

SRO Collaborative 2020 Year End Report

March 22, 2021

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### 2020 In Review

Mission: The DTES SRO Collaborative (SRO-C) exists to give tenants a voice. Our mission is to train and organize with tenants who live in 3,400 units in 104 privately owned Single Room Occupancy residential hotels (SROs) renting for under \$750/month. We work with tenants to improve living conditions, health, and their sense of belonging and governance of their own buildings on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh people. An estimated one third of the tenants are Indigenous in private SROs and at dire risk of homelessness as these hotels continue to deteriorate, renovate and gentrify at a rate of three to five hotels per year. The sordid state of many of these hotels, poor health and threat of displacement faced by tenants who live in them, figure strongly in Vancouver's historic role of colonizing Indigenous people.

Harm Reduction: The SRO-C's approach to harm reduction is a pioneering approach to outreach, and has been incredibly important to the Indigenous folks that engage with our staff. It remains unique insofar as it is the *only* harm reduction SRO building in-reach program in Vancouver, and has a specific focus on working alongside Indigenous tenants. We estimate that one third of tenants who SRO-C works with self-identify as Indigenous, and many who we encounter are disconnected from their homelands, family, cultural duties, and ways of life. The Indigenous model of community organizing practiced by the SRO-C focuses on the four directions: the physical, spiritual, mental, and relational aspects of all people. To this end, the SRO-C continues to seek to make appropriate cultural reconnection for those who ask for Indigenous programming. This work involves sharing the stories and learning the knowledge passed down from generations. The SRO-C believes that culture should be provided without barriers, and we do not require that individuals be sober to access our cultural programming. This is a unique model in a sea of abstinence based programming.

<u>Importance of SRO-C's Programming:</u> To many, the SRO-C's programming reaches deeper into their lives beyond a surface level of basic overdose response. Our programs have helped to bring folks out of isolation, and to become "super-connectors" to other tenants in need in their community and take on more responsibility in their hotels. In the words of another TORO from the first generation of programming:

"Tenant Overdose Response Organizer (TORO) is the most important thing in my life. I love being able to help the community I live in and be a part of something positive, when everything else going on in my life you know, it's not very easy. I have a lot of anxiety and it's hard for me to be around certain people in the neighborhood, but having this purpose helps me get out there. I think there's never enough harm reduction. I could go through it before I even got home if I gave it out to everyone that asked."

The SRO-C's programming has allowed tenants to see themselves in a new light. The transformative power of our work has not only occurred in direct improvements to the DTES as a community, but also via the positive changes and impacts on the organizer's own mental health.

<u>The year 2020 was a tough year</u>: It was difficult for us to sustain the same level and type of community interactions during COVID-19 as in previous years, but we tried our best. We lost some dear friends in rapid succession this year. Our respects to the loved ones of three Tenant Overdose Response Organizers (TOROs),

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See SRO-C Habitability report: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jRecmZE Ky8lHKNas-We6kYHxmw2UVyA/view?usp=sharing

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See City of Vancouver Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities and SRO Revitalization Progress Update and 2019 Low Income Housing Survey: <a href="https://council.vancouver.ca/20201007/documents/pspc1a.pdf">https://council.vancouver.ca/20201007/documents/pspc1a.pdf</a>

Jeremy, JP and Liz, who lost their lives to ongoing crisis with the regime of prohibition; this crisis of prohibition has become **much** worse this year because of the pandemic. Although many expected total disaster at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the congregate living environments of the SROs, we only know of one person dying of the coronavirus this year - Marcia, a former TORO who had moved on and was living in a BC Housing owned SRO. Two of our outreach staff were infected with COVID-19 in February 2021, but, thankfully they had been recently vaccinated and their course of illness was not long lasting. As of February 2021, most of our lead tenants and staff received their first vaccine, resuming their practices of going door to door in hotels and are bringing tenants together in small groups of six with good administrative controls in place. We're looking forward to meeting in larger groups outdoors as the weather improves. Thank you for the portraits of these TOROs by Angela Marion May; we included a portrait of Doug, a TORO who passed away in 2018.

Launch of the Covid-19 Emergency Tenant Responders (CETRs): The year 2020 was a year of exponential growth and change for SRO-C as an organization. In April, we adapted our flagship TORO program into CETR, working daily in the spring to connect lead tenants in 52 SROs, their caretakers and our City of Vancouver and Health Authority partners, doing everything that we could do, to avert potential disaster. By the summer, SRO-C realized the pandemic was not going to wipe out tenants in the hotels, so we restructured our staff and programming again. By October, SRO-C's staff had shifted into new roles and routines managing the expanded COVID and overdose prevention networks in the hotels while launching a full time effort to develop the elements of the SROHUB Pilot Program.

Launch of the SROHUB: This new program was set to start in April 2020 but was delayed due to COVID-19, and began full time in October 2020. The SROHUB is our strategy to stop the flood of SRO tenants into homelessness by ultimately getting "21 century housing agreements" in a pilot group of eight privately owned hotels. Primarily, our goal is to buy five to ten more years of housing stability for all SRO tenants, until hopefully replacement housing is developed on these sites, potentially through a land trust run by tenants and the Indigenous, Japanese and Chinese Canadian descendants of the community. In these pilot buildings, tenants develop their leadership capacity, take on more responsibility for themselves and their neighbours in their own buildings, come together to tackle small habitability and safety problems incrementally, and successfully, together. This process happens through our SRO Degree, SRO-C Maintenance Program and cultural programming (Indigenous Food Sovereignty Co-op, Chinatown Grocery Program, and Indigenous Reconnections). Lead tenants in these programs form Tenant Committees. Relations with landlords shift, community and government partners join with both tenants and landlords to support improvements to physicality, rent supports and more tenant-led involvement in tenants' own homes. We are already seeing early results in this area. Learn more about these programs, our progress and next steps for this strategy, later on in this report.

Research: We continued through the pandemic to work on our 2017-2021 Right to Remain (www.righttoremain.ca) research program with four SRO tenant researchers on zoom, and in person, in partnership with Queen's and Simon Fraser Universities. We are on the cusp of hiring six more tenant researchers who will continue to learn and mobilize their knowledge about the past and current socio-political history of the community told through the lens of the SRO. With Queen's and the University of Northern BC, we launched the Holding Space program to Indigenize Tenant Organizing, with time built in for the first year for professional and program development time for two Indigenous staff.

