

## OFF-RESERVE ABORIGINAL ACTION PLAN BACKGROUNDER

### **Background**

In British Columbia (BC), nearly three-quarters of all Aboriginal people live off-reserve, with 60 per cent living in urban areas. The October 3, 2011, Speech from the Throne acknowledged the importance of the off-reserve Aboriginal population and committed the government to work with Aboriginal partners, the federal government and local governments to develop an Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan (ORAAP) with the focus of improving socio-economic outcomes of off-reserve Aboriginal people in BC. The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR) is tasked with coordinating ORAAP.

Also, in a November 25, 2011 speech to the “Non-Profit Partnerships Summit: Collective Impact through Social Innovation”, Premier Clark stated that “*The province is a participant and supporter of social innovation and entrepreneurship in B.C. We need to find new ways of doing business - one that involves working with the private, volunteer and non-profit sectors to create solutions that make a real difference in people's lives. Working together, we make real change.*” This along with the throne speech commitment sets the stage for the BC to develop and implement ORAAP.

The Federal government’s Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) has been active in British Columbia since 2003. The UAS seeks to alleviate socioeconomic disparities between the urban Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. The strategy is based on a government-community partnership development model that is strategically driven to address community identified priorities.

Given the common goals and objectives of ORAAP and the UAS, the federal government (through Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC)) and the provincial government (through MARR) have agreed to work together and integrally link both initiatives.

On October 19, 2012, BC and BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) also signed a protocol agreement that supports government’s 2011 Throne Speech commitment to establish ORAAP. The protocol agreement outlines the partnership and principles that guide the work of both parties as they develop and implement the plan.

### **The Challenge**

Although there are many programs and services that provide social supports to the off-reserve Aboriginal population in BC, poor socio-economic conditions continue to exist in all key sectors (health, education, housing, employment and justice). Several factors are responsible for this including the long history of colonization, systemic discrimination, structural violence and the degrading experience of residential schools which have led to adverse multigenerational effects on Aboriginal individuals and families. As a result, many Aboriginal families are currently living in multi-generational cycles of

poverty which has created several barriers including limited participation in the labour market. Addressing these multi-layered challenges is the overall goal of ORAAP.

ORAAP will also focus on creating successes through building opportunities in off-reserve Aboriginal communities. For example, nearly 50% of the off-reserve Aboriginal population is under the age of 25 and many experts have noted that Aboriginal youth could play a significant role in helping employers meet their future labour market needs.

### **Program and Policy Context**

As noted above, although there are many programs that support the off-reserve Aboriginal population in BC, poor socio-economic conditions continue to exist. Also, to date, there has not been a discussion platform to share best practices that reflects the interests and needs of the off-reserve/urban Aboriginal population – ORAAP is intended to address this.

Given the above, in addition to working with the federal government and Aboriginal groups, BC will also seek out new partnerships with “non-traditional” allies such as municipal governments, business sector partnerships, philanthropic and academic partnerships. These broad based partnerships will identify innovative and collaborative program and policy responses that support BC’s off-reserve Aboriginal population.

### **Vision**

The overall vision of ORAAP is: *A world where all off-reserve/urban Aboriginal communities, families and children are empowered to achieve their full human potential by living healthy, self-sufficient and more economically viable lives in a way that meets their individual and community interests, and cultural traditions.*

To successfully achieve this vision, ORAAP must involve the collaborative efforts of Aboriginal groups and communities, all orders of government, non-profits and the private sector to identify and overcome the barriers to Aboriginal well-being that are unique to each community. This can be done by jointly working in a way that brings together resources, knowledge and creativity both at the community level and on a province-wide basis.

### **Guiding Principles**

The following principles guide ORAAP:

- **Collaboration** – promote a collaborative approach involving Aboriginal groups, service providers, all levels of government and the private sector.
- **Community-Based Priorities and Shared Values**– reflect an approach that is community-driven whereby Aboriginal groups will lead and build their own holistic and sustainable creative solutions.

- **Healing and Reconciliation** – aim to address the root causes<sup>1</sup> linked to the socio-economic disadvantages of Aboriginal peoples and communities.
- **Social Innovation** – generate innovative solutions to complex problems that will address the key socio-economic challenges facing Aboriginal people.
- **Integration of Programs and Services** – support ways to integrate programs more effectively to better serve off-reserve Aboriginal people.
- **Capacity Building** – promote capacity building as this will enhance positive outcomes for those delivering and receiving services at the community level.
- **Focused and Measureable Outcomes** – achieve measureable results through the comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of joint community-based and province-wide initiatives.

### **Work Done To Date**

Since the Throne Speech announcement in October 2011, the province has:

- Undertaken evidenced-based research to support the action plan, including an environmental scan of provincial programs, an analysis of off-reserve demographics and socio-economic statistics, as well as cross-jurisdictional research of promising practices;
- Worked with provincial ministries/agencies to explore possible collaboration opportunities to more efficiently serve the off-reserve Aboriginal population through existing resources;
- Had informal discussions with Aboriginal groups, the federal government and local governments regarding their interests/priorities;
- Formed the Provincial Co-ordination Team (PCT), which oversees the coordination of ORAAP at the provincial level. The PCT includes representatives from the British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC), Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC), federal government (AANDC), and three provincial ministries (Ministry of Children and Family Development, Ministry of Social Development and MARR); and,
- Through the PCT, identified initial ORAAP pilot communities to engage with through community-led planning processes ultimately resulting in local ORAAP community action plans.

### **ORAAP Community-Based Pilots**

An initial part of the ORAAP roll-out is to engage with community partners to develop ORAAP community-driven action plans that reflect local interests that ultimately improve socio-economic outcomes for off-reserve Aboriginal people.

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<sup>1</sup> Root causes reach back to colonialism, residential schools and policies of economic marginalization and cultural suppression.

More specifically, local action plans will speak to:

- community vision;
- community priorities/needs/interests (based on a range of social sectors);
- initiatives or actions (short/medium/long-term) to address community needs;
- key partners/resource requirements for initiatives; and,
- expected outcomes.

Given the complexity of the initiative and the need to involve a wide spectrum of stakeholders, ORAAP will also include support for collaborative social innovation approaches at the community level.

Five pilot communities have been identified as part of this roll-out: Vancouver, Surrey, Prince George, Kamloops, and Duncan. It is expected that the five communities will be announced in November.

Communities were selected by the PCT based on a series of factors, including: high concentrations of British Columbia's urban Aboriginal population; alignment with the UAS; coverage of key regions of the province; critical mass of programs and services; and, the readiness of the community to participate in a pilot.

As a next step, various PCT members will meet with key community leaders in the 5 communities to discuss how best to work together to develop and implement local ORAAP action plans. More specifically, there will be discussions related to:

- Formation of local core community teams to oversee community planning processes;
- Process to develop community action plans;
- Anticipated timelines; and,
- Resourcing for planning.

### **Expected Outcomes**

Local action plans may achieve some or all of the following outcomes:

1. Improvements in a range of socio-economic areas (employment, health, education, housing, justice);
2. Improved coordination of programs, services, policies and strategies pertaining to the off-reserve/urban Aboriginal population;
3. Increased institutional and organizational capacity;
4. Increased awareness and understanding of who off-reserve/urban Aboriginal people are including a better understanding of their history, culture and traditions;
5. Improved relational capital (through relationship building at all levels); and,
6. Improved understanding and response to the root causes - leading to healing and reconciliation.