



Everyone Deserves a Home

Session 3 Workshop:

Building a Coordinating Structure for the Cowichan Valley

Summary Report

June 15, 2017



Acknowledgements

Beginning in October 2016, six key organizations have been coming together in response to the issues of homelessness and lack of affordable housing to build collaborative efforts.

We are grateful for the initial mobilizing work of Cowichan Board Meets Board that brings board directors, executive directors and community leaders together to learn about and to encourage collaboration in supporting the well-being of people in a thriving community. In November 2016, working with Social Planning Cowichan and other community partners, Board Meets Board hosted Al Etmanski and Vicki Cammack to lead sessions focusing on how we respond to community challenges, particularly homelessness.

That dialogue sparked our series of forums beginning March 2017 that have galvanized community efforts toward a common goal to ensure that everyone in the Cowichan Region has a safe and affordable home.

Many thanks and much appreciation to our presenters!
From Victoria, Don Elliott, Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness and
John Reilly, Capital Regional District
From Nanaimo, John Horn, City of Nanaimo and Signy Madden, United Way

This report was made possible through the combined efforts of all of these organizations.

Cowichan Housing Association

Social Planning Cowichan

Our Cowichan Communities Health Network

Cowichan Division of Family Practice

Cowichan Mental Health and Substance Use Collective Impact Team

(Members: Cowichan Housing Association, Island Health, Our Cowichan, First Nations Health Authority, Cowichan Tribes, MCFD, Canadian Mental Health Association, Cowichan Division of Family Practice, H'ulh-etun Health Society, Social Planning Cowichan)

United Way

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Executive Summary

Like many communities across BC, the Cowichan Region is facing issues of homelessness, mental health and substance use, poverty and crime. Among the many challenges experienced by people in the Cowichan Valley are incomes that can't support the high cost of market housing, declining rental stocks, difficult and complex systems, funding to meet needs for immediate support and long term needs for affordable housing.

Over the past six months, six key organizations have come together to build response and collaboration around these issues. The "HOME Team" includes Cowichan Housing Association, Social Planning Cowichan, Our Cowichan Health Network, Mental Health and Substance Use Collective Impact Team, Cowichan Division of Family Practice and the United Way. In addition, our community is now embarking upon a Community Plan to Address Homelessness led by the Duncan Community Advisory Board and United Way.

Together, we planned and held three community meetings that invited a range of community members, agencies, government departments to engage in dialogue about the issues, determine goals and priorities and develop a supporting structure to foster success.

Session #1: On March 6th community members came together at a community forum and identified the need to align our efforts to ensure we are moving forward together toward a common goal, ensure that we are communicating with each other and with the broader community, and to work together to build awareness, connect our efforts, and access funding and resources.

Session #2: Our second session focused on the question of how to come together to address homelessness and affordable housing needs in the Cowichan Region. Community members attending this session committed to a common goal: *"All Citizens in the Cowichan Region have a safe and affordable home"*. Moving forward, recommendations to build upon our efforts included: coordinating our efforts and enhancing our ability to collaborate and leverage through forming a broad-based, multi-sectoral Coalition, developing policies to encourage affordable housing development, building our resources, to be prepared to take advantage of opportunities, and educating and engaging everyone the community.

Session #3: Our third session held May 26th 2017 focussed on exploring Coalition models to understand the range of possible activities, functions and structures, and to identify key elements for launching a Cowichan model. We were joined by representatives from the City of Nanaimo, the Capital Regional District and the Victoria Coalition who gave their time to share their knowledge and experience. Thirty one people came together and agreed that the Cowichan Coalition to Address Homelessness and Affordable Housing is needed to connect, coordinate, collaborate, and communicate around issues of homelessness and affordable housing needs in the region, and to promote, support and facilitate the development of affordable housing. Our goal will be *"Housing for Every Citizen in 10 years"*.

Working under a coordinated structure supported by local governments and community organizations, a Cowichan Coalition would develop a strategic plan and work through four main



streams – Affordable Housing, Homelessness Response and Prevention, Communications, Education, Advocacy and Funding and Resource Procurement.

We are now at a place in the Cowichan Region where we recognize that in order to address the monumental task of homelessness and lack of affordable housing, we need to combine our efforts and work together in a new way. While community members are made up of people who like to plan and people who want to get things going, we recognize that it is our different strengths and interests that will ultimately bring about success.

The problems of homelessness and lack of affordable housing were many years in the making, and they will not be solved by tomorrow. But we know that other communities have tackled these issues and have made great strides, and like these communities, we can build a new future, one day at a time.

Our next steps will be to:

- **Report back to the community on the feedback received from the May 26th event**
- **Build on the feedback from the community to design a structure and process for the Cowichan Coalition and begin the work of forming it.**



Introduction

In March 2017, over a hundred people came together in two community forums to discuss the pressing needs around homelessness and housing in the Cowichan Valley. We identified the need to align our efforts to move forward toward a common goal, build awareness, connect our efforts, and access funding and resources.

