

B.C.'s Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan

What is ORAAP?

In BC, 78% of all Aboriginal¹ people live off-reserve. Also, nearly 50% of the Aboriginal population is under the age of 25, representing an important element of BC's future workforce.

There are also significant and unacceptable socio-economic gaps in all key sectors within the Aboriginal off-reserve/urban population in BC.

The *October 3, 2011, Speech from the Throne* acknowledged the importance of the off-reserve Aboriginal population and committed the provincial government to work with Aboriginal partners, the federal government and local governments to develop an Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan (ORAAP) to improve socio-economic outcomes for off-reserve Aboriginal people in British Columbia.

Given the common goals and objectives of ORAAP and the federal government's Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS), the federal and provincial governments have agreed to integrally link these initiatives.

Who is responsible for ORAAP?

The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR) is tasked with coordinating ORAAP. To oversee the development and implementation of ORAAP, MARR has convened a Provincial Coordination Team (PCT) composed of partners from all levels of government and Aboriginal organizations as follows:

- *BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC)*
- *Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC)*
- *Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada*
- *Union of British Columbia Municipalities*
- *MARR*
- *Ministry of Children and Family Development*
- *Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation*

ORAAP Vision: A world where all 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.

What has ORAAP accomplished so far?

"Achieving meaningful change for B.C.'s off-reserve community is a challenge, but it's clear that the Off-reserve Aboriginal Action Plan is moving us in the right direction." - Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation John Rustad

A year-end report was prepared highlighting the research, outcomes, common themes, learnings, and recommendations that emerged from the key ORAAP/UAS activities in 2012/13.

Significant outcomes of ORAAP include:

Federal-Provincial Collaboration A formal agreement, including a Memorandum of Collaboration, was reached to align planning and resources for the urban/off reserve Aboriginal population².

BCAAFC Protocol Agreement A protocol agreement between BCAAFC and the Province to collaborate on ORAAP was signed.

Research Evidenced-based research to support ORAAP includes a compilation of statistics and a review of over 700 provincial programs that support B.C.'s off-reserve/urban Aboriginal population.

BC Aboriginal Social Innovation Competition This competition was undertaken to mobilize Aboriginal communities to generate innovative ideas that will have a positive social impact.

¹ First Nation, Métis and Inuit

² In 2012/13, the federal government invested \$355,000 and the province invested \$400,000 for ORAAP planning.

Community Pilots In 2012/13, the PCT engaged with partners in 5 communities to support the development of community-driven action plans reflecting local interests and ultimately improving socio-economic outcomes for off-reserve/urban Aboriginal people.

- **Duncan** – A new model for collaboration between local community organizations was developed as a result of in-depth community engagement, including a large community conference, youth and Elder’s gatherings and a survey. *“Nuts’amat Shqwaluwun:” Working together with one heart and one mind is the guiding principle behind the Duncan team’s work.-Duncan ORAAP team*
- **Kamloops** – New partnerships were built and a multi-organizational community team was established to implement a community plan based on needs and priorities identified by the community in interviews, focus groups and surveys. *“ORAAP has been an opportunity for the cross-pollination of information so everyone is truly aware of what is going on....” -Kamloops ORAAP team*
- **Prince George** –Relationships were strengthened between many community stakeholders, and a community vision and priorities were identified through a leadership gathering, cultural nights and focus groups. *“[through ORAAP]... we found there are opportunities for further collaboration and a greater interest and openness to trying something new.” -Prince George ORAAP team*
- **Surrey** – Community relationships were strengthened and a plan that identifies issues facing Aboriginal people in Surrey was achieved through interviews, surveys and Métis focused engagement. *“ORAAP has highlighted the need for a formal process that recognizes the need for change in policy and programming. Aboriginal approaches support “Mel Shun um Mustimuhw: Clearing the way for our People” -Surrey ORAAP team*
- **Vancouver** - Key priorities and actions were identified and constructive community dialogues and partnerships were supported through open and inclusive community forums and focus groups. *“The Off Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan is more than well received by the urban Aboriginal community... we look forward to not only more open dialogue but financial commitments that will directly assist our urban aboriginal people.” - Vancouver ORAAP team*

Key Themes Emerged: Employment, Education and Training; Health and Wellness; Capacity Building; Relationships; Collaboration; Cultural Awareness; Youth and Elders.

Métis Community Engagement MNBC led an engagement process with their membership in each of the 5 pilot communities, resulting in enhanced engagement in ORAAP and a plan based on Métis priorities.

Aboriginal Youth Engagement Given that 50% of the Aboriginal population is under the age of 25, hearing and understanding the youth voice was a critical success factor in ORAAP. BCAAFC and MNBC engaged with urban Aboriginal youth to get a better sense of their key interests and priorities.

What makes ORAAP unique and Successful?

ORAAP Guiding Principles: Collaboration; Community-Based; Healing and Reconciliation; Social Innovation; Integration of Programs and Services; Capacity Building; and, Focused and Measureable Outcomes.

The ORAAP PCT and community partners have achieved a great level of progress toward achieving the vision for ORAAP. ORAAP is not merely the addition of a new program or project, but rather a culture *shift in the way governments in BC work with Aboriginal people living off reserve* leading to responses to community priorities developed in partnership with Aboriginal organizations and to more strategic coordination that ensures the investments being made to support the Aboriginal population create tangible results and significantly improve outcomes.

What’s next for ORAAP?

Due to the complexity of the issues facing the off-reserve Aboriginal population, ORAAP requires a long-term, socially innovative approach to improving socio-economic outcomes of off-reserve/urban Aboriginal people and addressing their root causes.

Given that jobs, training and youth have emerged as one of the key ORAAP community priorities, in 2013/14, ORAAP partners, including community pilot leads, MNBC and the BCAAFC, will build on the achievements of 2012/13 and focus on *jobs, training and youth* and other key priorities at both community and provincial levels.