

Reaching Home:

Cowichan Homelessness Plan

2021 – 2024

Note:

All communities receiving funding from Designated Communities stream are required to use this template in order to complete the community plan under Reaching Home. In completing this template, communities are encouraged to develop comprehensive community plans that reflect the contributions of all funding partners, including other orders of governments, not-for-profit organizations, and the for-profit sector.

Please note that in communities that receive funding from both the Designated Communities and Indigenous Homelessness streams, cross-stream collaboration is expected to promote the adoption of a community-wide planning process and support the achievement of community-level outcomes reflecting the needs of the whole community. To support communities in completing their community plans, a Reference Guide has been developed. It is recommended that this be reviewed prior to completing your community's homelessness plan to ensure understanding of the requirements and completeness.

The Community Plan for Reaching Home must be approved by the Community Advisory Board (CAB) of the Designated Community before it is submitted to Service Canada. If your community is developing a joint plan with the Indigenous Community Entity, both Community Advisory Boards must approve the community plan.

In addition to the core requirements provided in this template, communities may also wish to include other components that provide insight into the community's housing and homelessness context or contribute to community-level homelessness challenges, such as a map of the community's current homelessness services and/or gaps in homelessness services or infrastructure (e.g. housing stock). Communities have full flexibility in drafting these sections.

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1. Community Engagement

*Please identify the steps taken to engage your community stakeholders in developing this plan.*¹

Engagement Summary – Cowichan Homelessness Plan

In 2017, the United Way of Central and Northern Vancouver Island (UWCNVI) as Community Entity (CE) on behalf of the Tze Tza Watul, Duncan Indigenous Community Advisory Board (CAB) engaged Kaleidoscope Consulting (specifically, [Dr. Eric Macnaughton](#) and [Cameron Keller](#)) to prepare a community-based plan to address and prevent homelessness in the Cowichan Valley.

Kaleidoscope consulted key informants (including many current CAB members), scanned available resources, reviewed the literature, and analyzed the current response in relation to best practices, in light of opportunities for moving forward. Key stakeholders engaged included First Nations, Indigenous organizations, local municipalities and regional district, housing and social services agencies, education, health, faith-based organizations and law enforcement officials.

Released in April 2018, the final report entitled, “*nuts'a'maat shqwaluwun/Working with One Heart & Mind: a plan to address and prevent homelessness in the Cowichan Valley Regional District,*” underscored the need to:

1. Respond to chronic/episodic homelessness;
2. Prevent or rapidly respond to emerging homelessness in vulnerable groups, (particularly youth, women-led single-parent families, and Indigenous peoples); and
3. Expand the supply of housing more broadly across the housing continuum by 750 (focusing first on creating 385 “core need” units, and second on 365 “missing middle” units).

The plan called for an approach to align leadership and create a community-based structure to implement and oversee the Cowichan Valley Regional District’s (CVRD) response to homelessness (including its prevention) on an ongoing basis. This proposed structure would be responsible for public education/advocacy, resource development, as well as implementing and overseeing a coordinated system of care based on [Housing First](#) principles, the approach utilized by the Reaching Home program to tackle homelessness. This follows the framework recommended by the [Canadian Observatory on Homelessness](#), which calls for community plans to address chronic/episodic homelessness, prevention, affordable housing, all within the context of a systems approach to planning and coordinating homelessness response and prevention.

This report formed the basis of Cowichan Valley’s successful application in Fall 2019 to Reaching Home for Designated Communities funding in Fall 2019. In April 2020, the new funding came into effect with the United Way Central and Northern Vancouver Island as Community Entity. The previous Community Advisory Board (CAB) that oversaw the Indigenous Homelessness funding for the City of Duncan has now transitioned into an expanded CAB that includes oversight of both the Duncan Indigenous and Cowichan Designated funding streams. Current CAB members include representatives from:

¹ Engagement with local Indigenous organizations, and the Indigenous Community Entity and Community Advisory Board (if applicable) is expected in the development of this community plan.

United Way CNVI (CE – Interim Chair)
Cowichan Tribes (the largest First Nation by registered members in BC);
Hiiye'yu Lelum Society/House of Friendship – Duncan (the largest social agency supporting urban Indigenous peoples in the region)
Cowichan Housing Association

Service Canada (Non-Voting)
Cowichan Women Against Violence
Vancouver Island Community Corrections
Salvation Army – Cowichan Valley
Ladysmith Resource Centre Association
BC Housing
Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

In early 2021, the Cowichan CAB will be recruiting new CAB members representing the broader Cowichan region, including other First Nations and sectors not already represented on the CAB.

