

BUILDING PROSPERITY IN **ALBERNI CLAYOQUOT**

DATA UPDATES | 2025

Prepared by

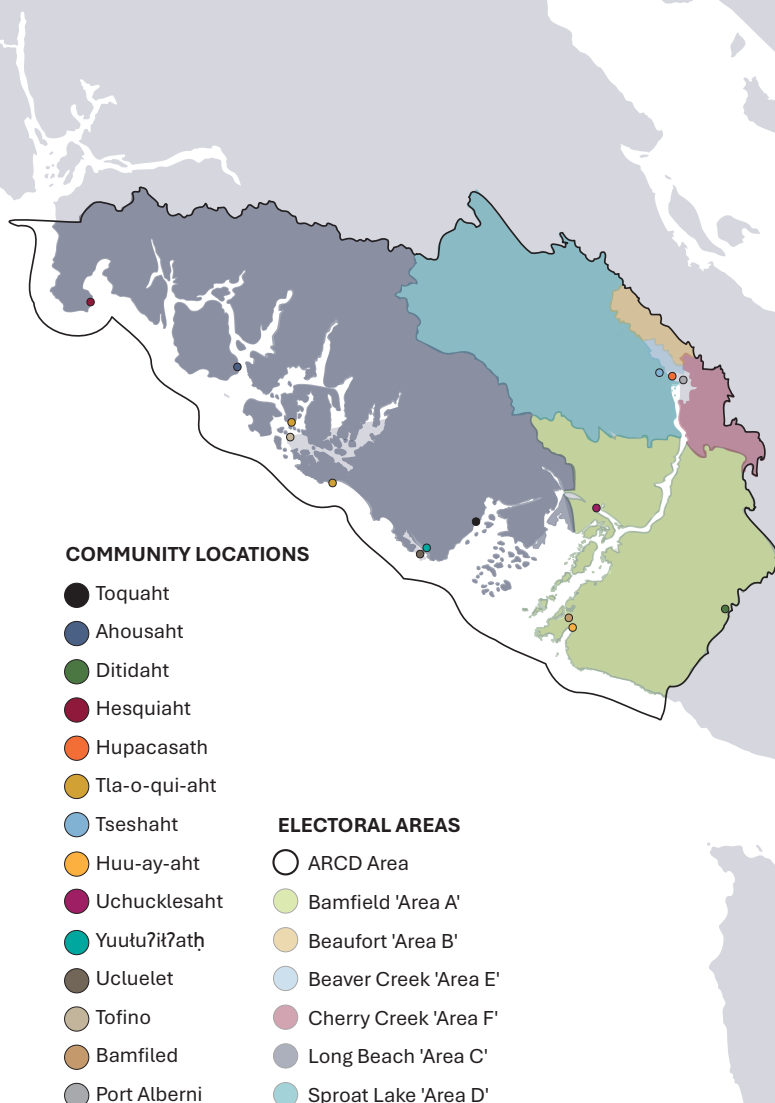


ALBERNI CLAYOQUOT
HEALTH NETWORK

The Alberni Clayoquot Regional District is a geographically diverse area which spans 6904 km² and includes three municipalities, ten Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations and six electoral areas.

The ACRD is located in the traditional territories of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth speaking peoples, the ten Nations of the Ditidaht, Huu-ay-aht, Hupacasath, Tseshaht, Uchucklesaht, Ahousaht, Hesquiaht, Tla-o-qui-aht, Toquaht, Yuułu?itʔath who have several communities within this region.

The ACRD includes the City of Port Alberni, municipalities of Ucluelet and Tofino as well as the six electoral areas of Bamfield, Beaufort, Long Beach, Sproat Lake, Cherry Creek, and Beaver Creek.



PAST

The Alberni Clayoquot Health Network (ACHN) received UBCM funding to produce the Building Prosperity in the Alberni Clayoquot – Poverty Reduction Action Plan in 2020, the plan was completed in 2021 and endorsed by local governments in 2022.