<u>Administration Challenges</u>: With exponential growth comes exponential challenges. The administration, organizing challenges and emotional toll on staff and tenants this year, while launching **new** programming

with *new* staff in *more* hotels, during a pandemic, while people are *dying* of overdoses by higher and higher numbers, was huge. In 2019, we were organizing with tenants in 12 SROs with an operating budget of \$600,000/year. This year, we were in 60 SROs with an operating budget of \$1,500,000/year. We took on management of a new warehouse space at 41 E. Hastings to distribute harm reduction and COVID-19 related supplies. Our programming staff grew from four to eleven (six of whom are Indigenous), while our admin team size remained virtually the same, mostly due to lack of core funding. This year we managed thirty funding contracts as best we could while operationalizing new bookkeeping software and a Controller, attempting to gain more funding to keep going without dropping SROs in 2021. Thank you to everyone for your patience with our slim admin and human resources department during this time! A huge thank you to the programming staff for picking up so much admin. Their skills are truly masterful in combining community organizing with research, data management and reporting.

<u>Successes:</u> While we strive towards some kind of "normal," we definitely achieved some historic things in this challenging year. A few highlights from our programs:

- We created a new network of 52 lead tenants in 52 hotels through the pandemic and engaged 2280 of tenants overall.
- Thanks to our partner SPARC BC we distributed 189 of free phones and cell phone plans to our lead tenants so they could get info in and out of their buildings.
- Trained 1,002 of tenants in overdose response and 960 tenants on COVID-19 response.
- Surveyed 100s of tenants about their needs and priorities in their homes, food security, cultural access, wellness, hotel conditions, number of overdoses unattended by ambulance and more.
- Graduated 10 lead tenants through our first cycle of the SRO Degree.
- Partnered with 6 Elders to support Indigenous tenants in the hotels.
- Distributed 4,200 bundles of Indigenous medicine bundles.
- Tenants led 330 of repair and cleaning projects.
- We developed a meal coupon program for 80 hotel tenants to protect the viability and strengthen relations between tenants and operators of the two best low income serving restaurants: Gain Wah and the Ovaltine.
- Distributed 44,500 meals in hotels while strengthening Indigenous food networks in the community.
- Organized a vaccination campaign in all of our hotels.

Despite a year of intense organizing on the ground, politically, SRO-C can chalk up some successes in 2020 too:

- We advocated and succeeded in getting extra cleaning and food in the hotels paid for by the Provincial government.
- Thanks to the Indigenous Food Sovereignty Hub, we created new and better relations between SRO-C, tenants, landlords, community partners (Watari, Dude's Club, Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre, Powell Street Festival Society) creating a pathway for collaboration to create a community plan to secure the remaining private SRO rental stock.
- On October 7, 2020, The City of Vancouver agreed to raise \$1B to acquire the entire hotel stock and to consider stronger controls over the rate of change in SROs (vacancy control) in a historic decision at City Council.
- On March 21, 2021, the Provincial Housing Minister offered to second a staff person to us to help us develop a proposal for our community plan to:
  - 1. Buy the worst SROs and;
  - 2. Buy the best SROs that are already gentrified/in good shape and;

3. Get enough funding together to get all of the remaining 60 or so SRO landlords into a housing agreements including renovations, rent supplements and tenant led programming, with a plan to reposition their ownership into the community land trust that our community partners are forming now.

Thank you to our Board of Directors for your patience, trust and support through all the bumps and grinds in the last year. Thank you to tenants, staff, community partners and funders for your steadfast commitments in this momentous year and we look forward to building more tenant power in the coming year with your continued support.

Onward into 2021!











## **Program Updates**

### 1 - The Right to Remain

**Description:** The Right to Remain is a participatory action research project that seeks to document and support tenant-led advocacy efforts on housing and human rights in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

**Community Partners:** Queen's University, Simon Fraser University, Powell Street Festival, Heart of the City Festival, Gallery Gachet, WePress, Carnegie Community Action Project, Nikkei National Museum, Greater Vancouver Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association.

**Funders:** Tri Council's New Frontiers in Research Fund (NFRF) 2019 Exploration competition, SFU Community Engaged Research Initiative.



<b>2020 Goals</b>	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
Sustain the participation of tenant leaders as advisors and drivers of our project through COVID-19.	Four tenants are actively engaged in leadership roles and attend bi-weekly two-hour meetings.	Expand our team of tenant leaders from four to ten or twelve in April 2021.
Recruit tenants for the 2 year knowledge mobilization strategy of this project.	Posted recruitment ads in 34 SRO buildings.  16 tenants have reached out to our team to ask for more information.  Current tenant leaders are interviewing other tenants that are interested in joining our research team; 4 interviews have taken place and other 6 are scheduled.	Hiring and onboarding successful applicants

2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
Document the tenant organizing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.	17 interviews with SRO-C tenant leaders and staff about their response to COVID-19 in the DTES SROs - April 10th - July 14th, 2020.	Finish manuscript draft.  Mobilize research findings.
Mobilize knowledge outputs from 2017-2021 research with third parties.	Academic team members prepared four initial knowledge mobilization stories that focus on: history of public health and SROs, SRO tenant access to legal protections, housing as harm reduction in the DTES, and self-governance within tenants' buildings.  4 tenant leaders are discussing and polishing the knowledge mobilization stories.	Finish identifying the most relevant knowledge mobilization stories.  Collect multimedia materials (e.g. images, newspaper articles, photos, sounds, poetry) that support the telling of our knowledge mobilization stories.  Write scripts for the knowledge mobilization stories.

**Tenant Reflection:** "In 2020, COVID slowed us down at Right to Remain, but we managed to get things done that we needed to done. We're trying to get the city to buy the hotels, with tenants to run them, with rent control in place. Right to Remain is helping us learn how to maneuver through the hoops and helping us learn how to help others learn those maneuvers too. Working with the academics is great, because we get input from them while we're giving input to them and this gives us more credence."

