

Tl'etinqox Community

ELDER CABINS



Community Background

Geography

Tl'etinqox is located on the Chilcotin Plateau and is crossed by T̓silhqox (Chilcotin River), in interior BC, 100km west of Williams Lake along Highway 20.

Land Governance

Reserve Land (Governed under the Indian Act)

Timeline *2019-2020*

Tl'etinqox began to develop Elders Cabins in 2019 to honour the intentions, prayers, and needs of their Elders by providing safe and affordable living spaces for them to age in place, at the heart of the community.

Nestled near the Elders Centre, the six Elder cabin-like homes are placed to form a circle to represent the four sacred directions, the cycle of the seasons, the cycle of life and more, and to encourage community gathering. The cabins were intentionally kept small as one-bedrooms, to require little upkeep while providing Elders with their basic needs. The cabins are all ground floor units designed to accommodate Elder's accessibility needs for those with limited mobility. Though cabin construction was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the cabins were completed in 2020, and began welcoming Elder applications for tenancy in September 2020.

Tl'etinqox

Tl'etinqox is one of the six communities that form the T̓silhqot'in Nation, the People of the River, the name loosely means "river flats".



Community champions

Brent Lulua, Housing Project Manager, and Ashley Hunlin, Housing Clerk, with support from Chief and Council and Executive Director, Ashton Harry.

Other Partners

Zirnhelt Timber Frames



General Description and Policy Context

Gentle Density Type(s)

Cabin-style homes

Community Plans and Policies

Comprehensive Community Plan (2017)

Process

Tl'etinqox has a total population of 1,729 registered members, with 350 members living in-community. Bringing community members home is a priority for Tl'etinqox, as well as finding creative solutions to overcrowding and mold in the current housing stock.

Tl'etinqox developed a Community Comprehensive Plan in 2017, which helped reconfirm the need for safe spaces for Elders to age in place in the community. To meet this need, Tl'etinqox initially envisioned a single complex for Elders to live in community and on-reserve, rather than having to leave to live in assisted living and care homes outside the community. Due to available funding, the Elder Cabins became the most feasible housing option for Elders to remain in community in safe well-constructed homes, while relieving overcrowding in some existing homes.

The cabins were designed to be small, approximately 640 square feet, to minimize housework, while still creating space for independent kitchen and living spaces. The walls, siding and windows of each unit were prefabricated by Zirnhelt Timber Frames in 150 Mile House. The cabins highlight the natural beauty of timber with cozy, cabin-like interiors.

Elder tenancy applications opened for the cabins in September 2020, with tenants selected based on a needs-based system. As of July 2023, five cabins are occupied – two by Elders – while one remains vacant.



*Original rental announcement poster





Outcomes

6 Cabins

(six one-bedroom cabins in a circle)

Elders (65+)
pay \$250/month per unit

Non-elders
pay \$400/month per unit



Strengths

Overall, the Elder Cabins have been a success and Elders and members living in the cabins have been happy with the housing with very few complaints.

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

- **Honour T̓silhqot'in culture:** Tl'etinqox and T̓silhqot'in culture are visible in the design of the custom-made cabins. The six cabins are placed in a circle, which represents the four sacred directions, the cycle of the seasons, the cycle of life and more. The exterior of the cabins are painted the colors of the medicine wheel – yellow, white, black, and red. Finally, the “cabin feel” timber interior resembles cabins constructed by the T̓silhqot'in throughout the T̓silhqot'in Territory. Elders visit cabins seasonally with family on hunting, fishing, berry-picking, and plant harvesting trips, so cabin-like homes may remind them of traditional ways of living.
- **Wrap-around care for Elders:** The cabins are placed in a circle and face each other to promote community connection, with a patio area gathering space in the center for residents to gather among themselves and with family and community. The central location of the cabins allows Elders easy access to community services, events and information, including at the nearby Elders Centre. Tl'etinqox families also frequently pass by the Elders Cabins, making it easy for them to check in on their respected Elders.
- **Safe and well-constructed spaces:** The Elder Cabins provide opportunities for Elders to age in place, with a small footprint on one floor and a front door for wheelchairs and other mobility device accessibility. The Elders have a healthy, clean space of their own, close to family, without any overcrowding. The cabins are well constructed with minimal maintenance requirements and good sound barriers to keep quiet, despite being close to the busy community centre.

Surprises

- Some Elders have a strong attachment to their existing living situation, in large homes, with many family members. This has created some barriers to filling the units. As a result, Tl'etinqox opened the cabins up to non-Elder applicants with priority still going to Elders. Currently, three cabins are lived in by non-Elders.
- Some Elders are hesitant to move into the cabins due to a perception that the central location of the cabins will lead to noisy homes. Current residents, however, say the soundproofing is good.



Next steps

The next steps for the Elder Cabins and Housing include:

- ✓ Filling the sixth Elder Cabin with a Tl'etinqox Elder
- ✓ Building fencing around the Elder Cabins to protect Elders from wild horses and animals
- ✓ Focusing on renovating and removing mold from existing Elder homes

“Within our culture a circle often represents a lot — it represents the cycle of the seasons, cycle of life and that's a continuation of beginning or end”

- Tl'etinqox Chief Joe Alphonse



Resources

<https://www.wltribune.com/news/a-first-in-the-chilcotin-tletinqox-builds-six-unit-elders-complex>