

## **FNHIC-BC SUMMARY**

### **Phase One Community Engagement**

#### **FNHIC-BC Commitment to Engagement**

*HIC is not designing the new Housing & Infrastructure Authority the way we want it. We are listening to the people. They are the ones who are going to decide what the Authority will be like.*

**Chief Dan George, Burns Lake First Nation, Chair of FNHIC-BC**

#### **Background**

Under the current government-controlled on-reserve housing regime First Nations citizens have been alienated from their housing and infrastructure. First Nations communities have had limited opportunities to choose what sort of housing they need and desire. The transition, which is currently underway, from government control to a new First Nations housing and infrastructure system does not just mean a change in who manages and delivers the services, but it means bringing about a change in the housing paradigm—First Nations people will soon own their housing and their housing decisions.

*Note: In this report the word housing is used to mean the whole housing services delivery system, which includes housing-related infrastructure, construction, management, training, finance, tenant relations and other associated aspects of acquiring housing and being housed*



The transition cannot take place until First Nations in BC design their own housing and infrastructure delivery system. This collaborative act started in the Spring and Summer of 2018 when FNHIC conducted a thorough engagement process (Phase 1) to establish what First Nations need, desire and imagine in terms of housing and infrastructure. The engagement sessions focused on sharing information about the federal government's plans to transfer housing & infrastructure authority to First Nations organizations and the role of FNHIC in the process. Secondly, and most importantly, Phase 1 collected the ideas, concerns and recommendations from First Nations people and communities on current housing and infrastructure programs and on what they envision for a better future.

Phase 1 concluded in October with a Design Charrette where 40 First Nations Housing & Infrastructure professionals met for two days to analyze the engagement feedback and develop governance models for a new Authority based on the findings.

## **Approach**

Phase 1 cast a wide net—it sought to establish a baseline, grounded in First Nations knowledge, to establish where people are currently in regard to housing and infrastructure services. FNHIC asked about what is working/what isn't? What sort of changes to delivery could be made immediately/gradually/in the future? And; What governance system should be put in place that would better serve the needs and desires of people living on reserves and all First Nations citizens? Phase 1 also fielded numerous questions about the government's intentions and what role FNHIC will play in the transfer. FNHIC members answered these questions to the best of their ability but many were difficult given that BC is the first region taking on the task of transfer and the federal government has yet to determine many of the aspects of the process.



The First Nations community engagement process is part of the FNHIC's larger engagement process, which includes communicating with organizations that are involved with all aspects of housing First Nations people. These organizations include urban housing providers and homelessness organizations, provincial housing providers, financial organizations, education and training centres and others.

## Phase 1- Research Methodology

### Key Goals

1. Information sharing and knowledge gathering:
  - a. To facilitate a province-wide First Nations discussion that will inform communities about planned government changes to housing and infrastructure delivery;
  - b. To collect feedback from First Nations leadership, housing and infrastructure professionals and First Nations knowledge keepers that will ensure that all decisions made about the design of the new Authority are First Nations knowledge-based; and
  - c. To ensure First Nations leadership is fully informed and supportive.
2. Knowledge interpretation and design development:
  - a. Enlist the help of a large group of BC housing professionals to read and interpret data from the engagement sessions; and
  - b. Conduct a design charrette to develop 3 possible governance models for a new housing delivery system.

### Research Principles

FNHIC research principles include:

1. Transparency; to post the research activities and outcomes on the website;
2. Multiplicity; to hear from as many First Nations as possible without government interference;



3. Diversity; to hear from as many interested parties as possible including housing and infrastructure professionals, administrators, leadership;
4. Respect: difference of opinion;
5. Accept: all feedback without judgement;
6. Collaboration; interpretation of the feedback will be a collective responsibility; and
7. Consensus; design options will be determined by consensus.