The CAB has also reviewed and approved more than \$920,000 in Reaching Home COVID funding via the Canadian Emergency Response Fund for both Duncan Indigenous and Cowichan Designated Communities funding streams.

Engagement Summary – RH Community Plan 2021-24

COVID-19 made community engagement for the RH Community Plan a challenge. Fortunately, the United Way, as the CE, was able to build on the work and outcomes of the *Working with One Heart & Mind* plan, and its existing network of partners and CAB members to complete this inaugural plan. It should be noted that the United Way has for many years invested in grants funded by donors to many agencies in Cowichan, and through COVID-19, it has also invested the federal Emergency Community Support Funds (ECSF) into the community. This has given the CE a broader understanding of the strength and challenges of the non-profit sector that also helps inform the CAB about the context for investing Reaching Home funds.

In November and December 2020, the CE engaged members of the CAB individually via videoconferencing to provide their direct input into the RH Community Plan including the key elements needed for a successful Coordinated Access system. Key findings from these interviews included:

- Addressing both overlap and gaps in services to ensure no one person or demographic falls through the cracks.
- Ensuring a stronger focus on serving the needs of women, single parents with children, and youth experiencing homelessness.
- Recognizing the intersecting themes of those living without permanent shelter who are leaving violence and/or experiencing child removal due to housing insecurity, substance use, mental health challenges, and community or systemic barriers.
- Identifying a new location for a night shelter for women fleeing violence, and additional emergency shelter for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.
- Working with private landlords to establish more affordable transitional housing units integrated in the community where multiple families could live together, rather than in larger shelters.
- Promoting stronger internal communications among local governments and agencies especially on affordable housing projects.
- Providing more life skills support including how to be a good tenant, personal budgeting, and housing maintenance.
- Safeguarding the privacy and security of vulnerable persons in any integrated coordinated access system by creating an integrated case assessment team to deal with

issues, such as high-risk domestic violence situations, before transitional / supportive housing placements are made, as ensuring safety of clients is paramount.

- Offering training, coaching, counselling, cultural awareness, and trauma-informed education to front-line staff and volunteers who work with persons experiencing homelessness.
- Hiring a staff person responsible for collecting data from agencies to input into a CA system that will allow the CAB and partners to capture the real situation of homelessness and to make informed funding decisions.
- Prioritizing providing more support and attention to communities throughout the Cowichan Valley region, including First Nations and communities outside urban areas.

In December 2020, two Design Labs were held virtually co-facilitated by the CE and HelpSeeker, and involved 30 participants representing the following organizations:

United Way CNVI (CE)	Service Canada
Cowichan Tribes	BC Housing
Hiiye'yu Lelum Society (House of Friendship – Duncan)	BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
Cowichan Women Against Violence	BC Ministry of Child and Family Development
Cowichan Housing Association	Island Health
Clements Centre	Vancouver Island Community Corrections
Our Cowichan Health Network	Canadian Mental Health Association
Ladysmith Resource Centre Association	

Key findings of these Design Labs included:

- The most prominent values identified by community participants were that any plan needed to be:
 - **Culturally Appropriate and Culturally Safe**
 - **Client-Centred and Person-Centred**
 - **Empowering**
 - **Collaborative**
 - **Clearly Communicated**
- Participants emphasized the need for a **trauma-informed, person-centred system** with wrap-around supports available focusing on people and “*where they are at*”, with a holistic lens including concrete actions to address inequities in race, gender, etc. and prevent discrimination.
- **Truth and Reconciliation** work around Indigenous homelessness, incorporating a culture-first approach that emphasized ceremony and language is seen as vital by community members. Particular concerns to address were the child welfare system and its handling of child apprehension with Indigenous mothers, as well as Indigenous youth experiencing homelessness and the need for trauma-informed care.
- **The desire for a Coordinated Access system was clear**, as community leaders wanted to see integrated case management systems that supported warm transfers between services; a ‘no wrong door’ approach that helps clients wherever they enter the system; triage and assessment systems that are comprehensive for service providers but simple and not overwhelming for clients; and systems navigators that exist to help support people to move through barriers
- **Mental health and substance abuse / addictions support** in the region was identified as a significant need. It was noted that the closest services are in Nanaimo or Victoria which creates a transportation barrier. Safe supply, detox beds, and peer support were all

seen as needed, and another gap was people needing somewhere to go after detox while waiting for inpatient care.

