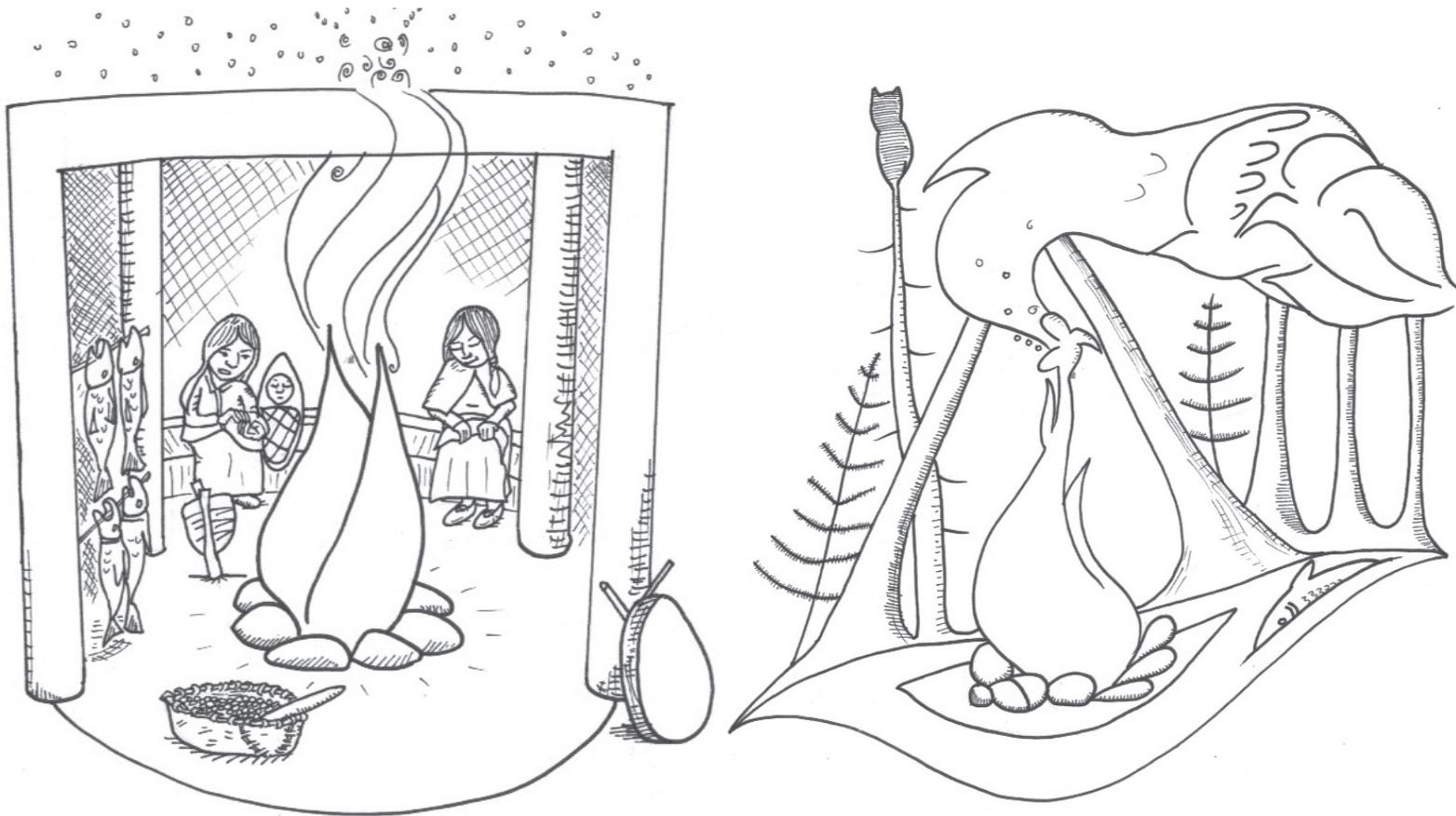


NOVEMBER  
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## Yunešit'in Housing Ecosystem Overview and Strategy Development

**INDIGENOUS HOME-LANDS INITIATIVE**

*PREPARED FOR: YUNESIT'IN GOVERNMENT*



## Accreditations

The illustrations throughout were completed by Russell Myers-Ross. The two cover drawings represent the Indigenous Home-Lands concept. One (right), respecting the animal's homeland, acknowledging fire as central to the landscape and spirit, and the second (left) a juxtaposition of fire within a dwelling, serving a purpose to feed people, keep warmth and bring people together. In both pictures, the trees serve as a 'structure' framing a home both as a forest and a house.

Research, analysis and writing of this report was carried out by Anthony Persaud, with review and editorial support from Pamela Perreault and Russell Myers-Ross.

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## Introduction

This report has been developed by Ecotrust Canada's Indigenous Home-Lands (IHL) initiative in support of the Yunešit'in Government's efforts to understand, articulate and implement a comprehensive and holistic approach to housing. This approach takes into account the interconnected nature of housing with broader community and territorial processes and aspirations.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview and foundation for the Yunešit'in Government to develop a housing strategy that offers a comprehensive and practical plan for addressing housing needs in conjunction with individual and collective goals for self-determination, cultural-ecological resilience, and socio-economic inclusion — referred to by IHL as a 'housing ecosystem strategy'. A housing ecosystem strategy enables communities to create an actionable plan which situates housing within the broader context of community well-being and self-determination, recognizing that housing, because of its link to the economic, social, and cultural well-being of a community, is one of the key leverage points for systems change and social innovation.

This report begins with the premise that housing and economic processes within Yunesit'in should be designed and driven by community values and needs. For Yunešit'in and the Tšilhqot'in Nation as a whole, self-reliance and self-determination

has, and continues to be, the driving force behind all of its pursuits and activities, and housing is no exception. Underlying this vision is the fundamental understanding that housing is part of a complex whole, where housing solutions go hand in hand with other processes occurring within the community, within the Nation, and within the everyday lives and experiences of the Yunešit'in people. This means developing more appropriate housing and appropriate economic opportunities that facilitate individual and community well-being through deepened connections and strengthened relationships to homelands.

## Approach

This report is the result of a long-standing research relationship between Yunešit'in and IHL, which at its foundation utilizes a decolonizing, collaborative and action-based approach<sup>1</sup> to support Yunešit'in in articulating and realizing their vision for housing, homelands and a cultural-economic future. Guiding this research partnership is the fundamental question:

How might diverse assets within Yunešit'in territory be leveraged to satisfy basic needs and to realize opportunities which support the reconnecting and strengthening of Yunešit'in peoples to their homelands?