The summary report on these two forums can be found on the Cowichan Housing Association website: http://www.cowichanhousing.com/uploads/4/9/6/0/49605357/everyone_deserves_a_home_community_report_april_26_2017_final.pdf

Stemming from the recommendations out of those forums, a workshop was organized to look at how other communities have organized and developed Coalitions, and to identify key elements for a model for the Cowichan Region.

Thirty-one people representing the following organizations participated:

Cowichan Valley Regional District
Cowichan Tribes
Municipality of North Cowichan
City of Duncan
Island Health
Vancouver Island Regional Library
Salvation Army
Cowichan Housing Association
Our Cowichan Communities Health Network
United Way
Duncan Community Advisory Board
Cowichan Valley Member of Legislative Assembly
Cowichan Malahat Langford Member of Parliament
Hiiye'yu Lelum Society
Social Planning Cowichan
Cowichan Board Meets Board
Cowichan Neighbourhood House Association
Cowichan Women Against Violence Society
Mental Health and Substance use Collective Impact Team



The work shop held on May 26th examined various Homelessness and Housing Coalition models in BC, and featured presentations from representatives of two communities that have organized around these issues: from Victoria, the Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness and the Capital Regional District, and the City of Nanaimo.

This report provides an overview of the feedback from participants attending the May 26th workshop who represented a range of community agencies and government departments who answered the question of what are the key elements that should be included in a Cowichan Coalition to Address Homeless and Housing?



Participant Feedback Summary: Key elements for a Cowichan Coalition to Address Homeless and Housing

i. Overarching Aims for a Cowichan Coalition

The Cowichan Coalition to Address Homelessness and Affordable Housing is needed to connect, coordinate, collaborate, and communicate around issues of homelessness and affordable housing needs in the region, and to promote, support and facilitate the development of affordable housing.

It is important for the Coalition to be regional in scope to recognize that the issues and needs cross municipal, electoral and health jurisdictions, and that these issues are not limited to urban areas.

The Cowichan Coalition should be guided by a Strategic Plan with clear and achievable goals that highlight “Housing for every citizen in ten years”. The Strategic Plan should include an evaluation and monitoring plan and be re-visited annually to allow for changing needs.

The Coalition needs to be sustainable. This means it needs to be funded, and it may benefit from being a registered society. It needs to be coordinated and administered to provide for effective and efficient process and outcomes.

Functions of the Coalition

The Cowichan Coalition should undertake four inter-related streams of work that would be encompassed in the Strategic Plan.

Affordable Housing

- Assesses, evaluates, and monitors the need for affordable housing
- Plans, sets targets
- Links with other streams to identify projects, research and facilitate funding, leverage resources, service provision, education and advocacy

Homelessness Response and Prevention

- Coordinates the continuum of services to facilitate a holistic response for supporting individuals to get and maintain housing
- Assists with navigation
- Includes Housing First

Communications/Education/Advocacy

- Ensures communications between the Coalition work streams
- Provides continuous communication with the larger community
- Provides, supports and facilitates community dialogue and education needed to promote support for affordable housing and reduce stigma



- Is guided by a Communications Strategy
- Provides a table for issues relating to systemic challenges

Funding and Resource Procurement

- Researches, networks and fosters development of a range of resources including funding from government, foundations, private sector, as well as in kind resources and lands
- Works to align funding

In addition to the main functions above, the Coalition should work to foster and support policy to promote the development of affordable housing. It should link with other sectors (e.g. food security). It should also link with and learn from other communities on Vancouver Island and beyond.

To ensure focussed and specific attention to Aboriginal and Youth homelessness and housing issues, the Coalition should have Aboriginal and Youth Task Forces.

The Coalition will need a strong and efficient Administrative structure to support the range of work.

ii. Representation

Representation on the Cowichan Coalition should be comprehensive and diverse. The Coalition should include people with lived experience, community agencies from pre-natal to end of life, faith-based organizations, the business, construction and economic development sectors, and municipal, regional, provincial, federal levels of government ensuring adequate representation from Cowichan Tribes and other First Nation bands.

The Coalition should have strong links with local governments. The Cowichan Valley Regional District and Municipalities should provide strong participation, involvement and leadership through establishing a Function.

To ensure that it is properly linked and informed, it should establish a Social Inclusion Advisory Committee/function.

iii. Structure and Process

The Cowichan Coalition should provide the community 'space' for dialogue and action on homelessness and affordable housing. As such it must be inclusive and provide a trusted and culturally safe environment.

The Cowichan Coalition should be guided by a Coalition Charter, Terms of Reference, Vision and Mission Statements. It needs to be transparent and accountable, and should have a process built in for self-assessment.



The Coalition requires a “backbone”. This could be made up of one or two organizations, or similar to the Victoria model, the Coalition becomes the backbone for the community through its establishment. The Cowichan Coalition would benefit greatly from the mentorship of the Victoria Coalition.

Next Steps

We are now at a place in the Cowichan Region where we recognize that in order to address the monumental task of homelessness and lack of affordable housing, we need to combine our efforts and work together in a new way.

The problems of homelessness and lack of affordable housing were many years in the making, and they will not be solved by tomorrow. But we know that other communities have tackled these issues and have made great strides, and like these communities, we can build a new future, one day at a time.

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