- Housing was an issue that came up repeatedly – including the need for more affordable housing along the entire **housing continuum**, housing for populations with specific needs (ie. children, seniors, people fleeing violence), as well as **repairs to rental stock** to deal with unsafe or inadequate housing.
- A **Housing First program** was desired that included co-located and scattered sites, with supportive housing that had 24/7 wrap-around supports and a simplified application process – though it was acknowledged that this may not be possible without more housing stock. This makes Coordinated Access difficult and creates barriers like being able to easily contact clients if they do not have stable shelter. Life skills programming was also seen as important for maintaining housing.
- For youths, ageing out of care and the foster system without adequate transfer to the adult system, and ongoing supports, was seen as an issue, and the need to either **connect youths with safe adults and mentors for ongoing support**, or reconnect them with their families when possible, was mentioned.
- Effective communication strategies – both between service providers and with the public – were seen as vital both to **accurately disseminate information**, and to prevent stigma and some of the community backlash that has occurred in the region towards people experiencing homelessness. This is particularly important since the region is large and includes an urban-rural mix.
- Finally, the need to work with other service providers such as **BC Housing and Island Health** closely and advocate to the provincial government was also mentioned, since the Reaching Home funds received, while important, are relatively small compared to the financial power of those institutions.

A summary report of these sessions is appended.

In early 2021, further engagement will take place with other community partners including First Nations, the Cowichan Valley Regional District, City of Duncan, Municipality of North Cowichan, Town of Cowichan Lake, Town of Ladysmith, business, education and other social organizations to inform this Community Plan.

Engagement Summary – Other Action on Homelessness in Cowichan Valley

- The Cowichan Coalition on Homelessness and, more recently, the COVID-19 Emergency Task Force formed to address the urgent needs of people experiencing homelessness in the region, co-chaired by the Mayor of the City of Duncan and the Executive Director of the Cowichan Housing Association.
- The Coalition adopted the "*Close to Home: A Housing First Plan for Youth in the Cowichan region*" in May 2018.
- The Cowichan Valley Regional District endorsed the "*Cowichan Attainable Housing Strategy*" in April 2019, a companion document to the two homelessness plans that addresses the need for affordable and attainable housing in the region.
- The City of Duncan, the Municipality of North Cowichan and Cowichan Tribes formed a group to engage businesses, the RCMP and private security providers on safety and bylaw issues related to individuals experiencing homelessness along the Trans-Canada Highway corridor.

- A Community Advisory Table (CAT) on mental health and addictions was established led by Our Cowichan Health Network that includes supporting people experiencing homelessness.
- BC Housing/United Way CNVI completed a Point-in-Time Count in March 2020.
- As a result of COVID-19 and planning with the COVID-19 Emergency Task Force, the Cowichan Housing Association set up temporary housing sites in the downtown Duncan area for individuals experiencing homelessness, and the Ladysmith Resource Centre Association offered shelter near its facility in the Town of Ladysmith.
- Cowichan Tribes has opened an emergency shelter for up to 10 youth ages 17 and under, providing individual rooms, food and connection to community services.
- The Province of BC through BC Housing has partnered with the Municipality of North Cowichan and the City of Duncan to build 100 units of supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness at two sites (2983 Drinkwater Rd. in North Cowichan, and 260 White Road in Duncan), and for the purchase and renovation of a house to support primarily Indigenous women who are pregnant and newly parenting, including women who are struggling with substance use, at a total cost of \$27.6 million.
- BC Housing is also partnering with Cowichan Women Against Violence to operate approximately 33 second-state housing units for women and women with children leaving violence.
- The Cowichan Valley Regional District initiated a process to revise and update its Official Community Plan (OCP) and is conducting, with the Cowichan Housing Association, an Affordable Housing Needs Assessment (in progress).
- The Municipality of North Cowichan recently approved a new staff position focused on social and environmental planning starting in 2021-22.
- The City of Duncan recently approved a new management position starting in 2021-22 that will participate in homelessness initiatives.
- The Town of Lake Cowichan recently established a working group focused on homelessness and poverty reduction.
- The Ladysmith Resource Centre Association (LRCA) converted its emergency shelter to a cold weather shelter for homeless individuals.