Multiple qualitative methods were used, including informal and formal meetings and conversations; formal in-depth interviews with Yunešit'in and TNG staff and leaders; a systematic review of Yunešit'in and TNG documents and reports related to housing, economic and community development, lands, and governance; and participation in various official TNG-hosted community events. Information derived from these methods were organized into pre-determined categories of **Housing, Homelands, People, and Governance**.



**Housing:** the built environment of communities, including residential, commercial and common buildings and structures, as well as the infrastructure, which provide the basic and cultural needs of community members

**Homelands:** the natural assets within the territories of communities and the tangible and intangible goods and services that they provide

**People:** the members, citizens and residents of communities, and their attributes, skills, practices, knowledge and roles that facilitate individual and social well-being

**Governance:** the rules (or institutions) that communities put in place, or that operate informally, that determine how they organize themselves and how they interact with each other and with outsiders

A process of triangulation was utilized to cross-reference information and responses in order to obtain a reasonable level of confidence in responses to interview questions. These findings are presented in the section: Yunešit'in Housing Ecosystem Overview.

<sup>1</sup> Research that is co-designed to produce action-oriented findings intended to improve the situation for community members. Source: Peltier (2018)

Once complete the housing ecosystem overview was assessed and organized into a framework which identifies **Needs, Assets,** and **Opportunities.** This approach aims to put the strengths and assets of the community front and centre as the focal points for actionable solutions and strategies to address underlying needs.



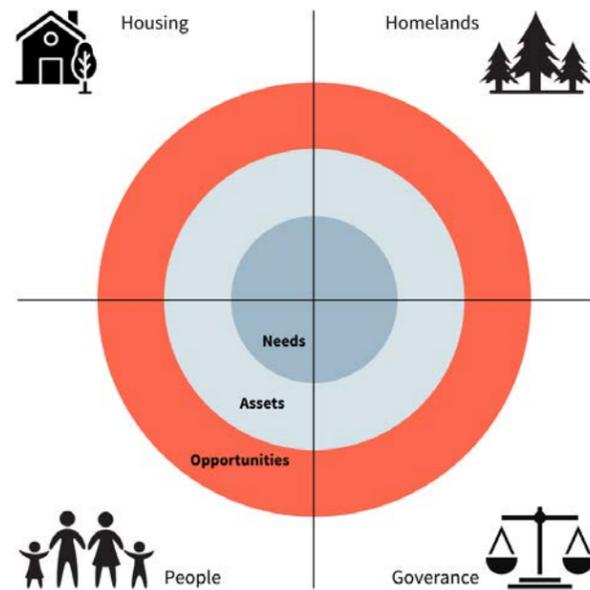
**Needs:** the infrastructure, skills, resources and knowledge that the community needs for the achievement of their goals

**Assets:** the skills, resources and knowledge that exists within the community that contributes to their goals

**Opportunities:** the potential future assets of the community

Organizing information on housing, homelands, people and governance into the categories of needs, assets, and opportunities allows for an analysis, which identifies real and potential relationships within the housing ecosystem. These relationships are presented as **critical linking strategies** in the section: Toward a Yunešit'in Housing Ecosystem Strategy.

Throughout this document specific **strategy actions** are also provided, which can be understood as actionable steps that the Yunešit'in Government can take in the short- and medium-term in order to set the stage for the elaboration of a full housing ecosystem strategy.



The Housing Ecosystem Framework

## Limitations

The writing of this document took place as the novel coronavirus took hold across Canada and the globe, limiting access to the community of Yunešit'in and the Tšilhqot'in territory. As a result, much of the information used to develop this report is derived from official reports and the knowledge, ideas, and opinions of staff and leaders within Yunešit'in and TNG with whom we were able to speak by phone/internet. Although these sources provide rich detail of previous engagement with the broader Yunešit'in community, they are not a replacement for up to date community input.

These limitations mean that there may be

errors and/or omissions that are pertinent to the overall analysis. To ensure the accuracy of the assessment, this report should go through a thorough review and validation process by Yunešit'in staff, leadership, and ultimately the community. Input from the community is particularly important to ensure that all of the diverse needs, assets, and opportunities within Yunešit'in territory are captured. Further, given these limitations and the broad scope of the current study, the examination of critical linking strategies within this document are necessarily cursory and further feasibility studies may be required to better understand their appropriateness.



By Russell Myers-Ross

# Part 1: Yunešit'in Housing Ecosystem Overview

“Yunesit'in are strong, spiritual, independent, and in control. We are moving forward”.<sup>2</sup>

Yunešit'in is one of six Tsilhqot'in communities located in the Cariboo-Chilcotin interior of British Columbia. The population of the band is 485

people, with approximately 250 living on-reserve within 60 homes. Located approximately 105 km West of Williams Lake, 8 km South of Hanceville, the Yunešit'in Caretaker Area stretches as far as the Fraser River to the East, Taseko Lakes (Dasiqox) to the West, Chilcotin River (Tsilhqox) to the North, and Graveyard Valley to the South.



Map of Tsilhqot'in Communities. Source: <http://www.thegreengazette.ca/tsilhqotin-community-radio-a-tool-to-enrich-culture-and-communication/>

Yunešit'in means 'people of the south', and it is also sometimes simply known as Stone or Stoney and historically known as “Gex Nats'enaghlnht'” referring to a place where people hunted rabbits (lit. rabbit-one-clubbed once). A majority of the population speaks the original language, nenqayni chi, and Yunešit'in-Tsilhqot'in values and identity are expressed through land-based activities including horses and fishing.

Yunešit'in Government, governed as an Indian Act Band, is the administrative body of the community, and includes a social, health, land, and housing department, a school for kindergarten to Grade 8, a youth centre and economic development arm. Like most First Nation communities across British Columbia and Canada, there is a housing shortage in the Yunešit'in community. Many of the houses that do exist are overcrowded and in a state of disrepair, requiring major renovations and in many cases mould remediation.

## Findings



### Housing

“Our people come from many origins. Yunešit'in is home because we are tied to raising our families close to the culture and land that provides a livelihood.”<sup>3</sup>

Housing is the built environment of the Yunešit'in community, including residential, commercial and common buildings and structures, as well as the infrastructure, which provide for the basic and cultural needs of community members. There are 60 houses within Yunešit'in I.R. Stone No. 1. The majority (46) of houses are on a community septic system, with only a few on individual septic systems. Most houses are serviced by community well/water treatment, with some on individual well/water treatment. Almost half of the houses are heated with wood stoves, and all have electrical power.<sup>4</sup> In total there are 18 social housing units in Yunešit'in, six of which are CMHC section 95 houses with mortgages that are still being paid by the Band, while the remaining twelve are fully paid and owned by the Band and no rent is being charged to occupants. The rest of the houses in Yunešit'in are considered individually 'owned', however there are no formal ownership structures in place — i.e. houses and land on-reserve in Yunešit'in is currently recognized customarily (see section on Governance).