FUTURE

The ACHN will update data following the release of the 2026 census to support ongoing communication and measurement.

The **2025 Building Prosperity in the Alberni Clayoquot Progress Report** brings together our past work with our future priorities.

PRESENT

To support measurement and reporting, ACHN is producing data snapshots to track and share progress on regional poverty reduction. These updates use 2021 census data and other sources to highlight recent trends and celebrate successes.

Snapshot of the Region

All together, the ACRD has a population of **33,521¹** people, and saw an **8.2%** increase in households since the 2016 census. Rural West Coast and Indigenous communities saw a notable **15% – 20%** increase in household growth², driven in part by tourism, ‘lifestyle migration’, and Indigenous community development.

Since our 2021 Action Plan we have seen increased cost of living driven by a hot housing market and the increasing cost of basic needs. Our census data shows improvements to our overall income equity and poverty measures but was largely influenced by CERB and other government transfers during the COVID pandemic.

INCOME & POVERTY MEASURES

Census	2016	2021
ACRD Residents Living in Poverty (LIM-AT)³	21%	13%
Child Poverty Rate	30% ⁴	24.5% ⁵
Median Income⁶	\$49,679	\$63,200
Residents paying more than 30% of income for rent⁷	47%	36%

INTRODUCTION

To better understand regional wellbeing, successes, and priorities, we'll take a closer look at the four focus areas outlined in our 2021 Poverty Action Plan.

- What has changed and what actions have been taken?
- Let's use this information to generate thoughtful conversations and planning to see ongoing progress.

HOUSING HEALTH



BUILDING EQUITY



MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE



INCOME



Advancing equity has been central to ACHN's work since 2012, through identifying, planning, and implementing initiatives that promote equity across the Alberni Clayoquot region.

Since 2022, the network has led and supported efforts focused on access, youth capacity building, and fostering ongoing education and dialogue about what equity means in healthy communities.

ACCESSIBILITY

Past work - Transportation and health equity have been priority areas for the ACHN since 2013 and was one of the most mentioned themes across priorities in the Poverty Reduction Action Plan recommendations. In the course of our work we have supported, led and implemented work to increase access to health services, basic needs, employment and education for residents of the Alberni Clayoquot.

Between 2022 and 2025 - the ACHN leveraged the long-standing Westcoast Transportation Working Group to support action and implementation for two interventions:

- West Coast communities were included in the Non-Emergency Medical Transportation system, ensuring residents with paved road access can reach Island Health appointments 60 km or more from home.
- In 2023, the West Coast Transportation Working Group helped the ACRD launch an interim custom transit system after BC Transit funding fell through. Adopted by BC Transit in 2025, the system is now more sustainable and expanding.



On the horizon - the ACHN has identified the need for intercommunity transportation in lieu of the once reliable Greyhound system. There is expansion within the BC Transit system which the ACHN will support. The ACHN will work with communities to continue these conversations and seek solutions for residents:

- Westcoast community bus stops, shelters and further expansions
- Support conversations around the Alberni Valley system and expansions to connect to other transit systems and communities in the Valley.

YOUTH CAPACITY

Past planning - Young people were identified as one of the more vulnerable populations in our 2022 Poverty Action Plan due to cost of living and mental health. In 2022 the ACHN was approached by the Tamarack Institute to join a cohort of communities across Canada to build youth capacity with funding from the Government of Canada Youth Employment and Skills Strategy. This initiative was called Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF).

Between 2022 and 2024 - the ACHN was successful in leveraging over \$700 000 to support youth capacity building in the region.

- ➡ Worked with local community stakeholders to hire 3 Youth Facilitators, one for the Westcoast, Barkley and Alberni Valley communities.
- ➡ Leveraged funds, hosted events, education opportunities and supported local youth initiatives identified by youth for youth.
- ➡ Supported one existing youth safe space and supported the development of 5 additional youth safe spaces in Westcoast, Barkley and Alberni Valley communities.
- ➡ Supported the continuation of Youth Facilitator roles in the Westcoast and Barkley communities.