These strategies and actions, agreed to by the community to address housing and homelessness issues in the Cowichan Valley region, form important foundations for the Cowichan CAB to move forward with implementing this Reaching Home Community Plan and a Coordinated Access system.

2. Investment Plan

In the table below, please outline your planned allocation of Reaching Home funding from 2020-24 by investment area. Please note that it is acceptable that your community's funding priorities change over time. This investment plan is to demonstrate that your community has a vision moving forward for the allocation of Reaching Home funding. An example has been included in the Community Plan Reference Guide.

Reaching Home Cowichan Designated Community Annual Allocations

2020-2021: \$291,450
 2021-2022: \$463,953
 2022-2023: \$463,953
 2023-2024: \$463,953

Cowichan Designated Community Funding without administration costs to illustrate distribution for project allocations to be reviewed by CAB following Call for Proposals.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2022-24
Housing Services	12%	16%	16%	16%
Prevention and shelter diversion	15%	34%	34%	34%
Client Support Services	44%	34%	34%	34%
Capital Investments	-	-	-	-
Coordination of Resources and Data Collection	29%	16%	16%	16%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

Reaching Home Duncan Indigenous Annual Allocations

2020-2021: \$179,508

2021-2022: \$179,508

Duncan Indigenous Stream Funding without administration costs.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2022-24
Housing Services	12%	12%	-	
Prevention and shelter diversion	15%	34%	-	-
Client Support Services	73%	54%	-	-
Capital Investments	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	100%	100%	-	-

Note: The allocation of RH funds and the directives provided in the RH Plan are provisional. The intent is for the Cowichan CAB to review these in more depth and to submit a revised RH Plan later in 2021, particularly as the post-COVID needs and realities become more apparent.

3. Cost-Matching Requirement

In the table below, please outline all funding for homelessness initiatives your community plans to receive from external partners from 2021 to 2024. Please do not report Community Capacity and Innovation funding in the table. An example has been included in the Community Plan Reference Guide.

Please refer to the table below for an annual breakdown of funding expected from other sources in order to cost-match Reaching Home Designated Communities stream funding.

Through the Designated Community funding stream, the Cowichan Valley community received \$291,450 in 2020-21, and \$1,391,859 (\$491,953 annually) from 2021-22 through to 2023-24 from Reaching Home. We are on track to match this funding with an estimated contribution of \$17,400,000 in external funding during this time period as detailed below:

Projected Funding towards Homelessness Initiatives				
Funder	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2021-24
<i>Provincial:</i> BC Housing	\$5,600,000	\$5,600,000	\$5,600,000	\$16,800,000
<i>Municipal/Regional:</i> Cowichan Housing Association	\$190,000	\$190,000	\$190,000	\$570,000
<i>Philanthropy:</i> United Way	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$30,000
TOTAL	\$5,800,000	\$5,800,000	\$5,800,000	\$17,400,000

4. Coordinated Access

Please discuss the steps you will take to implement a coordinated access system in your community. If your community has a coordinated access system in place, please describe how it presently functions.

Geographic Area: Cowichan Valley

The Tze Tza Watul, Cowichan Community Advisory Board (CAB) is taking the following steps to implement a Coordinated Access system for the Cowichan Valley area, which is expected to be implemented by March 2023.

The Cowichan CAB has engaged HelpSeeker to assist with community consultation, engagement and education on CA, and to provide access and training to the HelpSeeker software for systems mapping and planning.

The CE is also using the experience it has gained working with HelpSeeker, the Nanaimo CAB, and the Health and Housing Task Force of the City of Nanaimo to inform the CA approach in Cowichan. The research and plan developed by HelpSeeker’s CEO, Dr. Alina Turner, while Nanaimo focused, is helpful background information.

Throughout the consultation process for this RH Community Plan, Cowichan CAB members expressed a strong interest and desire for an integrated CA system to support reducing and preventing homelessness. While a few agencies have access to the HIFIS system managed by BC Housing, by virtue of their direct involvement in housing individuals experiencing homelessness, most do not. Most organizations manage their data / case management systems independently from one another with some using custom, web-based platforms, or maintaining paper records.

