



Aboriginal Housing Management Association
Over 25 years of Indigenous housing expertise.

AHMA Statement on Crab Park Resident Displacement *April 2024*

AHMA agrees with statements made by the [First Nations Leadership Council](#) and the [Federal Housing Advocate](#) related to upholding the dignity and human rights of encampment residents. We share concerns about the displacement of Crab Park residents and call on the Vancouver Park Board to honor their commitments to reconciliation and immediately prioritize a human rights based, culturally safe approach in responding to encampments.

The Crab Park encampment has been a home to many residents since May of 2021 and is currently home to around 30 people, half of whom are Indigenous. Indigenous residents of encampments in Vancouver have not been appropriately supported and have been forcefully decamped multiple times. Rather than creating more precarity for encampment residents, any encampment response should focus on providing supports and critical services to encampment residents in the absence of safe, affordable, culturally supportive housing.

The current displacement efforts at Crab Park are in opposition to the Vancouver Park Board's and the City of Vancouver's commitments to reconciliation, as well as BC's commitment to the implementation of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' Act. Under UNDRIP, Indigenous peoples have the right to be involved in the development of policy, including responses to encampments and homelessness, and should not be displaced without consent. These rights are frequently violated in engagement and responses to the Crab Park encampment.

It is well documented that Indigenous people are experiencing some of the most egregious right to housing violations. In the absence of safe, adequate and affordable housing, encampment responses must respect human rights, autonomy, and dignity, with a focus on providing access to basic necessities – including clean water, accessible sanitation facilities, electricity, cooking facilities, structures that are accessible for multiple people and those with diverse abilities or mobility, and access to heating and cooling. No relocation or displacement should take place without free, prior and informed consent.

Residents of Crab Park should not only be consulted, but their feedback needs to guide what interventions are necessary and useful for the community. In this case, residents recommended that the work be done in stages, and with their help, to address concerns about their homes, belongings and communal structures being taken, dismantled, lost or destroyed. The Park Board staff's decision to move ahead with the plan, despite reasonable alternatives, has

created considerable precarity and stress for residents of the encampment. Going forward, the cap on the number of people allowed to move back after the cleanup operation, and limitations on communal spaces are particularly concerning. We expect the Park Board to uphold their commitments to honoring the dignity and human rights of those needing access to encampments by listening to residents and advocates to address these concerns.

It is also critical that encampment responses be *For Indigenous, By Indigenous*. Indigenous housing experts and encampment residents need to be meaningfully included and their voices prioritized in conversations and municipal planning around housing and supports for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness. Alternatives have already been put forward. AHMA's encampment framework - a Transitional Village Housing Model - was developed and submitted to BC Housing and the Ministry of Housing in December 2022. This framework supports encampment responses that embed services and provide no-barrier housing options with wraparound supports for residents of encampments. In the absence of adequate housing, responses to encampments that prioritize human rights and dignity must be explored in collaboration with Indigenous housing experts and encampment residents.

About AHMA:

The Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA) is a *For Indigenous, By Indigenous* umbrella organization of 55 Indigenous housing and service providers in BC. AHMA's members oversee 95% of Indigenous housing units across the province for those not living on reserve. This includes almost 6,000 units that provide homes to an estimated 11,000 Indigenous individuals and families living in urban, rural, and northern regions of British Columbia (BC). In addition to providing Indigenous Peoples, their families, and communities with affordable housing, AHMA's members offer many support services. These include homelessness prevention, transition homes, parenting support, mental health programs, substance use support, and more. AHMA members provide a culturally safe space for Indigenous peoples to make their home wherever they settle, by facilitating connections to community and cultural resources.

In 2022, AHMA released BC's first Indigenous community-led Provincial Urban, Rural, and Northern (URN) Indigenous Housing Strategy. This report outlines a 10-Year strategy to address the housing needs of off-reserve Indigenous people in BC. The report reflects extensive engagement and input from existing Indigenous housing and service providers in BC and tenants, stakeholders, government agencies, and Indigenous organizations. The strategy includes thirteen strategic actions and an implementation plan identifying the funding, resources, and activities required to implement the strategic actions. AHMA awaits funding for this strategy, which is hailed locally, nationally and internationally as an example of innovation and excellence in Indigenous housing research and approach.

To learn more about the work AHMA does for those who are unhoused, please go to <https://www.ahma-bc.org/bcindigenouhomelessness>

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