## Researchers

Information sharing and knowledge gathering:

- FNHIC members conducted the engagement sessions. Researchers went out in teams of two. The researchers were remunerated for their time

Knowledge interpretation and design development:

- During the FNHIC forum and engagement sessions participants were asked to submit their names on a list if they wanted to take part in analysis and design work; and
- Professionals selected from that list, along with several government representatives took part in the interpretation and design development.

## Scope

FNHIC divided the province into geographical regions. Researchers focused on their own region. The Executive Director and FNHIC Chief members were tasked with maintaining communications with the AFN, BCUIIC, First Nations Summit and the Leadership Council.

## Recruitment

FNHIC Executive Assistant organized engagement sessions in central communities and contacted neighbouring communities. Invitations targeted First Nations housing managers, infrastructure and operations managers, senior administrators and leadership. The engagement sessions did not include any



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government personal.

## **Engagement Sessions**

In a typical session the researchers presented a Power Point slide show that explained the federal government's transfer of housing and infrastructure services, the formation of the FNHIC, and its mandate and its work. The PP gave the participants an opportunity to question the process. In the second half of the engagement session the FNHIC facilitated a survey with several targeted questions to draw feedback on specific topics such as governance, readiness and service delivery.

First Nations were given the option to arrange a telephone session if they couldn't attend the F2F meeting. Northern First Nations were contacted individually and engaged in individual sessions.

## **Survey**

The survey acted as a guide to the discussions and feedback sessions. At first each participant wrote out their own answers to the survey, but soon it was proven that group discussions about each question brought much fuller answers.

Facilitators then took notes in the group sessions and filled in the surveys based on group feedback. Some groups addressed only the questions that were of most interest to them. The responses were then inputted into a master list of questions and answers.

## **Interpretation**

During the analysis phase FNHIC lead researchers took the raw data and prioritized it into meaningful categories that were useful to inform the design work.



The material was then used to create all aspects of organizational design—operational, governance, culture, social, intergovernmental—at the Design Charette.

The organizational designs were brought back to communities for their feedback in Phase 2 beginning in the Spring of 2019.

### **Geographical Gaps**

All geographical areas are represented—some more thoroughly than others.

### **Research Gaps**

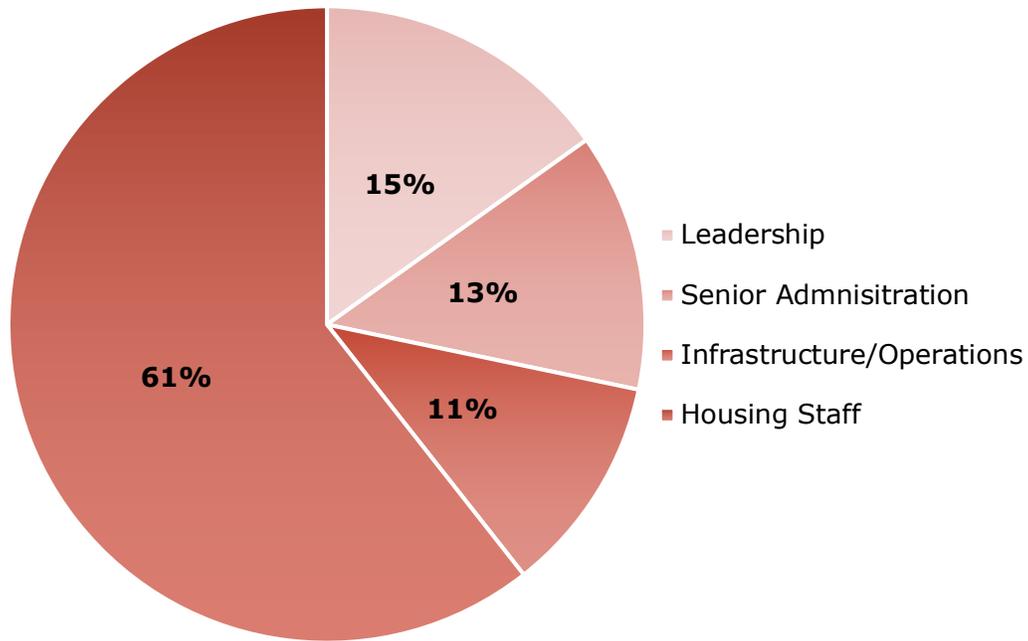
FNHIC has a chart of which FNs attended and which did not in order to ensure the next Phases of the Engagement Strategy include every FN. However, with the turnover of staff and leadership it became clear very early in the process that FNs will need to be visited several times each for the messaging and the feedback to reach deeply into the FNs population and leadership.