CAB members and other stakeholders expressed a desire to work collectively on a process and data sharing agreements that will allow a more seamless flow of information, including more accurate data on demographics, that will support individuals to get the housing and wrap-around supports they need to transition out of homelessness, while also protecting the privacy, safety and security of vulnerable persons.

The CE, along with other CEs for the “BC 13”, have a meeting planned in January 2021 to discuss the national data survey and to look at the particular challenges around HIFIS and data collection/use in BC. The CE will continue to co-chair the BC 13 and work with the Trilateral Working Group to develop solutions.

In 2021, the Cowichan CAB will also create a sub-committee to focus on implementing a Coordinated Access system. It will meet monthly to bring recommendations to the CAB on proposed policies and procedures related to funding, governance structure, and ongoing operations and management of the system. This may include identifying a lead organization to manage implementation and operationalization of the Coordinated Access system. It may also conduct research on Coordinated Access (CA) including learning more from Nanaimo, Victoria and other BC communities' journey to CA.

5. Community-Wide Outcomes

If you would like your community to measure progress on additional outcomes beyond the [federally mandated outcomes](#), please identify those outcomes. Please provide your proposed indicators, targets, and methodology for each of the additional identified outcomes.

We will not be reporting on additional outcomes at this time.

6. Official Language Minority Communities

The Government of Canada has a responsibility under the Official Languages Act to ensure that programs and services meet the needs of [Official Language Minority Communities \(OLMCs\)](#). Please describe the steps that you will take to ensure that the services funded under the Reaching Home take the needs of the [OLMCs](#) into consideration where applicable.

According to the 2016 Census, the Cowichan Valley reported 1.1% of the population as using French as their first language. The CE will provide services and/or products in both official languages as requested or required by the francophone community members they serve. The CE sub-agreements contain the official language clause.

Should services be required/requested the CE/sub-project will work with francophone community members directly to meet their needs, depending on the request. If a sub-project is not able to meet the request, the CE will be responsible for providing services. If neither the CE nor the sub-project can meet the request directly, the CE will contract L'Association des Francophones de Nanaimo to provide the materials or service required by francophone community members in the Cowichan Valley.

Indigenous | Designated Homelessness – Community Advisory Board

Note: You may list more than one name for each sector. ESDC will not sell, distribute, trade or transfer your information to other government departments, businesses, institutions, organizations or individuals outside ESDC for any other purposes, unless required by law.

Sector	Community Advisory Board Members
Service Canada (Ex-Officio Member)	Grace Kerr, Senior Program Development Officer
Provincial/Territorial government	Brenda Lee, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction Heidi Hartman, BC Housing
Local/Municipal government	To be identified.
Indigenous Peoples and organizations	Dana Thorne, Cowichan Tribes Debbie Williams, Hiiye'yu Lelum Society
Veterans Affairs Canada or veterans serving organizations	To be identified.
Organizations serving women/families fleeing violence	Pascale Dupont, Cowichan Women Against Violence
Youth and/or youth serving organizations (including Child Welfare Agencies)	Dana Thorne, Cowichan Tribes Vicky Stickwood-Hislop, Ladysmith Resource Centre Association
Organizations serving seniors	Dave Maandag, Salvation Army
Newcomer serving organizations	To be identified.
Health organizations, including hospitals and other public institutions, and organizations focused on mental health and addictions	To be identified.
Individuals with lived experience of homelessness	To be identified.
Organizations serving individuals experiencing, or at risk of experiencing homelessness	Carolyn Sampson, Vancouver Island Community Corrections John Horn, Cowichan Housing Association Dana Thorne, Cowichan Tribes Debbie Williams, Hiiye'yu Lelum Society Vicky Stickwood-Hislop, Ladysmith Resource Centre Association Dave Maandag, Salvation Army Pascale Dupont, Cowichan Women Against Violence
Private Sector	To be identified.
Landlord Associations and/or the housing sector	Heidi Hartman, BC Housing John Horn, Cowichan Housing Association

Community Advisory Board Chairs or Co-Chairs (if applicable):

I affirm that the above members of the Community Advisory Board have reviewed the attached Community Plan, and that a majority of Community Advisory Board members approve of its content.

Name

Signature

Date (YYYY-MM-DD)