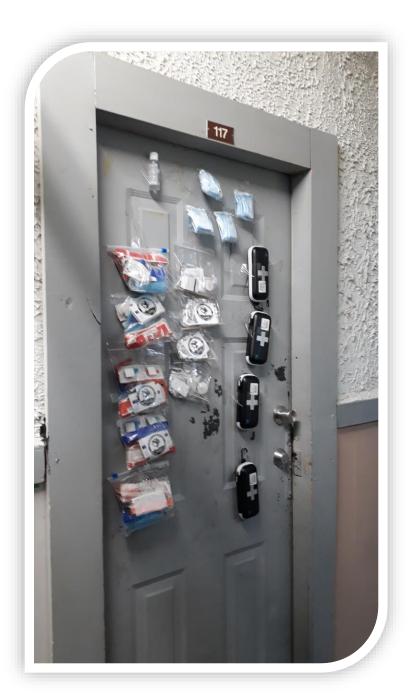
**Program Challenges/Analysis:** Hosting meetings during COVID-19 takes a lot of effort from our staff. Stable funding to hire more staff could improve our ability to conduct this project, which has proved essential to mobilize tenant's leadership throughout our organization.

#### 2- TORO and CETR

Description: TORO has been funded primarily by Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) since 2016, and has expanded its reach in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, growing its organizing reach from 13 hotels to 52 hotels, then returning to our current 39 due to a funding shortfall, with over 40 current program participants. This overdose prevention communication network and COVID prevention and response program includes direct outreach to seniors, Indigenous elders, and into the multilingual hotels in Chinatown. This new initiative provided key Tenant Overdose Response Organizers (TOROs) and COVID-19 Emergency Tenant Responders (CETRs) with a \$60/week cash stipend and a prepaid phone in order to coordinate information in and out of the hotels, as well as supplies. These supplies, as well as other project supports, continue to allow tenants to shelter more safely at home, and maintain basic hygiene standards for themselves and other tenants.

As per its previous iterations, TOROs continue to organize Naloxone Trainings with support from Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) in their buildings, provide one-on-one Overdose Prevention Training to their peers, and communicate with VCH and the City of Vancouver about issues related to overdoses in their buildings. As part of our programming, TOROs maintain a full selection of Harm Reduction supplies (needles, cookers, condoms, etc.) in their own SRO rooms, and distribute Harm Reduction supplies in their hotels. The program includes specialized support for Indigenous tenants and provides cultural and spiritual support to folks, specifically around addiction, grief, and loss. The SRO-C's overdose prevention programming has remained consistent, assisting isolated tenants who use substances in SROs, and ensuring they have access to the resources and education they need to prevent the immediate and ongoing threat of death in their buildings. According to the most recent BC's Corners Report – in VCH's health region – so called "Other Residences" (which include social housing and SROs) remain the location with the highest overdose morbidity.

Ultimately, as we move through 2021, outbreaks of COVID-19 are still occurring in SRO hotels. Currently, the SRO-C is synergizing its COVID prevention program with



its original goals of training around overdose response and habitability improvements. In 2021 we will continue to work with tenants and hope to scale up to 40 high priority buildings.

**Community Partners:** Vancouver Community Action Team, Community Action Initiative, Overdose Emergency Response Centre, Overdose Outreach Team, Coalition of Peers Dismantling the Drug War, Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society, DUDES Club, Wepress, DTES Response, Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users, Culture Saves Lives, Drinker's Lounge, Atira Women's Resource Society, St James Music Academy, First Nation's Health Authority.

**Funders**: Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, Canadian Red Cross, Reaching Home COVID-19, Canadian Foundation, Vancouver Foundation Emergency Covid-19 funding and all of SRO-C's other funders supported elements of this program from April-September 2020.

2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
96 Group Trainings (VCH)	1002 individuals trained; no group training due to COVID.	Holding pattern; increase prevalence of stipended one-on-one training with the building TOROs to ensure that 50% of buildings have been trained.
1500 Kits Dispensed (VCH)	10,462 kits dispensed in 2020	Continue increased kit output into the community at a rate of 200 kits per week.
24 Group Meetings for TOROs (VHC)	No group meetings due to COVID.	Restart meetings with TOROs, including other work such as kit making.
900 1:1 Check Ins with TOROs (VCH)	First half of the year: 1,248 Check-Ins Second half of the year: 960 Check-Ins 2,208 Total Check-Ins.	Continue weekly check-ins with TOROs in 40 buildings.

2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
30-45 TOROs Trained in OD Reversal Training (VCH).	All active TOROs have train-the-trainer level Naloxone training.  325 direct OD responded by TOROs.  134 referrals to safer supply.	Ensure any new on boarded TORO leads are train-the-trainer certified and know how to use naloxone.  Continue to support TOROs who are responding to Overdoses.  Expand safe supply network, connections and referrals.
50% of residents of each hotel trained to administer naloxone (VCH).	28 of 35 buildings currently mapped for Naloxone training saturation; Indigenous population; and drug use saturation.  17 buildings currently at 50% THN training saturation (10% variance added due to not having complete maps of buildings).	Finish updating maps of all 2021 TORO buildings (40 buildings).  Ensure that all buildings have 50% THN Training Rate.
Improved capacity of the organization to deliver new socially inclusive vital services or programming to meet new needs or losses arising as a result of COVID-19.	<ul> <li>Set up SRO Collaborative Distribution         Centre at St James Music Academy and         then at 41 E Hastings.</li> <li>Accommodated working from home         conditions and technology needs.</li> </ul>	Continue working with community partners to ensure that supplies are available for tenants in need, and delivered or picked up following best practice of COVID prevention.

