



## Community Summary Report #5

Location: British Columbia, primarily urban areas

Partner Name: Aboriginal Life In Vancouver Enhancement  
Society & North West Indigenous Council

March 29, 2022

Community Partner Name:

Aboriginal Life In Vancouver Enhancement Society & the North West Indigenous Council

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Conversation Date(s): January 26<sup>th</sup>, February 16<sup>th</sup>, March 2<sup>nd</sup> & March 24<sup>th</sup>

Summary:

Throughout the discussions, many topics of interests became apparent regarding the lack of resources allocated to the 78% of the Indigenous Peoples in B.C. living off reserve (which includes First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples) due to the Distinctions Based Approach.

There were discussions around the lack of consultation with the Urban Indigenous populations regarding Bill 41 of B.C., and Motion b.2 of the City of Vancouver as it relates to the Socio-Economic wellbeing of all Indigenous Peoples.

Key highlights from the discussions were:

- The need for systemic change as it relates to environmental impacts caused by industrial projects
- Land stewardship and the importance of Indigenous-led blockades for increasing awareness about reducing emissions
- The current Social Assistance programs in relation the socio-economic wellbeing of families and children. Discussions regarding CERB and the current impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Aboriginal Life In Vancouver Enhancement Society and the North West Indigenous Council works on a Provincial as well as a Place Based level to promote the Social, Economic, Cultural, health and general wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples. Our organizations were interested in participating in this project because we advocate for and represent the 78% of Indigenous peoples living off reserve and firmly believe that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should provide the framework for any climate change initiative.

The Urban Indigenous Community has been facing unique issues related to income security and climate change. These issues are directly related to Legislation and Policy frameworks that follow the current model of the Distinctions Based Approach.

Indigenous Peoples across B.C. are being impacted by economic marginalization. Such as, the high price of living and the lack of affordable housing. In the Urban Centre of Vancouver, the current projected living wage isn't enough to sustain a single parent family with the current inflation trends of living fees.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the world's largest conservation network, has made a strong and clear statement on the impact climate change will have on Indigenous peoples:

"... indigenous and traditional peoples are going to be particularly burdened by the costs of climate change impacts and show evidence that the dangers of climate change are already threatening traditional cultures. The degree of vulnerability varies from one group to another and can be unevenly distributed across and within communities."

*SOURCE : Indigenous and Traditional Peoples and Climate Change Issues Paper. International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Mirjam Macchi Contributing authors: Gonzalo Oviedo, Sarah Gotheil, Katharine Cross, Agni Boedihartono, Caterina Wolfangel, Matthew Howell. (2008) p 57*

It was made apparent by those participating within the discussion, that many community residents situated in urban centers across B.C. are facing barriers related to income insecurity. Some of the issues flagged included: lack of meaningful support in social assistance programs and an over-dependency on government supports, the severe conditions of being homeless, the use of Single Room Occupancy units as it relates to unsafe living conditions, co-dependency with other residents, inter-generational addictions, lack of stable employment income, and the discrimination of low expectation. Other concerns highlighted included high costs of tuition, distinctions-based approach funding on all levels of government, family wrap around services and child-care, and barriers to accessing community centre resources.

Throughout our conversations, we recognized the impacts that Indigenous-led rallies and blockades have had on communities far and wide. More people are standing in solidarity in resistance to oil and gas projects in hopes of reducing green-house gas emissions.

This reference was mentioned within one of our conversations "Indigenous Resistance has saved nearly 1.6 billion tons of annual green-house gas emissions over the past decade", as cited from this news article:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/what-on-earth-indigenous-pipeline-resistance-1.6271187>.

*"This dialogue has helped me to reconnect to my indigenous roots in the urban setting. Something I was struggling to find in the city. This discussion has fostered exponential growth in building my connections and relationships within the community and realizing the importance of educating the public on indigenous issues."*

– Public Dialogue Participant

Participants within our dialogues have expressed their pride in being Indigenous and noted the resurgence of Indigenous owned businesses and the importance of supporting grassroots

Indigenous led initiatives. Many examples were included of local Indigenous Entrepreneurs and Social Enterprises that exist to enhance the lives of Indigenous Peoples.

“Indigenous youth are the youngest and fastest growing population in Canada and Canada needs to listen to what we have to say.”

- Public Dialogue Participant

ALIVE and NWIC specifically targeted urban indigenous youth and advocates/service providers that urban indigenous youth tap into. We chose to host our dialogues in spaces where urban indigenous youth were present, such as outdoor community engagements and workshops. We also extended the invitation to representatives from the Co-operative Sector, First Nations Women’s Representation and Vancouver’s Food Security Network. All participants were engaged in a circle discussion where the key issues and solutions were presented and spoken on during the dialogue. We experienced a high volume of indigenous youth and were missing members from the LGBTQ2S+ Community. We provided access to a zoom discussion and a lot of the youth who attended our zoom meeting also had barriers to accessing technology which was provided to them on behalf of ALIVE and NWIC.

We decided not to do break-out sessions because traditionally indigenous people discuss things all together in a group setting. ALIVE and NWIC instead decided to host a number of circle dialogues.

