
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Housing

New affordable homes coming for Indigenous people in Smithers

SMITHERS – Construction will soon begin on 37 new homes for Indigenous individuals, families and seniors in Smithers.

Located at 1611 Main St., Ken’ulh K’it Yikh is the community’s first Indigenous-led housing project. The name Ken’ulh K’it Yikh means “wetland housing”.

“We know that many existing affordable housing buildings are often missing holistic programming and cultural spaces that offer a sense of belonging for Indigenous people looking for an affordable, safe, and inclusive place to live,” said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing. “This project is an example of how we are working with, and being guided by, Indigenous organizations to ensure that these affordable homes also centre Indigenous values and ways of living.”

Ken’ulh K’it Yikh was designed in close consultation with the community to reflect the needs of those who will make it their home. It will include culturally appropriate features, such as Indigenous art, a cultural amenity room, a healing room, a community kitchen, and larger unit sizes to accommodate families and intergenerational living. Culturally safe programming, counselling and advocacy will be available to tenants, including supports for individuals and families within the building, as well as at the nearby Friendship Centre. A tenant support worker will be present during regular business hours.

“These 37 homes at Ken’ulh K’it Yikh will mark a step forward in offering affordable and culturally supportive places for Indigenous families and seniors in Smithers,” said Nathan Cullen, MLA for Stikine. “Our government is proud to be delivering these affordable homes through the support of the Dze Ɓ K’ant Housing Society, as we keep moving forward in reconciliation and affordability for Indigenous people.”

Owned and operated by Dze Ɓ K’ant Housing Society, the three-storey building will consist of studio, one-, two-, three- and four-bedroom apartments, in recognition of the high need for housing for off-reserve Indigenous families and seniors in Smithers. Ten of the homes will be wheelchair accessible (six one-bedroom and four two-bedroom). An additional six one-bedroom units will be adaptable, allowing residents to remain in their homes as they age.

“Ken’ulh K’it Yikh is a by-Indigenous-for-Indigenous housing project guided by traditional values and principles. Our approach to housing is rooted in culture and heritage,” said Annette Morgan, executive director, Dze Ɓ K’ant Housing Society. “By centring Indigenous perspectives and leadership our initiatives are culturally responsive to the unique needs of our community. We are proud to be creating a space that is more than shelter, fostering a sense of belonging and connection to our heritage.”

The Ken’ulh K’it Yikh’s cultural amenity room and community kitchen will be places to foster a sense of community and intergenerational connections among the tenants. These spaces will be used for a range of activities, events and workshops to support healing and well-being.

The property is owned by the Town of Smithers and leased to the society through a long-term agreement. Completion of construction is expected in early 2026, with tenants moving in shortly after.

This project is part of a \$19-billion housing investment by the B.C. government. Since 2017, the Province has nearly 80,000 homes that have been delivered or are underway, including 154 homes in the region of Smithers, Telkwa, and Burns Lake. Of these, more than 110 have been delivered and approximately 40 are underway.

Quotes:

Gladys Atrill, mayor, Smithers –

“The Town of Smithers is thrilled to see this project materialize; we are proud to have contributed to the site. This is the first Indigenous housing in Smithers and will fill a big gap in the community’s housing needs. Congratulations to the Dze Ɓ K’ant Housing team for bringing their vision to reality.”

Margaret Pfoh, CEO, Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA) –

“AHMA celebrates Dze Ɓ K’ant Housing Society and Dze Ɓ K’ant Friendship Centre Society for their ongoing expertise and community leadership in supporting urban Indigenous people living in Smithers. Ken’ulh K’it Yikh offers a place of safety, wellness and cultural programming that is much needed across northern B.C. AHMA members provide a critical community service.”

Quick Facts:

- The Province, through BC Housing, is contributing a grant of approximately \$13.6 million from the Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund to the project and will provide annual operating funding.
- In addition to providing a site for the project with a land equity value of \$112,000, the Town of Smithers contributed approximately \$33,000 to the project: \$30,000 from its new Rental Housing Incentive Program and approximately \$3,000 for additional site works.
- A donation of \$100,000 from West Fraser will make possible a large Indigenous art piece on the exterior of the building and will help fund the development of an Indigenous-inspired playground.

Learn More:

To learn more about government’s new Homes for People action plan, visit:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023HOUS0019-000436>

To learn about the steps the Province is taking to tackle the housing crisis and deliver affordable homes for British Columbians, visit: <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/housing/>

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