2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
Deliver COVID-19 information and supplies among single-room occupancy (SRO) hotels in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside through hiring tenant representatives from 39 hotels to reach 1800 residents (Red Cross).	Hundreds of residents were vaccinated as part of a collaborative vaccine drive with VCH.  960 COVID Prevention Trainings done with residents.  606 COVID information posters were put up in private SROs (N.B. this is underreported!  In second half of the year:  • 63 Reported COVID Cases  • 38 Confirmed Cases  Tenant and peer leaders received:  • 34 credits on food handling and COVID precautions  • 27 credits on COVID-19 and PPE Use  • 9 credits COVID-19 and OD Response	Continue to engage in COVID prevention, vaccination, education, and response with tenants including:  • Assisting with roll out of vaccines.  • 1-on-1 and group trainings with tenant leads.  • Ensure all new and relevant COVID information posters are being circulated.  Ensure that COVID cases are being reported to the health authority in a timely fashion.
At least 6 workshops run on COVID Prevention (Red Cross)	<ul> <li>214 credits (20 modules) of Van CCAPO Street Degree taught to 75 unique participants; including:         <ul> <li>Overdose Response; COVID-19 and OD                 Response; COVID-19 and PPE;                 Preventing Burnout; Strength Based                 Care; Food Safety; First Aid; etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Continued expansion of Street Degree education with specific focus on COVID prevention and best practice.

2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
Onboard 40 COVID-19 Tenant Emergency Responders.	Currently 42 active TORO / CTERs who communicate with Community Organizers and actively support buildings in overdose prevention, as well as hygiene and education efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19.	Expand existing supports into buildings that require it - with a specific focus on harm reduction and overdose prevention.
Address the impacts of COVID-19 on those living in privately owned SRO hotels, as there is a resource gap for people living in these settings.	Supplies distributed:  • 122,400 alcohol swabs  • 625 bottles of 1 L cleaner  • 1093 rolls paper towel  • 1,005 toiletry packs  • 602 containers of body wash  • 668 containers of conditioner  • 677 bottles of shampoo  • 9,944 bars of soap  • 3,143 bottles of hand sanitizer  • 152,180 clean needles  • 8715 bubble pipes  • 49,150 straight pipes	Continue expanded harm reduction and hygiene distribution at, or above, our 2020 rate.

**Tenant Reflection:** "It helps out quite a bit. In a lot of ways. The drug use in this building is pretty heavy. I'd say most people in the building are users. I think having the harm reduction, and especially the clean pipes and having access to them probably stopped COVID from spreading here. The manager is a bit too busy to deal so I have been taking that on. I responded to 3 overdoses this week alone. And we just lost JP who's been with TORO as long as I can remember. I wish there was more we could do."

**Program Challenges/Analysis:** Some of the buildings TORO and the CETR program currently engage with are very adversarial to harm reduction. This has resulted in conflict between building managers and our Tenant Organizers, which in some cases has almost lead to the near eviction of tenants, in the word of one tenant:

"The interest for [Narcan] training is huge, but the management in a lot of SROs see it as a negative thing, which I don't understand, but I guess they see it as promoting drug use instead of saving lives. I don't see it that way. I think it's important work and I'm proud to do it."

Although there is a huge need for naloxone and other harm reduction supplies in SROs, many landlords are reluctant to engage with tenants who are doing this work. As many landlords don't want to "condone drug use", they refuse to place necessary health supports in their buildings such as rig boxes, and then blame tenants (potentially with retaliation like eviction) when rigs are found in the bathrooms. This ideological predisposition to stigmatize drug users creates an ouroboric cycle of marginalization for SRO tenants who chose to use drugs, and who remain one of the most marginalized groups in Vancouver. To combat this, the SRO-C has been trying to work with landlords whenever possible to increase their understanding of harm reduction. Though this is a Sisyphean struggle, it is of utmost imperative that the SRO-C continues to engage with landlords to encourage better harm reduction and overdose prevention struggles in SROs.



#### 3 - SRO Degree

**Description:** This project assists and empowers SRO tenants through training/workshops on topics like overdose, COVID-19 and eviction prevention, knowledge sharing through community building, a newsletter, and a resource library; and through building relationships with stakeholders who share our goal to improve the habitability and affordability of private SROs.

Curriculum was designed for SRO School in Sept/Oct 2020 and the first cycle of ten workshops for six lead tenants/Building Coordinators and four lead tenants from SRO-C's Repair and Cleaning Program ran from October-February 2021 with our first graduation ceremony happening in early April. These tenants came together weekly through the workshops at the Sun Wah Centre, in two groups of five tenants, with an instructor who also leads SRO-C's Maintenance Program.

**Community Partners:** Coalition of Peers, Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society, DUDES Club.



Funders: City of Vancouver, Vancouver Foundation, Reaching Home, Tenant Based Initiatives, SPARC BC, Embers Eastside Works.

2020 Goals	Progress/Milestones	Next Steps in 2021
Design workshops & plan for guest speakers	Workshop format for 10 workshops completed. No plan for guest speakers yet because of COVID.	Refine curriculum based on what worked and didn't work in the first cycle.
3 cycle of 12 weeks SRO Degree	1 cycle completed	Next cycle begins April 2021
Journaling and reflections done by tenants and 10-15 tenants contribute stories or reflections about SRO Degree in the Raven newsletter.	This deliverable was not achieved. Late start with COVID-19.	To add SRO Degree course on journaling with goal to contribute in 2021 newsletters.

<b>2020 Goals</b>	Progress/Milestones	Next Steps in 2021
10 tenants / cycle	Completed first round with 6 Building Coordinators from 6 hotels plus 4 Peer Repair and Cleaning tenants from 4 out of the 6 hotels.	Next set of tenants from SRO-C's Indigenous Reconnections Program in the SRO Hub hotels
Facilitating debriefs about courses with tenants	One workshop on this topic. Tenants want more relational skills to deal with difficult neighbours.	SRO-C to explore partnerships with WATARI and HAVE Cafe to deliver more courses on relational skills in 2021.
10-15 tenants complete the degree with graduation ceremony in total.	10 out of 10 tenants who enrolled in the first cycle are ready to graduate. Ceremony being planned. More expected to graduate than anticipated.	On track to exceed this deliverable.
2-3 Eviction Prevention workshops for community	First cycle of tenants completed this course but SRO-C did not meet this deliverable in the community.	Eviction prevention workshops shall be hosted over zoom in 2021.
Collaboration with other tenant based and community based groups around education for renters.	VTU Summer workshops cancelled. In the meantime, they use our SRO Degree curriculum and Eviction Defence Handbook.	No plans to collaborate in 2021 because of pandemic.
Tenants Committees work with others in the SRO sector to develop a concept for SRO resource library. End of year 2: 5 - 10 working sessions to develop a concept. Launch resource library in year 3.	Plan for establishing the Tenant Advisory Committee with 2 tenants from each program, in place. This group will attend the working sessions to develop content.	Planned for 2021.