2 Yunešit'in vision statement

3 Yunesit'in Community Vision

4 TNG Housing Strategy, 2018

- **More than 63% (38) of Yunešit'in houses need major repairs,<sup>5</sup> and mould has been identified as an issue.<sup>6</sup>**

Although there are several renovations currently underway in the community, identifying and obtaining funding for renovations is a major challenge. Overcrowding is also a major issue that has only worsened as a result of the COVID-19 crisis as extended family have returned to the reserve community where they believe they are safer.

- **Several houses have 13-14 people living in them and one three bedroom house has 17 people living in it.<sup>7</sup>**

There are currently 20 people on the waiting list for housing in Yunešit'in, and the latest estimates by Yunešit'in Government staff is that there is a need for at least 15 new houses in the community in order to make everyone “comfortable”.<sup>8</sup> This estimate does not take into account other construction requirements in the community including housing specific to elders, youth, emergency housing (including for emergency workers), and other shelters for visitors. The need for a new form of emergency or temporary housing became most apparent after the 2017 wildfires,<sup>9</sup> and has become further evident as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

Yunešit'in is currently building two guest houses that could potentially double as a shelter for emergency staff or those whose houses are being

renovated. There is also one cant (log) house nearly completed that will be used as a residence. In order to meet current demand the Yunešit'in Government intends to build approximately six houses per year in the community. The community has been working closely with UBC architecture to develop a design that is appropriate to community members, however it is not finalized and questions remain concerning the location, the tenure, and the materials to be utilized to construct it. The UBC pilot house offers an important opportunity to demonstrate the possibility of using local wood products in local housing design, but further coordination is required.

### Infrastructure

Infrastructure refers to the physical systems supporting the cultural and economic functions of households and organizations within the community. There exists some concern around the capacity of existing infrastructure within Yunešit'in to meet future housing needs. Some members have indicated that the refuse/dump/recycling facilities are inadequate and in a poor location (close to houses, eyesight for visitors, wildlife/bear danger). Others believe that the existing water filtration plant in Yunešit'in does not have the capacity to sustain the number of houses that need to be built in the community. We were told that under current demand the water can dry up in the summer, especially if there is a need for fire suppression. If accurate,

#### STRATEGY ACTION 1:

**Finalize one or several housing designs and establish a multi-year (5 year) housing construction plan, which includes material needs, labour requirements, and budgets. This can then inform a coordinated approach to labour capacity training, funding requests, and (forest) materials provision implemented in conjunction with the community mill, leading edge and other relevant departments within Yunešit'in government (and potentially TNG).**

this indicates a need to expand the capacity of the water system to accommodate new housing builds.

Infrastructure needs should also take into account the cultural-economic needs of Yunešit'in people. For example, in Yunešit'in at the time of the 2017 fires there was a shortage of backup generators and no community freezer, which meant that each household's deep-freeze — containing the yearly supply of hunted game, fish, and other essential foods — began to thaw.<sup>10</sup>

Also important are the energy sources to be utilized to heat and power new homes. A 2019 household survey in Yunešit'in indicated a strong desire amongst members for alternative energy features (i.e. solar) in their homes.<sup>11</sup> In addition to solar, given the ongoing development of the community sawmill and the wood waste that is produced from the operation, it is worth exploring the feasibility of combined heat and power systems from biomass (wood chips).

#### STRATEGY ACTION 2:

**Carry out a Yunešit'in critical infrastructure assessment to ascertain the capacity and appropriateness of all existing facilities to support the estimated growth and cultural-economic needs of the community.**

5 TNG Housing Strategy, 2018

6 Household Survey Summary Results, 2019

7 Personal communication, April 2020

8 Personal communication, April 2020

9 The Fires Awakened Us, 2019

10 The Fires Awakened Us (2019)

11 Household Survey Summary Results, 2019

### STRATEGY ACTION 3:

Develop a feasibility study for integrated heat and energy solutions for new builds in the community that link value-added forest product waste with housing energy and heat needs (“Forest to Furnace”).

### STRATEGY ACTION 4:

Develop a land use planning taskforce comprised of the Community Nen (Water, Lands & Resources) Coordinator position, the Housing Coordinator, and Chief and Council to develop a ‘housing’ ecosystem-based land use management plan which recognizes that land use planning and management must take into account the material, cultural, spiritual and economic needs of Yunešit’in members, which inherently includes housing.



## Homelands

“Each successive generation, every family, has shared the longstanding knowledge of how to live from the land. This wisdom is provided for us so we may be responsible for the future generations.”<sup>12</sup>

## Lands

The Yunešit’in reserve lands cover approximately 2,146 hectares and include forest, range, and community lands. There are five reserves in total but only I.R. Stone No.1 is populated. Within reserve lands there exist various opportunities for residential and commercial development, as well as agricultural and ranching activities, and there are discussions around developing another reserve.

- I.R. Stone No. 1,
- Stone No. 1A,
- Saddle Horse No. 2,
- Bringham Creek No. 3

- Stone No. 4.

On June 26, 2014 the Supreme Court of Canada declared Aboriginal title in the caretaker area of the Xení Gwet’in, and since that decision the Tšilhqot’in Nation and the Province of British Columbia signed the Nenqay Deni accord, and more recently the tripartite Gwets’en Nilt’i Pathway Agreement, which includes the federal government. These reconciliation framework agreements respond to the title declaration and address priority areas for the Tšilhqot’in Nation. The Nenqay Deni accord also creates Category ‘A’ lands, which refer to areas within Tšilhqot’in territory that are agreed between the Province of British Columbia and the Tšilhqot’in Nation to be under the ownership, control and management of the Tšilhqot’in Nation, excluding the declared title area and Indian Reserves. Within Category ‘A’ lands, the Tšilhqot’in Nation has the right to proactively manage, enact laws, and decide the uses of the lands and resources. Critical to the current project, the legal status of Category ‘A’ lands remains uncertain and are to be determined by the parties through further negotiation, and it is likely that Yunešit’in will have access to more lands for potential residential and commercial development moving forward.

