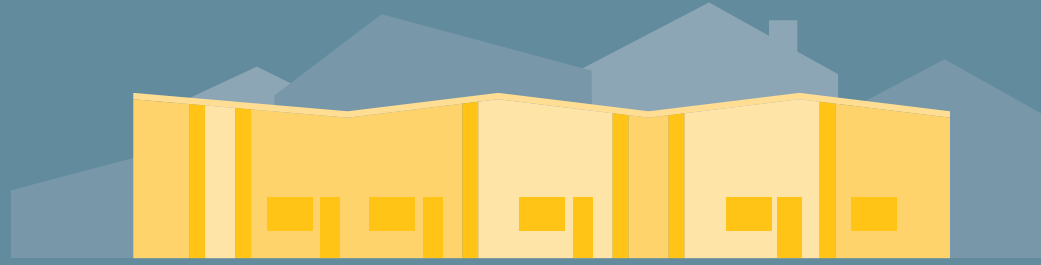


Nuutsumuut Lelum

ISLAND URBAN INDIGENOUS WELLNESS SOCIETY



Community Background

Geography

Nuutsumuut Lelum is located on the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation on Vancouver Island in Nanaimo, BC.

Land Governance

Fee simple land (governed by Municipal by-laws)

Timeline 2015–2018

The Island Urban Indigenous Wellness Society (formerly Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre) is a not-for-profit organization with a focus on early childhood development, prevention, collaboration, and Culture. They acknowledge the critical importance of supporting Indigenous communities with healthy development in the early years.

The Island Urban Indigenous Wellness Society has a goal to provide safe, affordable and Culturally appropriate housing for Urban Indigenous communities and space to support children and Youth learning outside the classroom.

The Island Urban Indigenous Wellness Society, in partnership with government agencies and other community organizations, developed Nuutsumuut Lelum over a two year period. Nuutsumuut Lelum is a 25-unit, affordable housing development for Urban Indigenous Youth, Elders, and families, anchored by a communal space for gatherings, celebration and other activities.

Nuutsumuut Lelum balances environmental, social and cultural goals, reflecting local Indigenous Culture alongside the creation of dignified homes that achieve the highest standard of energy performance. The project was built to the Passive House standard, which means it requires very little energy to achieve a comfortable temperature year-round, making conventional heating and air conditioning systems obsolete.

Nuutsumuut Lelum welcomed Indigenous Youth, Elders, and families into their new homes in June 2018.

Nuutsumuut Lelum (Island Urban Indigenous Wellness Society)

The Island Urban Indigenous Wellness Society is a not-for-profit organization with a focus on early childhood development and providing Safe, Affordable and Culturally Appropriate Housing for the Urban Indigenous community it serves.

Nuutsumuut Lelum is translated from Hul'q'umi'num' Nuutsumuut = "All in one" and Lelum = "house"



Community champions

We honour and acknowledge the Board and Project Manager Walter Hoogland, whose vision for Nuutsumuut Lelum came about from the deep need for safe, affordable, and culturally appropriate housing for the Urban Indigenous community in Nanaimo.

The project has been managed by Thomas O'Brien.

Funder

The project received \$4.6 million from the Social Infrastructure Fund (Government of Canada, CMHC, Government of British Columbia, BC Housing), \$1.4 million of own-source revenue, and \$770,000 in land value and \$221,000 in waived fees from the City of Nanaimo.

Other Partners

BC Housing, DYS Architecture, Mark Ashby Architecture, Saywell Construction Management, Designed Air Systems Ltd, Rocky Point Engineering, Osprey Electric, Waywest Mechanical Ltd, Herold Engineering, and RDH Building Science.

General Description and Policy Context

Gentle Density Type(s)

Rowhouses

Community Plans and Policies

[Nanaimo Housing Needs Report \(2023\)](#), [Nanaimo Affordable Housing Strategy \(2018\)](#), and [Nanaimo Action Plan to End Homelessness \(2018-2023\)](#)

Process

In Nanaimo, Indigenous people make up about 8-10% of the total population, but represent over 35% of the homeless population. Urban Indigenous Communities often struggle with the health and safety of their families, partially driven by housing that doesn't meet the needs of residents.

The Island Urban Indigenous Wellness Society has a goal to provide safe, affordable and culturally appropriate housing and gathering space for Urban Indigenous communities and space to support children and Youth learning outside the classroom. The Society supports Urban Indigenous People from Snuneymuxw, Snaw naw as and Stzuminus, as well as other First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities.

The Society, in partnership with BC Housing, the City of Nanaimo and other partners, collaborated to address this need through a new housing project. The Society sought out funding from partners and collaborated with the City of Nanaimo to access land for the project for a small fee on the condition that the housing constructed on the land be Passive House certified.

Over two years, the Society worked with architects, contractors, engineers and builders to develop Nuutsumuut Lelum. Nuutsumuut Lelum is made up of 25 affordable rental units in a townhouse complex for Youth, Elders, and families from Urban Indigenous Communities. The three two-storey wood frame buildings at Nuutsumuut Lelum consist of 12 three-bedroom, three two-bedroom units for families, six one-bedrooms (three of which are designated for Elders), and four bachelor units designed for Youth transitioning to independent living.