On the Horizon - The CBYF funding has completed but the impact of this funding has continued to influence communities in the Alberni Clayoquot. Our partnership efforts assisted in the development of a successful regional **Foundry Centre** application through Alberni Drug and Alcohol Prevention Society (ADAPS). This includes outreach services to the rural and remote communities in the region. This work has led to the continuation of Youth Facilitator roles in the Westcoast and Barkley communities as well as Youth Safe Spaces continuing to operate in Westcoast, Barkley and Alberni communities.

EQUITY EDUCATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Addressing equity in communities is a complex process which requires time, education and capacity. Themes of equity, de-stigmatization, and anti-racism were common throughout the Poverty Reduction Action plan recommendations.

Recognizing that equity work starts within, ACHN updated its governance, statements, and approach. In 2023, funding from the Union of BC Municipalities supported efforts to build community capacity and deepen equity conversations across the region.

- ➡ Hosted a Decolonize First workshop for community leaders. Delivered by local facilitators, with over 70 participants across two cohorts. Participants from local governments, organizations and the community had the opportunity to learn and reflect on decolonization from a local Nuu-Chah-Nulth lens. Unpacked personal biases and learning supportive ways of working.
- ➡ Creation of an Equity Toolkit with information from the Poverty Reduction Action Plan. For local stakeholders to better understand why supporting housing, transportation, quality health care and reconciliation matter and what they can do.



On the Horizon - ACHN continues to lead equity-focused conversations, we'll further promote the Equity Toolkit and seek new opportunities for community engagement and education.

Income and income equity are fundamental to reducing poverty. As a region we have seen some progress with provincial and national support, to strengthen equity and protective factors relating to income.

These include attention to service access through health service and transportation planning, childcare and housing identified in these reports. However, the rising cost of living and slow pace of change in addressing complex social issues leave us with work to be done. Our 2022 Poverty Reduction Plan focused on two main priority areas:

- ➔ Build and enhance **Protective Factors** which support community members in poverty, at risk of poverty or in situations where they are unable to thrive.
- ➔ Creating **Clear Pathways Out of Poverty** by addressing systemic inequities which exist for those individuals' experiencing poverty.

Comparing regional and sub-regional living wages, median incomes, and key expenses provides valuable insight for planning and implementing supports that help keep more money in residents' pockets. Advocacy efforts to strengthen pathways out of poverty are outlined in the Poverty Reduction Action Plan and remain an ongoing need for attention and discussion.

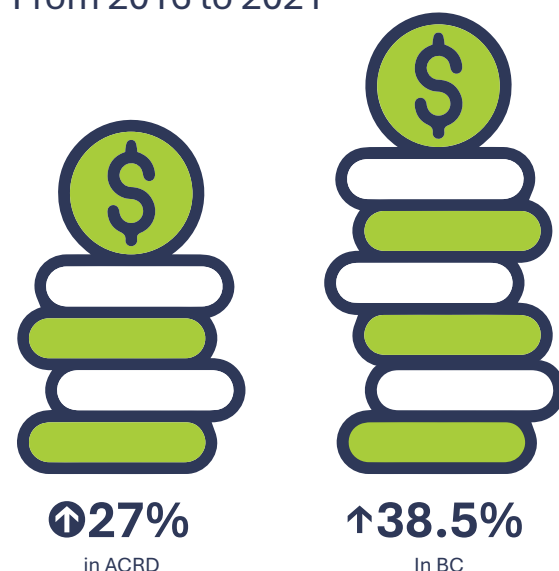
Median Income

ACRD after tax household income



Median Income Increase

From 2016 to 2021



MEDIAN INCOME (after tax household income)⁸

	BC	ACRD	Port Alberni	Ucluelet	Tofino
2016 Total	\$61,280.00	\$49,679.00	\$45,957.00	\$54,336.00	\$58,944.00
2021 Total	\$99,610.00	\$63,200.00	\$58,400.00	\$73,500.00	\$75,500.00

Basic Needs

The living wage is a calculation of a two parent, two child family with both parents working **35 hrs** per week, one child in full time childcare and the other in afterschool care. It considers the Market Basket Index for necessities, transportation, education and a small contingency fund.