## See Critical Linking Strategy: Land Use Planning and Housing

In addition to Category ‘A’ lands, Yunešit’in, along with neighbouring community Xení Gwet’in, declared in 2014 a portion of their shared caretaker area as Nexwagwez’an or the Dasiqox Tribal Park, which offers a land base

and expression of Indigenous governance over approximately 300,000 hectares of land (3,000 km<sup>2</sup>) to be utilized for eco-system protection, cultural revitalization, and an economy for sustainable livelihoods.<sup>13</sup>

## See Critical Linking Strategy: Indigenous-led Conservation and Housing

### STRATEGY ACTION 5:

Leverage the strong working relationship and aligned value set that exists between Xení Gwet’in and Yunešit’in in relation to forestry and housing to develop a bilateral housing ecosystem management committee that examines both timber harvesting scenarios within the Dasiqox tribal park strictly for the purposes of local housing provision, as well as opportunities to share resources, skills, and labour for the purposes of housing provision.



Dasiqox Tribal Park Map. Source: <https://www.wltribune.com/news/dasiqox-tribal-park-information-meeting-wednesday/>

### Forest Resources

In a community ravaged by fire in 2017, Yunešit'in is surrounded by burnt forest (200,000 hectares), both within and beyond the reserve lands. They hold the following forest licences: Forest licence # A90108 (non-restricted) of 40,000 m<sup>3</sup>/year, and Forest Licence # (non-restricted) of 66,667 m<sup>3</sup>/year. They have also been offered 790,000 cubic metres of the mountain pine beetle uplift volume but have not activated it, and they hold an area-based tenure First Nations Woodland Licence of approximately 53,000 ha which can provide a secure timber source for exclusive use should it be necessary. According to several sources, timber harvesting allowances are expected to drop significantly as a part of the next William's Lake timber supply area determination, and Yunešit'in timber volume could go down to 20,000 m<sup>3</sup>/year and become a restricted forest licence.<sup>14</sup>

All forestry activity currently underway is done using small equipment to salvage logs under small Forest Licence to Cut (FLTC). Approvals are quick for FLTCs, about five days compared to longer approvals taken on cutting permits. Small scale salvage work for Yunešit'in members has proved to be successful and it means relying on "old school" methodology with five members employed harvesting oversized Douglas fir attacked trees. Yunešit'in has also focused on developing other silviculture related activities including fencing, burning, mistletoe eradication, surveying, and tree planting, and on creating a value-added forestry enterprise that connects territorial timber resources with local housing needs.

### See Critical Linking Strategy: "Forest to Frame" Program



### People

"As a community, we are strong, proud people who value the land in providing healthy food to hunt and fish. Our people are hardworking individuals. We have raised our families with the expectation of becoming healthy people."<sup>15</sup>

The population of the Yunešit'in band is 485 people, with 219 (45%) living on-reserve, and 266 people (55%) living off-reserve mainly in the nearest city of William's Lake. The largest age demographic within the community consists of youth under 19 years of age, an age group that contributes to 34% of the population.<sup>16</sup> This is followed by community members between the ages of 31-50 years old, which contribute to 29% of the population. The average education level of members is Grade 8 and approximately 70% of members are receiving income assistance. For those employed, the average annual income

is \$35,000, and the main employers on-reserve are the Yunešit'in Government and Yunešit'in Development Enterprises Ltd. Through these main employers, 86 people were employed in November of 2019 and as a result of the layoffs throughout the winter in the forestry sector, approximately 40 are employed today. It is not known how many of those people will be going back to work this spring.<sup>17</sup>

Although more than half of Yunešit'in members live off-reserve, there has been a strong expression of interest to return to live in Yunešit'in if there was adequate housing and sufficient economic opportunities available. For example, in a 2019 household survey carried out with 30 Yunešit'in members, 13 of the respondents said that they lived off-reserve. When asked the reason for living off-reserve 10 out of 13 (77%) people said that it is because there is not enough adequate housing available in Yunešit'in, five out of 13 (38%) said that it is because there are not enough jobs in Yunešit'in, and seven out of 13 (54%) said that it is because they are working off-reserve. Importantly, only one out of 30 people surveyed said that they would prefer to live off-reserve.<sup>18</sup>

**STRATEGY ACTION 6:**  
Carry out a follow-up employment survey to understand what type of work community members are interested in, how they would like jobs to be structured, and for those off-reserve what jobs would bring them back.

- 15 Yunesit'in community vision
- 16 Forest to Frame Community Plan and Workforce Plan, 2017
- 17 Personal communication, April 27 2020
- 18 Household Survey Summary Results, 2019

## Formal Employment and Training

Although cultural-economic practices persist in Yunešit'in, the community and people of Yunešit'in are deeply embedded in the modern economy, and formal wage-earning jobs are of paramount importance to ensure that basic needs are met. Workforce capacity in Yunešit'in is currently quite limited, which reduces the options for employment and restricts activities primarily to labour-focused work in forestry and agriculture. A 2017 survey indicates that interest levels were high for industry faller certification, lumber grading, log scaling, joinery training, carpenter training, millwright training, electrician training, mechanic training, university, and college. The most popular employment area among youth was tied (at 79% of youth) between lumber grading and secondary manufacturing (the production of value-added wood products), while the second most popular employment area was tied (at 71% of youth) between sawmilling, log scaling,

and lumber sorting. Women in the community indicated that they were more inclined to pursue administrative, business development, marketing, and brand-development opportunities with respect to activities associated with a natural resource economy.<sup>19</sup>

Results also suggest that there is limited capacity within Yunešit'in in relation to the skills, knowledge, and abilities involved in the establishment, operation, and administration of value-added forestry enterprises, although many of the respondents indicated that they are interested in such training.<sup>20</sup>

There are currently six people with strong construction skills in Yunešit'in, including one with a certificate in log building, and others willing to learn.

**See Critical Linking Strategy: “Forest to Frame” Program**

### STRATEGY ACTION 7:

Seek out funding for training opportunities in the local sawmill, at Leading Edge, and in local construction projects including by exploring the (re) establishment of a formal sweat-equity house build/ownership program in Yunešit'in.

