



## For Immediate Release

February 24, 2022

### JOINT STATEMENT: Provincial Budget Marginalizes Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Peoples

**Traditional and unceded territory of the Skwxwú7mesh Nation (West Vancouver BC) and Coast Salish Territory of the Lekwungen and WSÁNEĆ nations, (Victoria, BC)** - The Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA) and BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) support the integral steps towards reconciliation found within British Columbian Budget 2022. However, the budget falls short on priorities for both Indigenous women and urban, rural and northern Indigenous housing.

Approximately 85% of all Indigenous Peoples in B.C. live off-reserve in towns and cities but continue to be excluded from distinction-based funding. AHMA and BCAAFC call on the provincial government to expand their commitment to reconciliation by addressing the substandard living conditions and lack of social supports that Indigenous Peoples endure throughout B.C.

#### Indigenous Women

BCAAFC is particularly concerned that Indigenous women have been the [hardest hit financially](#) due to the pandemic. “We see a large shortage of women in the workforce, especially trained childcare workers. Many Indigenous women have fallen out of the workforce because of inaccessible childcare, transportation, and the cost of working being only marginally more financially viable than staying home to look after family. It is disappointing that these issues are not addressed in this budget.” said Leslie Varley, Executive Director of the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres.

Furthermore, [Indigenous women have experienced violence at a disproportionate level throughout the pandemic](#). It is of grave concern that no concrete measures within this budget ensure culturally safe and supportive services to address violence against Indigenous women.

#### Housing Priorities

“The budget lacks the specific means and measures needed to address the growing housing issues experienced by Indigenous people residing in rural, urban, and northern communities,” said Margaret Pfoh, Chief Executive Officer of AHMA. “AHMA released B.C.’s first ever [provincial Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy](#) and we’re calling on our government to support and implement our strategy to ensure all Indigenous peoples can access culturally safe and affordable housing.”

AHMA and BCAAFC call on the Government of British Columbia to work with Indigenous partners to better understand the lived reality of off-reserve populations in BC. Only through meaningful engagement with Indigenous organizations and service providers can the social, economic, and Indigenous rights of urban and rural Indigenous peoples in British Columbia be claimed and protected in relation to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Indigenous self-determination rights per the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

#### **Indigenous funding highlights from the 2022 BC Budget:**

- \$57 million to increase the number of urgent and primary care centres throughout B.C.
- \$45 million to support the operations of up to 15 First Nations primary care centres.
- \$11 million to support the province's Aboriginal Head Start program. (Providing culturally based childcare, early learning, and family bonding opportunities for Indigenous children).



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- \$12 million over the next three years to support the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act and a new Declaration Act Secretariat.
- \$44 million to create the Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship.
- \$4 million to expand the Indigenous Forest Bioeconomy Program to help participants commercialism and scale-up innovative forest-based products.
- \$185 million over the next three years to support First Nations and forestry workers adapting to old-growth logging deferrals

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