### **Synopsis of Phase 1 Engagement**

- FNHIC held 22 engagement sessions, with 81 First Nations, accounting for 40% of BC First Nations.
- Three of the First Nations were Treaty Nations; and
- A total 154 people participated: 15% leadership; 13% senior administration; 11% infrastructure /operations; 60% housing staff



## Participation Representation



## Engagement Session Locations

1. Prince Rupert
2. Hazelton
3. Terrace
4. Ft. St. John
5. Williams Lake
6. Cranbrook
7. Tsawwassen
8. Kelowna
9. Lillooet
10. Chilliwack
11. Songhees



12. Esquimalt
13. Tsartlip
14. Nanaimo
15. Port Hardy
16. Campbell River
17. Port Alberni
18. Merritt
19. Vernon
20. Ladysmith
21. Vancouver
22. Iskut
23. Daylu/Lower Post
24. Fort Nelson
25. Tsay Key Dene
26. Taku

## **Engagement Findings**

### **Level of support**

- There is widespread support for the transition from government to FNs control with many seeing the transition as an exciting opportunity;
- Some see the transition as a daunting but necessary challenge; and
- Many FNs want to get involved.

### **The bureaucracy**

- The current system does not garner high scores...clearly it does not work well; and
- Improving housing outcomes with reduced housing bureaucracy are important goals.

### **Funding/Financing**

- Make sure maximum dollars reach communities for construction and renovations while ensuring general support services such as training are maintained;
- Keep housing dollars in the community—use housing and infrastructure to build economies is another important goal;



- Ensure that adequate funding will be available to cover both the transition process and the institution when it is developed;
- Do not transfer without sufficient resources (financial and human). Do not set FNs up for failure; and
- Participants want access to new financing instruments.

### **Programs**

- Participants do not want to see devolution of existing programs or merely housing reform;
- There is a need for new appropriate programs developed and delivered through new mechanisms;
- Programs must be designed around FNs needs and desires;
- Programs must be evaluated based on FNs criteria, not government; and
- Participants want to be part of the transition—they want their voices heard and their ideas used.

### **Governance/service delivery**

- It's time to decolonize FNs housing & infrastructure;
- Governance must have individuals FNs communities at the core;
- Participants want each FN to decide what is best—what services they want for their communities;
- Regional flexibility is important although there are many variations on how participants see the new institution dealing with regional differences;
- Local autonomy is important but so is retention of high level services that are shared;
- The new authority must be accountable to FNs first;
- Want improve service delivery especially in remote communities;
- Want delivery to be client centered;
- Want some sort of circuit rider service available for housing as well as infrastructure;
- Want the authority to be delivered and run by housing experts...leadership to be in an oversight role; and
- Do not want chiefs to run the organization.

### **Legacy**

- Participants speak about how to get recognition for the legacy of the past, how to hold government accountable for the destructive force housing has



been in FNs communities, how to get enough funding to make the necessary changes in the future.

### **What we learned**

Communicate, communicate, communicate...make sure everyone knows everything we are doing and that everyone has an opportunity to take part

Don't forget all the social aspects of housing...it's not a stand-alone topic...it's not just about building, water, services, it's about community, education, health, and family services

Move quickly...the first out of the post will get the best deal from government. Get it done while the government is still interested.

Move more slowly...many First Nations aren't ready. They need to build capacity first.