19 Indigenous Forestry Initiative Proposal (2018)

20 Forest to Frame Community Plan and Workforce Plan (2017)

## Cultural Economy

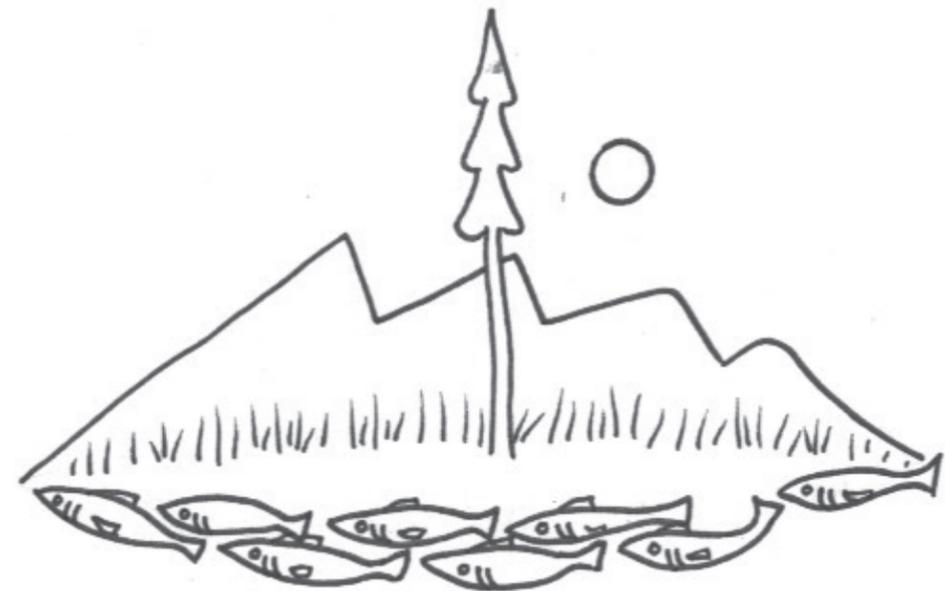
Despite an increasing dependence on the formal wage economy, cultural-economic activities such as hunting, fishing, gathering, horse chasing and catching, and the sharing of resources still persist in Yunešit'in and remain an important priority for the Yunešit'in people. These activities keep Yunešit'in people connected to their homelands; community members have indicated that they wish to advance modern economic activities that continue to ensure ecological and cultural sustainability, and that favours restoration over

extraction of land and water-based resources. Some types of work that the people of Yunešit'in have prioritized include, but are not limited to:

- restoration of degraded areas;
- tree-planting and native species-based restoration;
- monitoring and guardianship on the territory;
- building trails and maintaining cabins; and
- guiding and ecotourism.<sup>21</sup>

### STRATEGY ACTION 8:

Consider including questions on the housing application about people's activities on the land as a part of the process of matching people to housing designs and locations that would support their lifestyle.



By Russell Myers-Ross

21 Bhattacharyya et al. (2017)



## Governance

“Our spiritual relationship to the land is tied to our ancestral stories. Lhin Desch’oysh represents our people as it describes our relationship to the animals, explains how the land was shaped, and teaches the basis of our laws. Our Diyen, those who have powers drawn from the land, have gifts that help people.”<sup>22</sup>

The Yunešit’in Government has only recently established formal governance protocols and policies in relation to housing. The housing policy<sup>23</sup> was developed, ratified and accepted by the community with a plan for implementation in 2016, but the system has not been utilized mainly due to a lack of housing construction activity.

A Housing Committee also exists, which is the permanent committee established by Chief and Council to assist in the delivery and operation of all on-reserve housing. It is comprised of five voting community members and non-voting members including the Housing Coordinator and the Councillor with the housing portfolio.

Current funding for housing in Yunešit’in comes in the form of a contribution agreement with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Department of Canada (AANDC), Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and own-source revenue of Yunešit’in with the backing of the First Nation Market Housing Fund or Bank of Montreal. In addition, Yunešit’in is expecting to receive a portion of the Tšilhqot’in National Government housing funds — although the form of this contribution has not yet been determined. It is also understood that TNG will be providing capacity building support, which could be in the form of funding for a full-time Housing Coordinator position in each community.

### STRATEGY ACTION 9:

**Seek out funding support for a part time-time housing ecosystem coordinator position which will focus efforts toward increasing housing ecosystem integration within Yunešit’in and TNG including through collaboration with the Lands (NEN) Coordinator, the Housing Coordinator and participation in the Housing Committee.**

## Housing Policy: House Rental and Ownership

With the exception of those paying down mortgages on CMHC Section 95 homes, no rent is being charged or fees being paid by Yunešit’in members for housing on-reserve at this time. This presents a challenge in terms of keeping the housing portfolio revenue positive, particularly given the lack of external funding available for the administration, repair and building of new

housing on-reserve. Frustrating this problem is the indication that many are willing to pay rent off-reserve in William’s Lake.

To overcome this challenge the Yunešit’in Government has laid out clear rules in relation to rent and fee collection in the new housing policy, but it is evident that the socially imbedded nature of housing on reserve can result in an ad-hoc application and enforcement of rules.

### STRATEGY ACTION 10:

**Carry out a ‘willingness to pay’ study/workshop in order to gain a better understanding of what might be required for members to start to pay something for housing on-reserve, and further clarify in the policy the conditions under which policy exceptions may apply.**

For those paying down CMHC Section 95 homes (through rent payments to the band), the option is available for them to become an owner of that home once the mortgage is complete, but

only if they are in a good financial situation and employed, otherwise the house is supposed to become a rental.

### STRATEGY ACTION 11:

**Carry out a land tenure community workshop in order to validate housing policy rules around distribution, ownership and allocation, and to better understand what types of property and ownership structures are culturally appropriate to Yunešit’in members.**

22 Yunesit’in community vision

23 Yunešit’in Government. Housing Policy (2016)

The current housing policy declares that to encourage members to build their own homes, the Yunešit'in Government will assist members to build or buy a house on-reserve by providing a subsidy in the form of a mortgage down payment (subject to available funding).

Home ownership itself is appears to be a vague concept in the community. Included in the housing policy are rules in relation to distribution, ownership and allocation, but a lack of implementation has meant that these policies have not been tested amongst community members for cultural appropriateness. More broadly, property within Yunešit'in and Tšilhqot'in title lands is understood as collectively owned lands and any individual claims to ownership over land are recognized customarily.<sup>24</sup> There do not exist any certificates of possession, long-term leases or any other land tenure designation in Yunešit'in.

### Nation Housing Authority

Yunešit'in and all of the other Tšilhqot'in communities are at a unique cross-roads where Aboriginal title recognition has further

empowered them to advance a new mode of governance, jurisdiction and collaboration at the TNG level. Housing governance is perhaps one of the areas where it appears that there is the greatest need for this collective Nation-level of support. As such, TNG has been mandated by the Chiefs of all six Tšilhqot'in communities to develop a Nation Housing Authority, a Housing Strategy and to administer the distribution of housing funds negotiated with the federal government. However, there appears to be reticence across most of the Tšilhqot'in communities to hand over all housing responsibilities to TNG. The fear is that already existing community-developed and approved housing policies will be neglected, and that a TNG Housing Authority will be less responsive to local needs and emergencies. Further research and analysis at the TNG level and across all communities is required to fully elaborate and detail the potential role and structure of a Nation level housing authority.