<b>2020 Goals</b>	Progress/Milestones	Next Steps in 2021
6 Tenants source and write content for newsletter.	This deliverable was not achieved.	Plans to develop content from graduates for the newsletter.

Tenant Reflection: "These classes are super valuable. The knowledge we are able to share with the other tenants in the building is great."

**Program Challenges/Analysis:** Several challenges faced this program, including COVID-19 group restrictions; first draft of curriculum content did not always relate to the demographic perfectly; participants continually attend classes; participants pay attention or be active in classes; and participants staying on topic during discussions. However, we made the following adjustments to address these obstacles/challenges:

- Smaller groups were formed and easier to manage due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- One on one meetings with tenants if they missed a class and catching them up to speed.
- Having one on one follow ups for proper feedback sessions if folks are not active in group participation.
- Offering a hands-on approach to class settings to engage with participants, when this was not available providing colouring tools to keep people engaged.
- Updating content of course to reflect tenants more accurately.



#### 4 - SROHUB Tenant Committees and Housing Agreements

**Description:** Tenant Committees are organized in each building to bring about the changes that tenants want to see where they live. They prioritize and discuss how they want their building improved and work with building managers on solutions without triggering evictions or building closures. Committees also work with SRO Collaborative staff to implement peer-led services and programs. *Each committee is a living, evolving entity. Like the octopus pictured below, the tentacles represent the different ways that the SROHUB project reaches out to make a difference.* 



**Community Partners:** Dudes' Club, Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre, Powell Street Festival Society, WATARI.

**Funders**: City of Vancouver, Community Housing Transformation Centre, Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia, Vancouver Foundation.

2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
Identify 8 Target SROs for Housing Agreements.	Hotels identified: Arlington, Cobalt, Hildon/Bourbon, Keefer Rooms, Lion Hotel, Summer/Sunwest, United Rooms, and West Hotel.	Work toward building strong tenant committees that have the legitimacy to negotiate Housing Agreements with their Landlords.
Identify 8 Building Coordinators (BCs) or tenants who will organize tenant committees.	Strong BC candidates identified in 6 of 8 Buildings achieved Oct 2020 - Mar 2021.  4 of 8 BCs are currently being on boarded.	Identify BC candidates in last 2 buildings Fully onboard other 6 BC candidates. Begin recruiting Building Program Coordinators (BPC) candidates.
8 BCs graduate from SRO Degree training workshops.	10 graduates from HUB buildings so far. 5 of 8 BC candidates have already graduated.	Final 3 BC candidates graduate.  BPC candidates begin SRO Degree.
Assist 8 BCs to survey their neighbours for needs and organize together for them.	66 surveys completed in 4 of 8 HUB Buildings.  Preliminary Needs Assessment Analysis of first 66 surveys.  Plan to complete Surveys representing 60% of units in each HUB building.	Work with all BCs to meet or exceed 60% target in each HUB Building.  Begin referring tenants to tenant-led programming according to needs, by matching tenants up to BPCs, as they become available in each building.

2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
Assist 8 BCs to share leadership and identify others in their building to take on more responsibility for programs. Each BC develops the nucleus of their Tenant Committee with 4 tenants leading these programs in their buildings (Indigenous Reconnections, Maintenance, TORO, and Food Sovereignty).	Had our first BC meeting with 4 candidates that are currently conducting surveys inside their building. We met to discuss shared struggles and victories, as well as review the Preliminary results of the surveys so far.  Discussed ways of identifying and recruiting BPCs.	Continue having regular BC meetings to inspire more cross building networking and integration with other available programming.  Fully onboard BPCs and start having program specific meetings that can invite appropriate BPCs so they can also integrate into the larger SROHUB Project.
BCs operationalize Tenant Committees with one meeting per month (4 buildings in year 1 and 3 buildings in year 2)	BCs have need assessment and building mapping as their main priority.  Tenant Committee Leadership consists of the BC and BPCs.	COVID makes General Tenant Committee (GTC) meetings difficult to conduct.  GTC meetings can be called, as needed when a collective issue arises by discretion of Tenant Committee Leadership.
BCs organize dinners (or outdoor meeting/gatherings) every 2 months for everyone in their building.	This did not happen because of COVID-19.	COVID makes Organizer Dinners difficult to conduct; therefore the 2021 outcome is dependent on COVID.
Tenant Committees learn about housing agreements and get involved to get them in place.	Two out of eight BCs are on the Right to Remain as tenant researchers and learned about SRO-C's research on RRAP Agreements at those meetings.	In 2021, there will be multiple sessions with Tenant Advisory and Tenant Committees about how to get housing agreements with their landlords for each building.

2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
Tenant Committees interactions with other SRO stakeholders increases.	This deliverable was not met in 2020.	In addition to city staff and landlords, tenant committees will engage with other non-profits and NGOs to increase their legitimacy and their knowledgeability around issues that meaningfully affect tenancy rights.
BCs work with others in their building to produce a newsletter edition about their work.	This deliverable was not met in 2020.	Tenant Committees to publish a special edition of Raven written by SRO Hub tenants by Sept 2021.
Tenants raise small repair, safety or communication issues with their landlord as a group and achieve results.  Tenant leadership grows. Tenants begin to:  Name problems and organize solutions  Relate more confidently with other tenants  Take on more responsibility for themselves and others in their buildings.  Hold those in power more accountable without causing detrimental ripple effects.  Relationships between tenants and landlords improve.	Tenants were not coached through issues with their landlords in 2020.  Generally tenant and SRO-C relationships with landlords improved in 2020 because of COVID-19 i.e. SRO-C got caretakers vaccinated, helped get food and essential supplies into the buildings.	In 2021, minor repairs that do not require building management could be completed by SRO-C's Cleaning and Repair program.  Petitions will be circulated for selected (nonevictable) issues to have more likelihood of gaining the Landlord's attention.  Tenants will become more proactive in discussions with the Landlords.  Legitimize the tenant's ability to collectively negotiate certain issues with the Landlord through Housing Agreements.