General Description and Policy Context *Continued*

Nuutsumuut Lelum integrates Indigenous Cultural elements such as communal spaces, cedar siding, a 37-foot totem pole carved by Snuneymuxw First Nation artist Noel Brown, and Metis artwork by Keltie Chamberlain located on the property. Nuutsumuut Lelum was developed to encourage community building. The Nuutsumuut Lelum design took into consideration Coastal Indigenous architecture and the buildings are a representation of traditional Coast Salish longhouses. The three townhouse-style buildings are also arranged around a central circular outdoor courtyard, which provides a place for community gathering, intergenerational learning and Culture sharing, and it includes a fire pit used to foster ceremony, singing, drumming, dancing and storytelling. Two of the townhouses face one another to promote socializing and relationship building among neighbors. A large, shared common room is equipped with a warming kitchen and space for larger gatherings like family birthday parties, Cultural activities, and programs supported by the organization and their community partners. Overall, the project supports families and individuals to overcome trauma in a supportive community environment.

The project is Passive House certified, making it highly energy efficient (up to 85% more energy efficient compared to typical construction standards) and is the highest step on British Columbia's new Energy Step Code. The Passive House building elements include low slope roofs that allow suites to receive full sun in winter and reduce the summer heat, 10 inches of polyiso foam insulation in the roof assemblies that deliver an R-value of 45 and triple-glazed windows and doors throughout. An airtight seal enables units to be heated by a heat recovery ventilator system that warms incoming air, helping to keep temperatures comfortable year-round. Heat pumps are used to move heat from the air to the hot water storage tank, further reducing the energy needed for hot water. The Heat Recovery Ventilator (HRV) constantly recirculates fresh clean air and increases indoor air quality, creating a healthier living environment.



Outcomes

Community of 3 Two-story Rowhouses

25 UNITS TOTAL

12 three-bedroom units | 3 two-bedroom units

6 one-bedroom units | 4 studio/bachelor units



Strengths

This project has created a vibrant community that provides Urban Indigenous Youth, Elders, and families a safe, affordable, and Culturally appropriate place to call home. Families take pride and love where they live and are passionate about their community.

The following are the top practices that made the project successful:

- **Culturally Appropriate Design:** Nuutsumuut Lelum was designed to resemble traditional Coast Salish longhouses, with cedar siding and long, low buildings. The buildings feature a 37-foot totem pole carved by Snuneymuxw artist Noel Brown and Metis artwork by Keltie Chamberlain. An open courtyard, fire pit, and amenity room/library provide space for cultural and social gatherings.
- **Affordability:** The project's building systems reduce maintenance costs and energy consumption, keeping monthly energy bills affordable. Together, low energy costs, low maintenance costs, and affordable rents help keep the units sustainable for Urban Indigenous Youth, Elders, and families.
- **Community Building:** The project's unique building design and shared amenities encourage community building. The four bachelor apartments are designed for Youth transitioning out of care (between the ages of 18 and 25), and three one-bedroom units are designated for Elders. Youth and Elders living in the community fosters intergenerational knowledge sharing, traditional teachings, and learnings. The community holds each other up in a good way through their challenges and successes, such as by holding events, celebrating Youth graduations, and connecting families to wrap-around resources and support services. The community at Nuutsumuut Lelum deeply believes they are stronger together. A community Facebook page was started to share events, and memos are posted on doors for those who aren't social media inclined.

- **Net Zero Building Standard:** Nuutsumuut Lelum was the first Passive House certified multi-family residential building in BC. The Passive House design meets high quality building standards and is up to 85% more energy efficient than standard construction. Passive House design includes: triple glazed windows and doors, building orientation, air-tight envelope, and eight to ten inches of insulation on the entire building envelope including the roof, foundation, and walls.

Surprises

- As Nuutsumuut Lelum was the first affordable Passive House project in the area, assembling a construction team with relevant experience was difficult and required continuous learning among the team about Passive Housing construction.
- As Nuutsumuut Lelum has a unique building design, new tenants are provided with orientations on how the building systems operate.
- Passive House design is known to have a potential of a 1- to 3-percent overheating factor. During extreme heat events, the team provides support to families by checking in, opening the amenity room as a cooling centre, and providing cold bottles of water. IUIWS applied and was approved for funding to provide fans for all units at Nuutsumuut Lelum.



Next steps

The next steps for Nuutsumuut Lelum continue to enhance the lives of our community through Cultural gatherings, programs, services, and food security.

- ✓ Orient new tenants and provide continuing education to existing tenants about Passive House building features
- ✓ Continue to work with engineering firms to identify cooling opportunities in units, especially during heat events



“It’s been rewarding to see our vision for the project come to fruition.”

“We have a deep belief we are stronger as one, stronger when we work together.”

“I feel in my heart it’s a living entity. It’s become something in its own.”

“We don’t want to layer more challenges on tenants, if we can sit and have open conversations and meet them where they’re at, we can better support them”.

– Thomas O'Brien, Manager of Housing and Facilities

Resources

https://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/_Library/CCAQ_First_Nations_EnergySave/Nuutsumuut_Lelum_case_study.pdf

<https://sabmagazine.com/passive-house-project-nuutsumuut-lelum/>

<https://passivehouseaccelerator.com/articles/nanaimo-aboriginal-centre-passive-housing>

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023HOU0037-000997>