The living wage calculations provide us with useful comparisons to median income in the Alberni Clayoquot. We know that slow increases in wages and rising costs are putting strain on the pockets of residents. Using the Bank of Canada inflation calculator, which calculates the consumer price index (CPI), we can demonstrate that Canadians experienced a 18.45% increase in consumer costs for the period between 2019 and 2024.⁹ This reinforces the need for poverty reduction recommendations to increase health and resilience in communities - the interconnection between efforts targeted around access, quality programming, housing and other levers of community support.



Protective Factors

Putting money into the hands of people (and keeping it there)

LIVING WAGE¹⁰

2019



Alberni Valley



Westcoast Communities

2024



Alberni Valley

Net family income required **\$74,700***



Westcoast Communities

Net family income required **\$92,338**

INCOME

*After tax income + government transfers

Education and Childcare

Access to early childhood education is a predictor of health and wellbeing throughout the course of an individual's life and a major component of economic wellbeing for families and communities. Since 2019, the province and region have poured resources into the early education system to construct new facilities, provide wage increases for Early Childhood Educators (ECE), increase access to **\$10/day** childcare spaces and monitor availability.

In Summer of 2025 the ACHN surveyed childcare providers in the ACRD to explore space availability - spaces available to families VS what is licensed and measured by the province. In our survey we found that since 2019 the region has:

- Successfully added much needed after school spaces - more than 200.
- Maintained slow growth in spaces for 30 months – approximately 60 spaces were available out of the 112 created.
- Lost infant toddler spaces - licenced infant toddler spaces were unfilled due to staffing.

While more work can be done to verify numbers and dig deeper into these findings this work validated the qualitative reports from providers. Positions requiring increased skill level and training requirements were hardest to recruit and retain.

Qualitative reports and quick counts highlight the need for additional local and provincial interventions to address the Early Educator sector to recruit and retain ECE's and ensure new spaces can open to families.

Since June 2019

Child care spaces for children ages 0-7 have increased (according to provincial data)¹¹



2019

939 spaces

Spaces for 20% of children in SD70



2025

1332 spaces

Spaces for 33% of children in SD70

EDUCATION LEVEL REQUIRED OF CHILDCARE STAFF:

After School Program

½ week (20 hours)

ECE
Up to 2 years

Infant / Toddler

Up to 4 Years



The right to adequate housing is internationally recognized as a fundamental human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which Canada is a signatory.

The 2022 Poverty Reduction Action Plan adopts this international definition, emphasizing key elements such as location, security, suitability, and other essential criteria. To quantify this measure in Canada housing **at or below 30%** of the cost of an individual's income is deemed affordable and attainable. In the past five years the housing market has grown radically in both positive and negative ways for residents. This growth has prompted additional community and government attention and resources. The implementation and resourcing of local, provincial, and national housing plans has also assisted to bring attention back to housing as a basic human right with concise actions, policy and reduced red tape for communities to move solutions forward.