2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
Tenant Committees plan a housing clinic alongside resource library by end of year 2 and implement it in year 3.	No action required on this in 2020.	Planning for Library and Clinic will happen with tenant advisory committee in 2021.
<ul> <li>Develop Housing Agreements:</li> <li>Develop strategy to get tripartite government funding for structural renovations and rent subsidies in their hotels, including assembling an SRO Coalition of partners and experts.</li> <li>Host four consecutive monthly meetings with the most active tenants from committees plus multi-sector stakeholders design campaign strategy and engagements for SRO Sector Coalition to get pilot project(s) for renovation agreements including:         <ul> <li>Develop background materials on the history of the federal program;</li> <li>Communication materials, including website, op-eds, planning, media conferences;</li> <li>Meetings with tenant/landlord sector reps, tripartite government officials;</li> <li>Ongoing discussions and negotiations with tenants, landlords, and tripartite government partners to develop housing agreements.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Designed concept and proposal for elements of a program in March 2021.  Housing Minister Eby offered to help support a proposal by donating a staff person to help.  Background materials on the history of the federal program was completed by the Right to Remain research group.  Community coalition established with Urban Indigenous, Japanese Canadian and Indigenous/Migrant rights groups in the Downtown Eastside to form a land trust to administer these programs. Meeting bimonthly to plan.  Other deliverables not completed in 2020.	Ready to take concept and proposal to wider group of tenants in April 2021.  Land trust group will take on the communication materials (power point, website, op-eds).

2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
SRO Hub project is evaluated	December - March developed outcome measurement framework with Vancity/Reaching Home and March - April, an evaluation framework with tenant advisory committee plus Capstone Program students at SFU and our Queen's academic partners.	Conduct participatory evaluation on the SROHUB program in 2021.

**Tenant reflection:** "I think it's very necessary to have an organization amongst people who live in SROs so they can have better peace of mind and better living conditions; I mean be better both mentally and physically. By joining the Collaborative, I'm finding roads to solutions about what's going on in my hotel. I can't stop homelessness but those of us who are housed can at least have some civility and dignity - and stop us from becoming homeless. I'm hoping to do whatever I can to facilitate this and when we put our minds together, we can do it. "

Program Challenges/Analysis: COVID has presented an enormous impediment to our organizing strategy. Community based and face to face interaction had been our main strategy for tenant outreach and relationship building prior to the outbreak of the pandemic. Moreover, building Coordinators (BCs) have been trained to map the tenants in their buildings and conduct needs assessment surveys with tenants in their buildings. These surveys allow our organizers to identify which tenant-led programming to introduce to the SROHUB buildings, based on what the tenants say they need most. As programming is introduced the BCs are encouraged to share the added workload with Building Program Coordinators (BPC), who are responsible for maintaining an individual tenant-led program in their building. For example, one building might have multiple tenant-led programs running in their building simultaneously. In this case, the BC would refer tenants to the appropriate BPC when they needed access to the program, be it Food, Repair, Indigenous Culture, TORO etc. The most major challenge is the fact that we have had the most success with our 1 BC per building model when buildings have under 45 units. In excess of 45 units a single BC seems inadequate and a multi-BC/multi-BPC approach may need to be developed. Possible ideas would be floor by floor jurisdictions or some other blended model that would be more flexible.

#### 5 - Uya'am Gaak / Holding Space Research Program

**Description:** Uya'am Gaak is a new project being developed by SRO-C, hopefully with support from the Community Housing Transformation Centre and the First Nations Health Authority to connect Elders to Indigenous tenants from their same territories in the SROs as a way to help tenants improve health by reconnecting to culture, language and home that does not require abstinence. Holding Space is a participatory action research project that strengthens our Indigenous staff by employing restorative Indigenous methodologies to support each other, reflect on the trauma that surrounds us, and strengthen a wider coalition of Indigenous frontline organizations. In 2020, SRO-C staff laid late the groundwork for this project by surveying and visiting with tenants that self identified as Indigenous in the eight SRO Hub hotels, meeting regularly with and delivering hot meals to six Elders and others who want to be involved and support the program, making thousands of medicine bundles and distributing them, along with bannock and harm reduction supplies in the hotels.

Community Partners: Project partners who agreed to support Holding Space at the time of application are the Native Women's Association of Canada, the Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre, the Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council, the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users, the EIDGE Program of Vancouver Coastal Health, the Vancouver Dudes Club, the Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society, the First Nations Health Authority, the Portland Hotel Society (Indigenous Health and Culture Saves Lives Program), the Megaphone Magazine and the Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation.

**Funders:** Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Aboriginal Community Policing Centre, First Nation's Health Authority, Community Action Team Grant.



2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
Begin professional development supports for two staff with support from weekly Holding Space meetings with academic team.	Need to update this here with Sam	Begin land based retreats with participants and partners and begin documenting learnings through 50 interviews/year.
Design 2021 project for Elders and Indigenous Tenants in SRO Hub hotels called Uya'am Gaak to complement research goals of Holding Space.	Completed, waiting to hear if funded by Canadian Housing Transformation Centre. Elders came up with the name for the project.	Initiate project activities: inaugural ceremony, medicine gathering, traditional foods, workshops, Indigenous Tenant committees - all to reconnect to culture.
Recruit Indigenous tenants from SRO Hub Hotels for Uya'am Gaak.	Completed a minimum of six questionnaires with Indigenous tenants in each of the eight SROHUB hotels.	If the project is funded, match these tenants with Elders from their territory and organize cultural activities.
Recruit Elders to support tenants.	In process. Staff recruited six Elders, but one passed away from COVID-19. This is an ongoing process of relationship building. Staff bring the elders food and traditional medicines, checking in regularly with them.	If the project is funded, match Elders to tenants and begin project activities:
Design and deliver Raven Newsletters to tenants.	2000 copies of Raven Issue 5 and Issue 6 produced total.	Production of Raven 7-10.
Deliver hot meals to Elders and Indigenous tenants.	200 grocery hampers delivered to Indigenous Elders since last may. 30% of hot meals going to Indigenous tenants (4400 meals total).	Increased output of groceries and meals top Indigenous tenants in need (funding dependant).