“I like the idea of having more money to spend as a safety net, but I do not like the idea of having to depend on the government”

- Public Dialogue Participant

The changes in the economy and environmental impact have effected individuals as well as their families in these key ways:

- Marginalization of community within various neighborhoods resulting in isolation,
- Opiate overdose and death rates have increased over time,
- Common thread on how CERB has helped individuals survive,
- Preliminary conversations around what basic income would look like,
- More meaningful/impactful social assistance programs and wrap-around services,

“I don’t have the opportunity to make a livelihood for myself, or my family. With the competitiveness of surviving, I just want to escape reality.”

- Public Dialogue Participant

The economic and environmental changes intersect in these key ways:

- Renewable resources and energy production being at the forefront of a new economy,
- Place-based food security initiatives that reduce the dependency on shopping,
- An opportunity to restore the relationship between people and the planet,
- Indigenous people’s right to develop substantial practices of their lands which has been limited as a result of factors within the economic, social and historic nature.

“Indigenous people’s traditional values enhances the families, the land and the economy. Colonial systems need to change to accommodate these values.”

- Public Dialogue Participant

Some possible solutions that came up during the public dialogues are as follows:

- UNDRIP being a key framework to all processes related to climate change,
- Systems change to keep indigenous people connected to traditional ways,
- Systems change to ensure indigenous people’s freedom to govern ourselves,
- More meaningful/impactful social assistance and wrap-around services,
- Incorporating traditional values in multi-lateral decision making,.
- The end of criminalization of indigenous people defending their lands,
- Free, prior and informed consent on all initiatives affecting indigenous people’s rights.

Some ways that these solutions can be built to maintain and strengthen resilience that came up during our discussions are as follows:

- Urban Indigenous people, and their Representative Organizations as well as Indigenous Governing Bodies need to be negotiated with on implementation of UNDRIP as well as Self-government Agreements,
- Indigenous and non-indigenous Youth need a seat at decision making tables municipally and provincially,
- An urgent need to facilitate the proof of title and rights for non-status indigenous people and the citizens of their Tribal nations
- Industry decision makers such as the Oil and Gas Commission of BC, BC Forestry and others need to include Indigenous Tribal Nations such as the Nuu’chuh’nalth Nation and the Wet’suwet’en Nation in the planning, processes and outcomes of Extraction Projects.
- Free, prior and informed consent to be obtained also from off-reserve Indigenous Governing Bodies of whom the majority live in the Urban Setting and are non-status.

“As a youth who is caring and passionate about these critical issues, I am not included in decision making tables and feel marginalized from creating change in my community.”

- Public Dialogue Participant

In our perspective within ALIVE Society and the North West Indigenous Council, we have found that there is an intersecting consensus that Indigenous people are indigenous whether they are non-status, status, Metis, Inuit, on-reserve or off-reserve. Another intersecting consensus is that all Indigenous people must be repatriated to their Tribal Nations and included in decision making that impacts the environment. Indigenous Researchers, Academics, Youth and all levels of Representation for Indigenous people must be included in Environmental Impact Assessments as well as the economic return resulting from resource extraction and international trade. People have brought up that they do not want to be more dependent on the government for their basic needs, that

their needs to be a systemic change so that we could be empowered and reduce dependency.

To what extent do you think your conversation built wider and deeper understanding of the links and synergies between community resilience, livelihoods, income security and the low-carbon transition?

5 – Very much so; As a result of our conversations, we have concluded that the reservation system, as well as the welfare system is not serving our community. Indigenous people's livelihoods need to come from a just and honorable way of enhancing the use of the land so that the future generations' livelihood is guaranteed as well. A low-carbon transition is intertwined with indigenous values and governance systems. Our discussions have created a sense of hope in creatively diverting climate disaster.

To what extent did participants demonstrate increased awareness of climate change and their own capacity for climate action?

4 – The people who were at our discussion provided their expertise in the reduction of emissions because of indigenous resistance, as well as a knowledge of how the climate changing will bring extreme weather events and how inflation rates will reduce access to affordable living. Impactful ways of dealing with these issues were presented, mostly by youth, such as including off-reserve Indigenous people impacted by the Indian Act in the implementation of UNDRIP and the mis-use of the Distinctions Based Approach to exclude the non-status distinction in Treaty Rights resulting in higher rates of death, overdose, disease and child apprehension.

To what extent were new relationships between community partners and conversation participants created and fostered?

5 – Very much so; Virtually all the participants have been intimately working with ALIVE Society and NWIC and these open conversations have strengthened and enhanced our ability to work together in a meaningful way in the future. Most participants are engaged in other workshops and engagements that ALIVE/NWIC is facilitating.

To what extent did your conversation create opportunities to foster ongoing discussion of solutions related to climate change, income insecurity and community resilience?

5 – Very much so; There is a huge push to continue the on-going dialogue that has been created because of the Green Resilience Project's Initiative and partnership with ALIVE Society and NWIC. Residents of our respective Neighborhoods have expressed their commitment to a better social context and are prepared to engage in more discussions on these topics.

The Urban Indigenous Community needs to be included in strategies and solutions on climate change, as the youngest and fastest growing population of any demographic in Canada, we are imperative voices to these strategies and solutions and the most impacted by the welfare system. The Urban Indigenous Community must be negotiated with to transition not only to better social stability programming, but to a low-carbon economy also.

ALIVE Society and NWIC will continue to host these public dialogues as these conversations have kindled much interest as well as presented numerous intersections.