RESIDENTS SPENDING 30% + OF INCOME ON HOUSING¹²

	2016		2021	
	Owners	Renters	Owners	Renters
ACRD	15%	47%	13%	36%
Port Alberni	13%	52%	13%	41%
Tofino	29%	29%	21%	21%
Ucluelet	29%	39%	25%	24%

2024 LIVING WAGE RENTAL CALCULATIONS

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed
Alberni Valley \$74,700 annual net income ¹³	\$1275.76 (47% of income)	\$1650.00 (41.6% of income)	\$1923.00 (30.9% of income)
Westcoast Communities \$92,338 annual net income ¹⁴	\$1670.09 (45.7% of income)	\$2201.56 (46.6% of income)	\$2706.00 (35.2% of income)

MARKET PRICE: ASSESSED SINGLE FAMILY HOME¹⁵

	2019	2024	% Change
Port Alberni	\$299,000.00	\$500,000.00	+60%
Tofino	\$883,500.00	\$1,512,000.00	+58%
Ucluelet	\$445,000.00	\$705,000.00	+63%

Communities in the Alberni Clayoquot have been paying attention to the impact of the housing crisis and are beginning to act locally to keep residents housed.

A quick tally of the actions taken by local municipalities and electoral areas between housing needs assessments (2022-2025)¹⁶, shows considerable work being done to decrease barriers to housing development and tackle the mounting housing need. Big wins have come in the way of Agricultural land policy changes, provincial policy changes, funding, housing development partnerships and the success of housing authorities to expedite the development process.

Communities which have pooled resources to address housing, through community partnerships or a housing authority have seen the most progress to address their housing needs assessment targets.

The Power of Partnerships

New units of housing developed between 2022 and 2025 directly linked to housing needs assessment targets.



Port Alberni

85



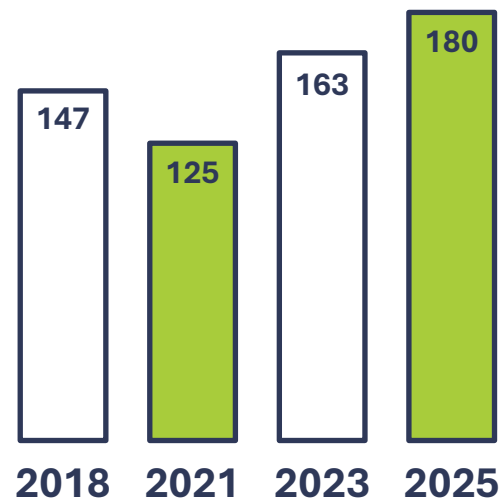
Tofino

88

Alberni Point in Time Homelessness Count

The Port Alberni Point in Time Homelessness Count occurs every two years through the Homelessness Services Society of BC and BC Housing. This count is conducted over a 24-hour period providing a snapshot of the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in a community and their experience. While Point in Time counts are known to be underestimations, they provide valuable insights for communities to plan services and supports.

Total number of people experiencing homelessness and included in the count¹⁷



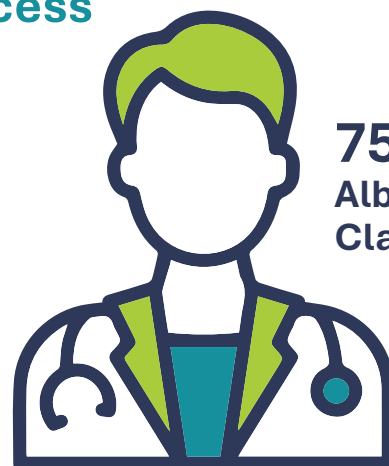
The overall health of residents is directly correlated with the social determinants of health, with the strength of community systems serving as one of the most significant predictors of individual well-being throughout life.

Attention to the social determinants of health and our health system are equally integral to build a resilient path forward to address the complex social issues seen in communities across the world today. In our region, increased investment, community driven planning and action have gradually improved access to health services and key health indicators.

Although chronic disease prevalence rates have been higher for Alberni-Clayoquot than Island Health and BC for over a decade, a decline in Home Care usage suggests some stabilization. Over the past three years, community partners have leveraged data to plan and implement targeted interventions addressing the region's most pressing health challenges.



Health Service Access



75%
Alberni-Clayoquot

Population attached to physician at the practice level (2022-2023)

Success

In **Ucluelet**, the addition of one primary care physician and one nurse practitioner has expanded clinic availability from 1 day per week to 4 days per week.

