

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: British Columbia Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN)
FROM: Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA)
DATE: March 8-9, 2018
RE: Support for the Urban Native Youth Association's new Native Youth Centre

PURPOSE

UNYA is requesting the support of BCAFN for its new Native Youth Centre (NYC) – a Centre of Excellence for Indigenous youth where they will be able to access programs and services that will help build their confidence, leadership, and spirit of independence.

RECOMMENDATION

UNYA recommends that BCAFN pass the attached resolution expressing support for UNYA and the NYC project, and committing BCAFN to work with UNYA, the First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) to call on the provincial and federal governments to support the project.

BACKGROUND

UNYA has a 30-year history and a proven model of success in delivering culturally-responsive programs and services to Indigenous youth who come from across the province to Metro Vancouver. In order to meet expanded needs and build on that success, UNYA has a vision to develop an innovative, state-of-the-art Native Youth Centre (NYC). The NYC will be the first of its kind in Canada – a purpose-built Indigenous youth-led Centre of Excellence, where young people can access resources, programs, and services that will help build their confidence, leadership, and spirit of independence. The NYC will bring 15 of UNYA's programs together under one roof with expanded and enriched programs and services. The project will include a complementary affordable housing component, built in partnership with the City of Vancouver, with priority for housing given to Indigenous youth and their families.

CURRENT STATUS

The land for the project, valued at \$19 million, has already been secured through major partnerships. Much of the background work for the project is already complete or underway, including a Functional Program, Concept Plan, Business Plan, Social Enterprise and Capital Campaign Feasibility Studies, and an initial Pro Forma for the housing component. UNYA is now in the process of working to secure funding from the provincial and federal governments, as well as support from private sector funders, to make this visionary project a reality.

ANALYSIS

The NYC has the potential to impact First Nations from across British Columbia, and Canada, as First Nations youth from all over have relocated to Metro Vancouver and access UNYA's programs and services. The vision for the NYC is to be a "home away from home" for these youth, where they can connect to culture and community, and access educational, skills, health and wellness supports in a culturally-responsive environment in the heart of Vancouver's urban Indigenous community.

Furthermore, UNYA supports youth in realizing their fullest potential, and the expanded programming that will be offered at the NYC, as the Centre of Excellence for Indigenous youth, will further allow youth to thrive and grow into leaders of our communities.

The NYC supports the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, recommendations from Grand Chief Ed John's report on Indigenous Child Welfare in BC, and the BC Representative for Children and Youth's report *Paige's Story*. The NYC will provide a safe and supportive environment for Indigenous youth and families healing from the intergenerational traumas of colonization and residential schools, and be a positive step forward for reconciliation.

The support of the leadership of First Nations from across the Province will send a strong message to the federal, provincial, and municipal governments as well as to private sector funders as to the great need for the NYC and its potential to make a difference in the lives of youth from First Nations across BC, and Canada. Minimal action is required, but UNYA respectfully requests a letter of support for this project from BCAFN, and the ongoing political support of First Nations leadership for this project.

The First Nations Summit and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs both recently passed resolutions in support of UNYA and the NYC project and committing to work alongside UNYA, BCAFN, and each other, to advocate to the provincial and federal governments for adequate support for this important project. UNYA is requesting a similar resolution from BCAFN.

NEXT STEPS

1. We ask that the BCAFN Chiefs in Assembly pass the attached resolution in support of UNYA and the NYC.
2. We ask that BCAFN work with the First Nations Summit, UBCIC and UNYA to call on the provincial and federal governments to provide adequate financial and political resources to support the UNYA Native Youth Centre project. The most immediate next step would be to write a letter expressing support for the project to the government of British Columbia.