2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
Deliver traditional medicines to tenants and Elders.	350 medicine bundles delivered per month (4,200 in 2020).	Continued expansion of medicine delivery to Indigenous tenant sand elders.

**Tenant Reflection:** "This project is what is fulfilling me more at the moment. This is the first time I am being able to plan in the future, not being always in the day. Paradoxically, this is happening in the worst time possible (COVID-19)."

**Program Challenges/Analysis:** We are working on getting full funding for this program. Indigenous Elders have an essential role in guiding our work. COVID-19 has limited our work to mostly one-on-one and not group gatherings. As vaccinations advance, we anticipate that our project will be able to launch the components that remain on hold due to the pandemic.



#### 6 - Repair and Maintenance

Description: SRO-C assembled a maintenance crew of ten tenants and paid them honorariums for doing small repairs or cleaning jobs in their eight SROHUB hotels, often without permission from the landlord, helping tenants were needed (see tenant reflections for testimonies below). There were an average of eight hours a week spent doing this work in each of the eight hotels and completed a total of 330 jobs. Maintenance crew members come with years of experience in construction, electrical and plumbing and generally have a strong connection to people in their building and the community. This program has been important because landlords are extremely neglectful of habitability problems and when tenants use legal methods to get results, negative consequences are inevitable from harassment or evictions of the tenants who ask for help, pressure to "reno-evict" tenants to full scale building closures. When landlords learn that tenants and SRO-C are helping with cleaning and repairs, the goodwill has helped us build a rapport and facilitate more cooperation from the landlord. Tenants need their own cleaning and maintenance person in each building who are working with tenants!

**Community Partners**: Embers.

Funders: Reaching Home, Centre for Tenant Based Initiatives, Vancouver Foundation, Embers, Network of Inner City Community Services Society.

2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
Design Better at Home Program with partners	Pilot Maintenance and Cleaning program with Embers.	Develop into a keystone project connected to the proposal for Federal Housing Agreements in each pilot hotel.
Host meeting with tenants, landlords and government officials to improve implementation plan.	This deliverable is not completed in 2020.	Will be initiated in Spring/Summer 2021.
Train and employ 10 tenants to support 100 rooms, minimum 2 hrs / week (light housekeeping or grocery shopping)	10 Crew Members associated with the program were trained and employed in their buildings. Four out of 10 graduated with SRO Degrees.	Maintain Active crew members while seeking new Crew Members prospects for the program.

2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
Begin to implement program in all SRO-HUB buildings	Approximately 330 jobs completed, operating in 6 SROs with a total 1,727 hours worked at \$20/hour for a total of \$34,540 in paid honorariums/compensation.	Maintain Active buildings while Implementing program in remainder of the SRO-HUB buildings.

**Tenant Reflection:** "I love it. It makes me feel good doing this work, I love just getting things done. Sometimes helping peoples' spirits can be as little as changing a lightbulb. I'm in their rooms a little more, so when I see them in the hallways, they seem brighter. They don't feel so alone."

Program Challenges/Analysis: This program met several challenges in 2020 including getting new people on the team with even the minimal skillset; job accountability with crew members (this issue is now being addressed by getting the crew to take "before and after photos" for jobs completed); sharing the workload with other trades people in the building; skill sharing aspect is not always happening; ensuring safety of crew members and tenants receiving services during COVID-19; COVID-19 restrictions made it difficult to meet all the tenants or do a proper follow-up about the job completions (this will be addressed in 2021 by new sign off sheets for job accountability after job completion were created).



#### 7 - SRO Food Programs

**Description:** Approximately 3,700 residents living in 104 privately run single room occupancy hotels (SROs) in the Downtown Eastside are extremely food insecure. In the wake of COVID-19, food security has become even scarcer in the DTES, and this has been exasperated, as charity food system service has become very restricted, and many grocery stores and meal programs have closed their doors. For most in the DTES, who are considered high risk for transmission of COVID-19, it has been difficult to self-isolate due to a reliance on community based food service. In April 2020, the SRO-C recognized the need to act quickly to organize emergency food deliveries to hotels to protect the health and lives of Downtown Eastside residents.

Over this past year SRO-C has begun working with 25 tenant organizers across 25 SRO Hotels to build culturally appropriate food distribution systems in their building. We are currently reaching 1,500 SRO tenants every week with a variety of food programming including hot meals, meal coupons, grocery gift cards and grocery hampers.



Accomplishments of the SRO-C's fiscal 2020 Emergency Food Program in Private SROs included:

- Addressing SRO tenant COVID-related food insecurity through access to nutrient dense meals and grocery hampers.
- Enabling tenants to stay home and decrease transmission.
- Facilitating physical distancing.
- Coupon program for SRO tenants living above Gain Wah and Ovaltine historic low income serving restaurants.
- Providing culturally appropriate and dignified food.
- Prioritizing support for Indigenous Elders.
- Prioritizing support for linguistically isolated Chinese seniors.
- Prioritizing support for tenants with mobility constraints.

**Community Partners:** Watari/LatinX Catering Kitchen, DTES Neighbourhood House, Tayybeh Catering, Grandview Woodland Food Connection, Gain Wah Restaurant, Ovaltine Restaurant, Ho Family, Powell Street Festival.

**Funders:** United Way Lower Mainland, BC Housing, Community Food Centres Canada, Health Services Association, Network of Inner City Community Services Society, Aboriginal Community Policing Centre.