The **Uut Uustukyu Healing Society**, supported through the First Nations Primary Care Initiative (FN PCI), has introduced cultural supports across all West Coast communities.

Patient Care Networks in Alberni and Westcoast, the First Nations Primary Care Initiative and other health care provider networks have been working to plan and implement health care solutions to assist in greater health access, physician and health care professional recruitment and retention.

Success

Significant Decline in Deaths: 25% reduction in drug poisoning deaths in early 2025. Linked to lower fentanyl concentrations and expanded harm reduction services.

Community Action Team (CAT) Initiatives:

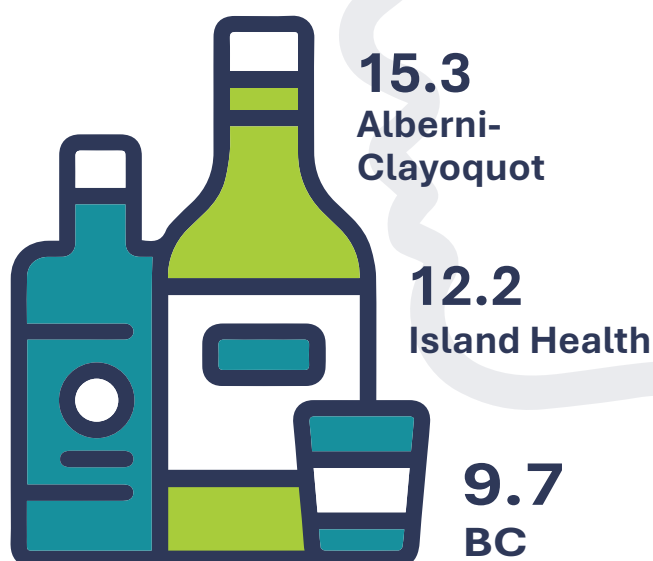
Peer-led strategies focused on: stigma reduction, culturally safe care, developed a blueprint for addressing the toxic drug crisis.

Tseshah First Nation launched a community-led toxic drug strategy that emphasizes healing, empowerment, and cultural safety.

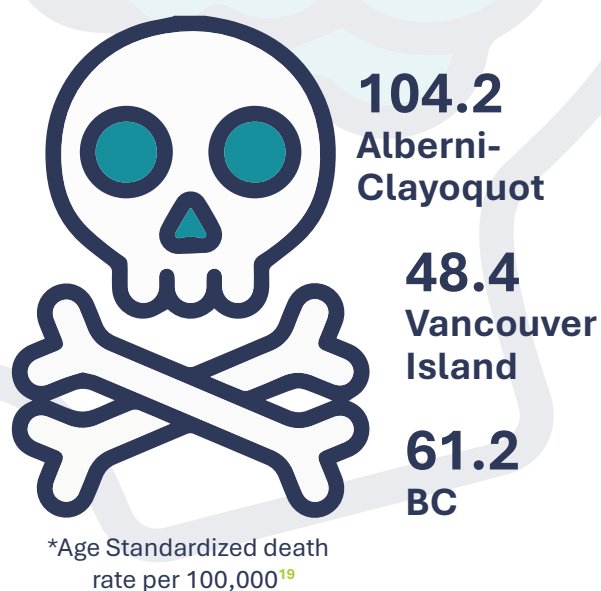
ACRD has seen a disproportionate increase in unregulated drug deaths since 2020,

compared to Island Health and BC. As of 2023, the rate of unregulated drug deaths (crude rate per 100,000) was **105.6**, roughly double that of Island Health and BC.¹⁸

Alcohol Consumption (Drinks per week, 2023)



Death rate Attributed to alcohol



Success

Tofino council adopted a **Municipal Alcohol Policy** in 2021 and Port Alberni recently adopted a **Municipal Alcohol Policy** to promote responsible drinking, prevent underage use, and reduce alcohol-related harm.

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