

# Ways that COV May Be Able To Contribute

The City of Vancouver has demonstrated its commitment to community in a number of tangible ways, through many initiatives in the Downtown Eastside, the CityPlan vision process, the City's grants to community service agencies and through such initiatives as the Social Development Plan. As the City develops and implements plans that are meant to benefit its citizens, it is important to keep in mind the fact that Aboriginal people are often over-represented in most negative statistics and suffer high rates of poverty and homelessness in Vancouver. Although Aboriginal people are not generally involved in civic or other politics, this should not limit their access to and benefits from city policies that are meant to help improve the living conditions of Vancouver residents.

The City could help to positively address many of the issues faced by Aboriginal Vancouver residents by partnering with Aboriginal communities to identify and actively address community priority areas. The City could help to engage these communities by disseminating information in a timely manner, and in accessible forms (e.g. in-person reports, culturally appropriate literature, or information that focuses on benefits to the Aboriginal communities).

The following six initiatives or potential areas of partnership represent ways in which the City could begin to support Aboriginal communities. Some of these obviously overlap with others, but their individual categorization is important to ensure that they are highlighted, and to help the City to divide any potential work into workable 'chunks' that may be addressed by different parties either on their own or in partnership.

## Vancouver Aboriginal Accord

An Aboriginal Accord could help to build a framework for ongoing respectful and meaningful relationships that would benefit both parties. The development of an Aboriginal Accord would provide a means to identify priorities, and collectively work towards concrete plans to address them. Such an agreement would be most effective if it included specific goals and timelines that both parties could work towards, and be representative of the communities (youth, Elders, women, disabled). The COV could follow the examples of Winnipeg and Edmonton and begin work with local Aboriginal leaders and individual community members to develop a community development focused Aboriginal Accord. More information about similar initiatives can be found online at:

- ~ Edmonton's Urban Aboriginal Accord: [www.edmonton.ca](http://www.edmonton.ca) or [http://www.edmonton.ca/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_0\\_265\\_210\\_0\\_43/http%3B/CMSServer/COEWeb/city+government/plans+and+initiatives/edmontonurbanaboriginalaccordinitiative.htm](http://www.edmonton.ca/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_265_210_0_43/http%3B/CMSServer/COEWeb/city+government/plans+and+initiatives/edmontonurbanaboriginalaccordinitiative.htm)
- ~ Winnipeg's First Steps: Municipal Aboriginal Pathways can be found online on the bottom of the following page: [www.winnipeg.ca/interhom/guide/map/Memo.stm](http://www.winnipeg.ca/interhom/guide/map/Memo.stm)

- ~ (Australia) Albany Aboriginal Accord:  
<http://www.atns.net.au/biogs/A001826b.htm>

While an Aboriginal Accord would help to lay a good foundation for ongoing and respectful ways of working together, its development need not delay other work that can be started now.

## **Advocacy**

The City of Vancouver is in a unique position to help Aboriginal organizations and initiatives to move forward by exercising their right to bring forward ideas, comments, and suggestions to the many committees and boards in which City staff participates. The City could reach out to the Aboriginal communities to identify what their individual and community priorities are. If the City is aware of Aboriginal priorities and initiatives, staff may be able to assist through advocacy. Staff could include members of the Aboriginal communities at various tables, so that their ideas can be presented and they can network with others.

The monthly Vancouver Aboriginal Council meetings are a good way to hear updates on community initiatives and to network with community members to identify their needs. There are many bodies that the City is connected to, but the following are the primary groups that would be most relevant to Aboriginal communities:

- ~ Urban Aboriginal Strategy
- ~ Vancouver Agreement
- ~ 2010 Olympic Committee
- ~ GVRD / SCPI Homelessness Initiative
- ~ Ministry for Children & Family Development
- ~ Youth Funders Table
- ~ Provincial government committees and initiatives
- ~ Federal government committees and initiatives

Advocacy by City staff is linked to all activities identified in this report. A good example of advocacy, and partnership, is the development of the Native Youth Centre. The City has been very instrumental in helping to keep provincial and federal focus on this project, and has formally committed to the project by purchasing a piece of land to develop the Centre on.

## **2010 Olympics**

The Vancouver Olympic Committee has identified and committed to Aboriginal involvement in the development and hosting of the 2010 Winter Olympics. The City could support this commitment to have local First Nations involved at all levels of planning and development, as well as participation during the event itself by advocating for their meaningful representation at all levels that the City has influence in.

- ~ Helping to ensure meaningful involvement would help to build trusting and ongoing relationships with the local First Nations who the City must work with even after the Olympics are over (Musqueam First Nation, in particular as they are located within Vancouver).

- ~ Helping to ensure the meaningful participation of urban Aboriginal communities will also help to develop and strengthen relationships with this diverse, non-land based population.
- ~ Given the high rate of unemployment within Aboriginal communities, the build up to the Olympics is a great opportunity to help ensure that Aboriginal people are able to access some of the emerging opportunities such as construction work, consulting, planning, or through arts and cultural initiatives. More info about employment activities in Aboriginal communities can be found in the 'Employment' section of this manual.

## Facilities

Most Aboriginal organizations or ad hoc groups are under-housed in inadequate facilities that limit their ability to provide the numbers, types, and quality of programs that they would like to offer. Access to the following would greatly contribute towards progress in this area:

- City buildings with low lease rates
- Land - City purchase of land for the organization's use
- Public facilities - Access to space in community centres, neighbourhood houses, or other venues that can help to alleviate needs and allow organizations to provide programs and services that they might not otherwise be able to

Partnerships between the City and Aboriginal organizations or groups that focus on advocacy and meaningful partnering opportunities could greatly help organizations to realize their goals.

## Capacity Building

Many Aboriginal organizations have the will and expertise to become more proactive in their work, but often funding inhibits this. Many organizations are struggling to participate in community and organizational development activities because most of their staff's time is spent ensuring that their programs and services are being well developed and implemented. Many organizations recognize the benefits of organizational and community development, but need additional supports to allow them to pursue any related activities. Resources usually needed include dedicated staff, funding, mentorship, and access to best practice resources such as templates, sample policies and procedures, and development and evaluation tools. Ways that City staff could initiate partnerships or respond to requests include:

- Mentorship
- Introductions to other community organizations, private business, or government representatives (resources and/or funding)
- Fostering partnerships between community organizations, private business, or government representatives (resources and/or funding)

## Within the City of Vancouver

- **Funding** - ensuring that Aboriginal organizations and community members are aware of funding opportunities both within and outside of the City of Vancouver. Effective partnerships for dissemination of information could include the Vancouver Aboriginal Council, Urban Native Youth Association, Aboriginal Front Door, Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre, Luma Native Housing, Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association, Aboriginal Mothers Centre, Vancouver Native Housing, and other broad reaching organizations.
- **Aboriginal Staff** - Aboriginal staff in various policy, planning and direct service positions would be especially helpful as a liaison between the City and Aboriginal communities, and could help in fulfilling and expanding upon many of the suggestions noted in this report. Consultation with Aboriginal communities to identify priority areas to focus on prior to hiring such a staff person would greatly

enhance the effectiveness of the work, but this work could also be completed in a collaborative process with the community.

- **City Learn** could incorporate the information within this manual into their learning materials so that all City staff have the opportunity to learn more about the unique contributions, history, needs, and aspirations of Vancouver's Aboriginal communities.
- **The CoV Equal Employment Office** could develop and implement processes that help to identify, recruit, train, and retain Aboriginal employees. Effective partnerships could include local colleges, universities, Aboriginal organizations, and Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement Holders (ACCESS and the First Nations Employment Society).