**See Critical Linking Strategy: TNG Housing Authority**

#### STRATEGY ACTION 12:

**Develop a community vision for a housing ecosystem strategy and ascertain the level to which Yunešit'in people wish to integrate their housing strategy, policies, roles and responsibilities with that of TNG.**

## Part 2: Yunešit'in Housing Ecosystem Overview

The primary purpose of developing a housing ecosystem overview is to organize pre-existing community level knowledge and information into an actionable framework that brings together previously disparate information, enabling a cross-sectoral understanding of the needs, assets, and opportunities that exist territorially such that they can be formulated into an integrated housing ecosystem strategy.

A housing ecosystem strategy should therefore be developed with the fundamental understanding that housing is much more than just shelter. A house forms a part of a community connected through a network of natural, social, economic and cultural assets that relate to one another over time and space. Housing ecosystem

strategies underpinned by innovations in governance should act in conjunction with wider community economic development, land-use and infrastructure plans and be designed to reinvigorate the relationships that Indigenous peoples have with their homelands through cultural economic activities. As such, a housing ecosystem strategy requires a profound respect for culture with a focus on the new and evolving needs for the present and all generations yet to come.

In order to create a strong housing ecosystem, which satisfies the diverse **Needs** of the community, Yunešit'in must continue to leverage its existing **Assets** to develop and realize new **Opportunities**.

### Needs

- Housing maintenance and renovation work tracking system
- Increased funding for new housing builds and renovations
- Increased coordination with the Tšilhqot'in National Government
- More housing built to accommodate the 20 people on the waiting list
- Improved refuse/dump/recycling facilities and potentially relocation (currently close to homes, eyesight for visitors, wildlife/bear danger)
- Increased capacity of the water filtration plant
- Land designation for the gas station enterprise
- Articulation of property and ownership structures in Yunešit'in reserve and on Category "A" lands

24 Personal communication, April 22 (2020)

- A community freezer to hold the yearly supply of hunted game, fish, and other essential foods
- Backup generators
- Improved housing designs to address cultural and climatic needs
- More employment opportunities that are appropriate to the cultural and social needs of community members
- A land use and management plan for Yunešit'in territory including the Dasiqox Tribal Park and the creation of a Yunešit'in lands and stewardship department
- access; sun exposure; access to clean water; priority water rights
- A fully functioning greenhouse
- A newly constructed daycare centre
- A nearly constructed Guesthouse
- A formal corporate governance structure with a board and legal structure for Yunešit'in Development Enterprises (forestry, fencing, etc.)
- A new housing policy
- Elhdaqox Developments Ltd: 37% ownership and partnership with Tl'esqox and Celtic Engineering

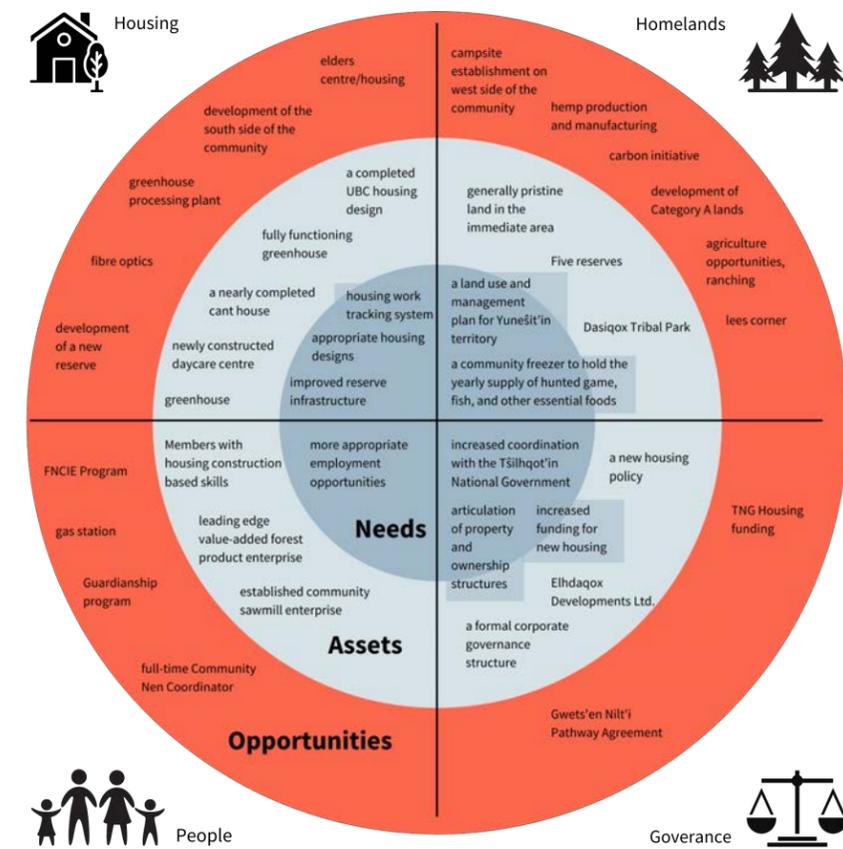
### Assets

- Five reserves (I.R. Stone No. 1, Stone No. 1A, Saddle Horse No. 2, Brigham Creek No. 3, Stone No. 4)
- An established community sawmill enterprise providing cants and some dimensional lumber for local construction, as well as employment
- A completed housing design through UBC Architecture
- A nearly completed cant house
- Leading Edge value-added forest product enterprise located in Horsefly, BC can provide finished housing materials (high end home building products, tongue and groove, hardwood floors, post and beam, wall systems, glue lamination etc.), employment and potentially revenue to reinvest back into the community
- Members in the community with construction, carpentry and heavy equipment operation skills
- Generally pristine land in the immediate area; good soil available; hay fields; river

### Opportunities

- Development of the South side of the community
- Development of a new reserve (4 reserves in total)
- Development of Category A title negotiation lands
- Camp site establishment on West side of the community
- Development potential along the road near Joanna Haines' place
- Greenhouse processing plant
- Discussion of an elders centre/housing being built that will keep elders close to home and create some jobs
- Fibre Optics in Tšilhqot'in communities – coming within next 2 years
- Possibilities to use Yunešit'in agricultural

