



AHMA's TVH RECOMMENDATION

Transitional Village Model

A trauma-informed response to encampments

February 2023

Background:

AHMA was invited into the Encampment Response Planning Table (ERPT) by BC Housing (BCH) in September 2022 to develop a response plan for the Downtown Eastside (DTES) encampment. This table consists of Ministry partners and focuses on the operational plan to bring community members indoors before the winter; this entails relocation planning and coordinating units in the development to the existing needs.

AHMA's position is that the City of Vancouver (CoV) will never be able to build enough affordable housing for community members experiencing homelessness. Therefore, it is necessary to establish continuums of housing that meet individual needs by supporting and facilitating providers and those in core need with accessing and maintaining permanent housing as a long-term strategy. AHMA has proposed that the Transitional Village Model (TVH) is one solution to the DTES encampments.

Why do we need the Transitional Village Model?

- Current encampment responses lack cultural safety by forcing Indigenous people away from their community members with no assurance of housing.
 - A consistent trend discussed in the ERPT was that many community members chose to sleep in the DTES encampment rather than their Single Room Occupancy (SRO) unit because of safety or health concerns.
- City of Vancouver's 2022 Housing Needs Report noted that 86,000 existing households need housing and the demand is expected to increase further by 50,000 over the next ten years.
- To best serve the 32% of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in the DTES.
- Recent studies have also shown that 79% of residents in BC believe homelessness has increased across the province over the past three years¹.

¹ Canseco, M. (2022). British Columbians Say Homelessness Has Increased in Province. Researchco. Accessed November 30, 2022, from <https://researchco.ca/2022/08/19/homelessness-british-columbia/>



Philosophy

- The Indigenous communal approach utilizes harm reduction practices and trauma-informed care in addition to considering the community member's cultural identity.
 - Upholding the high standard of these practices is the most integral component of a successful TVH encampment; therefore, we must consider how to support staff best to deliver this work.
- Utilizing the Indigenous communal approach to care model, we empower community members to contribute to the encampment within their strengths.
 - Examples include making art, building gardens, developing protocols, and peer support.
- Heavily focused on transitional support services instead of Affordable Housing.
- Indigenous culture is difficult to practice individually; it requires seeing the community in person and feeling a shared energy amongst the practicing group, calling for a TVH model.

Setting and Size

- The TVH model is positioned to be implemented in an outdoor setting but may also be adapted to indoor operations.
- Utilize unused landmass near airports and railroads; alternatively, private organizations may donate land to host an encampment labelled as "safe spots."
- Pet-friendly environment with 20-40 Service community members maximum.

On-site Facilities

- Outfitted with all necessary facilities and supplies for a community, including garbage and recycling infrastructure, supplies associated with facilities, and meals.
- Common area to host community events/programming and staff operations.
- Must have access to health outreach services, including prescription refills.