- land for hemp production and eventually the manufacturing of hempcrete blocks that can be utilized in Tšilhqot'in housing.
- Gas Station feasibility complete
- Ranching feasibility — Deer Creek Ranch: agriculture opportunities, ranching
- Lees Corner — offer in to explore highest and best use
- Taseko Lake Lodge — shelved for now
- Carbon initiative options
- Forest 2 Frame — forest health, small scale logging, milling, cants
- FNCIE Program — training in trades, increasing pride among members
- \$21.5 million dollars to distributed between all of the 6 Tšilhqot'in communities for housing and capacity development
- Guardianship program development and increased opportunities for members to get out on the land
- Hiring of a full-time Community Nen (Water, Lands & Resources) Coordinator in Yunešit'in
- Implementation of the groundbreaking tripartite framework agreement (Gwets'en Nilt'i Pathway Agreement)



The Housing Ecosystem Framework

Yunešit'in is in a strong position to advance an ecosystem-based approach to housing utilizing its access to timber, its sawmill enterprise, and the Leading Edge facility in Horsefly (among other assets and opportunities) in order to begin to address its needs. Strengthening this position is a high level of cooperation with other Tšilhqot'in communities — primarily Xeni-Gwet'in through the Dasiqox Tribal Park, and Tl'esqox through Elhdaqox Developments Ltd. — as well as a strong sense of unity and coordination on housing, lands, and governance through the Tšilhqot'in National Government and as a result of the 2015 title recognition.

In the following section we elaborate several critical linking strategies, which bring together different components (assets and opportunities) of the housing ecosystem in order to satisfy needs. Some of these strategies are already underway by the Yunešit'in Government, and some require further development.

## Critical Linking Strategies

### Critical Linking Strategy A: Land Use Planning and Housing

Given the expectation of increased jurisdiction over lands, there is a critical need for Yunešit'in to develop an ecosystem-based land use management plan covering not only their reserve lands but also potential Category "A" lands and the broader traditional territory including the Dasiqox Tribal Park. The development of such a plan would facilitate the identified need of creating a Yunešit'in lands and stewardship department that could function independently of the TNG (as mandated by the Yunešit'in

community), while also coordinating with TNG via the creation of a Community Nen (Water, Lands & Resources) Coordinator position for Yunešit'in (currently underway). Such a process might also support the need for the creation of a housing cadastral system at the TNG level (see below). It is critical that housing and the built-environment are central to any land use planning and management activities, as doing so will allow for a long-term vision of housing within Yunešit'in territory that better conforms to the land-based cultural-economic practices of the Yunešit'in people and that supports the continuance of their connection and relationship to their homelands.

### Critical Linking Strategy B: "Forest to Frame" Program

Connecting housing construction needs to forest resource extraction has been the fundamental objective of Yunešit'in's Forest to Frame program for several years. Although not fully realized, Yunešit'in has a plan in place to support the full spectrum of the forest to frame supply chain (i.e. access to timber, milling capacity, and housing need). Under current small-scale forestry activities, it is estimated that Yunešit'in has access to approximately 8,000 cubic meters of timber per year. Although the current supply is primarily over-sized Douglas-fir and not necessarily suitable for local milling purposes, there do exist opportunities for log trades and purchases with industry partners.<sup>25</sup> Yunešit'in has a community mill that has been operating for several years off site and since February 2020 within the reserve.

At the time of writing, Yunešit'in was in the process of acquiring the Leading Edge Wood Products facility which will enable rough cuts

from the mill to be processed into roofing, siding, flooring, stair treads, beams and custom home building materials for local housing projects.<sup>26</sup> Leading Edge can produce many value-added products and also has a kiln that allows for choice of moisture content of wood. While it is beyond the purview of this report to assess the business feasibility of the Yunešit'in sawmill and Leading Edge facility as concerns provision of local housing materials, there are indications that the supply and demand characteristics make such an approach feasible. This determination considers not only the internal housing and construction needs within Yunešit'in but also the immediate plans by TNG to invest \$4 million into building 36 houses this year, followed by a much larger investment for the construction of upwards of 300 houses over the next five years.

### Critical Linking Strategy C: Connecting Indigenous-led conservation and housing

Nexwagwez'an, or the Dasiqox tribal park, was created to ensure the realization of three interconnected goals in the tribal park caretaker area: ecosystem protection, cultural revitalization, and economy for sustainable livelihoods. Given these interrelated goals, the Dasiqox tribal park offers a unique opportunity to demonstrate what is economically possible within a framework of Indigenous-led conservation. Through small-scale 'needs-based' or 'livelihoods' forestry practices connected with local value-added production and housing construction activities within Yunešit'in and other Tšilhqot'in communities, Dasiqox could be a suitable way to advance a conservation economy.<sup>27</sup>

### Critical Linking Strategy D: TNG Housing Authority

A Nation-level housing authority that respects decision making and jurisdiction at the community level could be of great benefit to Yunešit'in. The following list includes activities that are already underway at the TNG level, and activities that could potentially be developed that would support the satisfaction of Yunešit'in needs.

- TNG could develop a **Tšilhqot'in Building Code** to ensure that any community-level construction activities meet minimum standards as agreed upon by the communities. These standards could be a condition of Nation-level funds disbursements for housing should a cash disbursement model of distribution be selected
- TNG could develop a **Nation-level contractor enterprise** which hires and trains members from all of the communities and serves as the main contractor for housing constructed utilizing Nation-level funds
- TNG could serve as a central Tšilhqot'in **housing supply**, demand and labour coordinating hub where information regarding construction plans and the labour and material requirements for those builds would be made available to Tšilhqot'in housing related businesses and skilled labourers. This would enable inter-community coordination and potentially trading arrangements, and would create

26 Leading Edge Business Plan, 2019

27 A 2017 Dasiqox Forest Harvest Scenarios report suggested converting the Dasiqox Tribal Park area into a First Nations Woodland License and implement a needs-focused eco-system-based management forestry strategy

the economy of scale needed to maintain a needs-first T̂silhqot'in housing economy supported by businesses like Leading Edge

- TNG could serve as **communication hub** for all of the communities, ensuring that best practices are shared and that all of the communities are aware of funding, training or other opportunities
- TNG could create a **Land Registry** and integrated cadastral system that serves as the official legal registration of properties (land, buildings and apartments), of legal rights and of rightful claimants under T̂silhqot'in law.<sup>28</sup> This would serve to remedy the insecurity and uncertainty of tenure that exists for T̂silhqot'in members under current customary ownership systems.

above. However, it is important also to recognize that the implementation of a housing ecosystem strategy may require initiatives and enterprises that build cultural, social, and ecological well-being, rather than just monetary wealth, particularly in the early stages of development. While all efforts should be made to realize these efforts in a cost-effective manner, feasibility studies need to articulate community aspirations and values and factor them into the cost analyses of any project. Ultimately, increased costs to housing construction processes or other related enterprises may be justified within a systems approach to housing if community indicators of success are being achieved. As such, a critical process will be community engagement and participatory indicator development such that community member's inputs, aspirations, and values are actively driving the development of a housing ecosystem strategy and the monitoring of its implementation.

### Indicator Development

In addition to the action strategies, feasibility studies may also be required in order to further advance the critical linking strategies discussed

**STRATEGY ACTION 13:**  
 Develop a community-driven monitoring framework for a housing ecosystem strategy and related activities, including quantitative and qualitative monitoring of upcoming housing builds.

<sup>28</sup> Although some work has been done to articulate T̂silhqot'in law, there is a need to further articulate and operationalize T̂silhqot'in Land Laws and the development of T̂silhqot'in specific land tenure systems for title lands and Category "A" lands. This outcomes of such a process could eventually form a part of the T̂silhqot'in Constitution which is under discussion.

### Next Steps

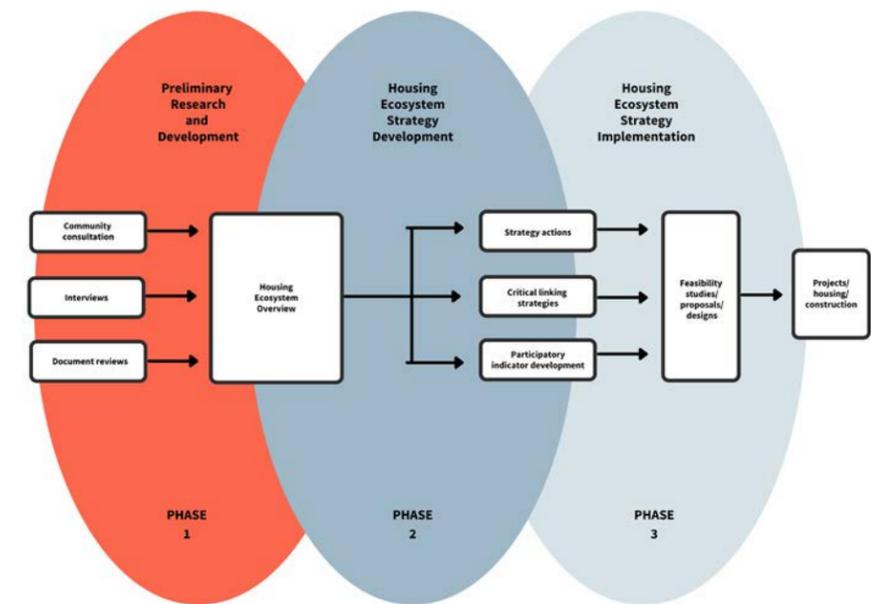
"Yunesit'in is a place of beauty. We move forward together, in healing, making positive changes to ensure our children and future generations may lead a healthy life."<sup>29</sup>

### Strategy Development

This report has provided an important snapshot in time of the needs, assets and opportunities that exist within Yunešit'in territory. Although it is meant to provide a starting point for the development of a housing ecosystem strategy, it is by itself not sufficient for this process. A housing ecosystem strategy should be considered an ongoing process that requires continued community engagement.

The strategy actions provided throughout this document offer practical next steps for the Yunešit'in Government to take in order to move ahead a housing ecosystem strategy. Each of the following strategy actions should be assessed for appropriateness, ranked according to priorities and delegated to appropriate staff or other supporting actors outside of the community as needed.

**Strategy Action 1:** *Finalize one or several housing designs and establish a multi-year (5 year) housing construction plan, which includes material needs, labour requirements, and budgets. This can then inform a coordinated approach to labour capacity training, funding requests, and (forest) materials provision implemented in conjunction with the community mill, Leading edge and other relevant departments within Yunešit'in government (and potentially TNG).*



Housing Ecosystem Strategy Development Phases

**Strategy Action 2:** Carry out a Yunešit'in critical infrastructure assessment to ascertain the capacity and appropriateness of all existing facilities to support the estimated growth and cultural-economic needs of the community.

**Strategy Action 3:** Develop a feasibility study for integrated heat and energy solutions for new builds in the community that link value-added forest product waste with housing energy and heat needs ("Forest to Furnace").

**Strategy Action 4:** Develop a land use planning taskforce comprised of Community Nen (Water, Lands & Resources) Coordinator position, the Housing Coordinator, and Chief and Council to develop a 'housing' ecosystem-based land use management plan, which recognizes that land use planning and management must take into account the material, cultural, spiritual, and economic needs of Yunešit'in members, which inherently includes housing.

**Strategy Action 5:** Leverage the strong working relationship and aligned value set that exists between Xeni Gwet'i'in and Yunešit'in in relation to forestry and housing to develop a bi-lateral housing ecosystem management committee that examines both timber harvesting scenarios within the Dasiqox tribal park strictly for the purposes of local housing provision, as well as opportunities to share resources, skills, and labour for the purposes of housing provision.

**Strategy Action 6:** Carry out a follow-up employment survey to understand what type of work community members are interested in, how they would like jobs to be structured, and for those off-reserve what jobs would bring them back.

**Strategy Action 7:** Seek out funding for training opportunities in the local sawmill, at Leading Edge,

and in local construction projects including by exploring the (re)establishment of a formal sweat-equity house build/ownership program in Yunešit'in.

**Strategy Action 8:** Consider including questions on the housing application about people's activities on the land as a part of the process of matching people to housing designs and locations that would support their lifestyle.

**Strategy Action 9:** Seek out funding support for a part time-time housing ecosystem coordinator position which will focus efforts towards increasing housing ecosystem integration within Yunešit'in and TNG including through collaboration with the Lands (NEN) Coordinator, the Housing Coordinator and participation in the housing committee.

**Strategy Action 10:** Carry out a 'willingness to pay' study/workshop in order to gain a better understanding of what might be required for members to start to pay something for housing on-reserve, and further clarify in the policy the conditions under which policy exceptions may apply.

**Strategy Action 11:** Carry out a land tenure community workshop in order to validate housing policy rules around distribution, ownership and allocation, and to better understand what types of property and ownership structures are culturally appropriate to Yunešit'in members.

**Strategy Action 12:** Develop a community vision for a housing ecosystem strategy and ascertain the level to which Yunešit'in people wish to integrate their housing strategy, policies, roles and responsibilities with that of TNG.

**Strategy Action 13:** Develop a community-driven monitoring framework for a housing ecosystem strategy and related activities, including quantitative and qualitative monitoring of upcoming housing builds.

## Contact

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