<b>2020</b> Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
Addressing SRO tenant COVID-related food insecurity through access to nutrient dense meals and grocery hampers.	Distributed 44,500 hot meals; Distributed 1,500 grocery boxes; Distributed 2000 food gift cards; Distributed 480 meal gift cards (Gain Wah and Ovaltine Restaurants).	Secure funding to maintain and grow program
Providing culturally appropriate and dignified food; including:  • Prioritizing support for Indigenous Elders.  • Prioritizing support for linguistically isolated Chinese seniors.	DTES SRO Tenant Chef and Tisamshian Elder planning and cooking weekly menus.  Implementing findings of quarterly surveys with over 50 SRO tenants asking about food security needs and dietary needs and preferences.  Chinatown SRO Tenants planning and packing weekly grocery deliveries.  Weekly grocery deliveries to 25 Indigenous Elders.	Support upgrades to shared kitchen spaces across SRO Hotels where appropriate and requested.
Prioritizing support for tenants with mobility constraints.	Training Tenant Organizers to identify those with mobility constraints and deliver meals and groceries direct to their door.	Build tenant capacity through training and meetings.
Facilitating physical distancing enabling tenants to stay home and decrease transmission.	Trained 18 SRO Tenants in Safe Food Handling and PPE usage.	Trainings to continue in 2021.

**Tenant Reflection:** "I am incredibly grateful to be a part of this program. If I didn't have this I would be getting my food from a dumpster in the alley. I've noticed I've sustained a healthy weight. The food is preventing people from getting sick because people are accessing nutrition. We are less reliant on soup kitchens, which is good because most food stopped during COVID."

**Program Challenges/Analysis:** The SRO-C's 2020 food programming was met with the following challenges: ensuring safe food handling practices amongst tenants during the Covid-19 pandemic; limited food storage, refrigeration and appliances in SRO Hotels; limited Refrigeration and Freezer space in our office and warehouse; immense need for food support amongst SRO tenants; difficult to ensure ongoing food security for tenants with uncertain funding for the next fiscal year; and the restrictive laws making traditional Indigenous food sharing (wild meat and fish) illegal.



## 8 - Chinatown Grocery Program and SRO Organizing

Short description: Chinatown Grocery Program distributes Chinese groceries to 100-130 SRO non-English speaking tenants every week and reaches out to those who are isolated from social services. A team of five volunteers, who have multi-dialect skills, coordinate with the tenants. Tenants collectively decide on the selection of groceries. SRO-C has managed to navigate the extremely challenging dynamics among benevolent associations to work directly with tenants living in their buildings. A Chinatown Seniors vaccination campaign (beginning in March 2021) in these 9 SROs plus 36 more social housing buildings is being organized by our one staff person. We learned about the barriers to sharing public health and community information that's literacy and digital-literacy friendly to this group of seniors in hotels. There are huge habitability issues in these hotels that must be addressed for health and safety in the coming year. SRO-C currently does not have funding to keep this program going in 2021 and this is one of our biggest short term funding gaps.

Community Partners: Ho Family, Powell Street Fest, DTES Neighbourhood House, Lotus Light

**Funders**: United Way, Health Services Association and various COVID-19 emergency funders: Canadian Red Cross, Canadian Foundation and Vancouver Foundation.

2020 Goals	Progress	Next Steps in 2021
Culturally Dignified Food supports for Chinatown tenants.	200 food deliveries during summer 2020.  Working with team of 5 Chinatown tenants to deliver grocery programming.  130 CGP Grocery Boxes delivered to SRO tenants weekly since November 2020.	Funding not secured; plan TBD based on funding.
Hygiene Supplies to support enhanced COVID cleaning for Chinatown SROs.	Hygiene supplies and PPE delivered weekly with grocery boxes.	Funding not secured; plan TBD based on funding.

**Tenant Reflection:** The Chinatown Grocery Program received an appreciation poem from a very sweet tenant written in a notebook we provided (see photo).

Translation:

The fruits are sweet SROC, PSF, and Ho's Family are passionate, hardworking and committed fellows
Thank you for sharing joys in the neighborhood
Wishing us the success we seek and to be credited in history for the changes we made.

Program Challenges/Analysis: The Chinatown grocery program, like much of our programming, was met with direct challenges to its funding stream, which have inhibited the programs future potentiality. We hope to address this funding shortfall to continue providing food to those in need in 2021.

积极筹款为大家 餡生辛苦人人夸 杨生应姐每周送季到名家 瓜果香甜知威恩 裏心感谢慈善泉 鲍威尔特佳节庆 祝贺成功举世嘉

# **Appendixes**

# Appendix A – SROs that we Organize In

### 1 - TORO Hotels

SRO Building	Address	Units	% Trained
Abbott Mansions	404 Abbott St	80	N.M.
Afton Hotel	249 E Hastings St	38	71
Astoria	769 E Hastings St	84	36
Brandiz	122 E Hastings	104	22
Chelsea Hotel	33 W Hastings	40	40
Cobalt Hotel	917 Main	98	42.5
Colonial	122 Water	120	47
Cosmopolitan	29 W Hastings	40	100
Dodson Rooms	25 E Hastings	69	70
Empress	235 E Hastings	74	54
Flint	1516 Powell	50	17
Glory	204 Carrall	42	N.M.
Grand Union	74 W Hastings	37	75
Heatley	407 Heatley	16	13
Hildon	50 W Cordova	131	27
Keefer Rooms	218 Keefer	45	10
Laurel Apts	610 Alexander	42	32
London Hotel	208 E Georgia	73	88
Lion Hotel	316 Powell	76	N.M.
Main Rooms	117 Main	28	70
Melville Rooms	322 Cambie	9	N.M.
Murray Hotel	1119 Hornby	101	N.M.
Persepolise	351 Columbia	26	90
Regal Hotel	1046 Granville	82	83
Siesta Rooms	936 Granville	74	23
Summer/Sunwest	341 E Hastings	30	79
Triple Six / Ocean Rooms	688 Alexander	8	42
United Rooms	139 E Cordova	44	N.M.

Vogue Hotel	1060 Granville	79	66
West Hotel	488 Carrall	98	40
Winters Residences	102 Water	92	51
Wonder Rooms	50 E Cordova	32	46
Woodbine	786 E Hastings	45	22
	Total Units	1927	

Note: N.M. means not mapped.

## 2 - Hub Programming

SRO Building	Address	Units
Arlington	575 E Pender	29
Cobalt	917 Main	98
Hildon	50 W Cordova	131
Lion	316 Powell	76
Keefer Rooms	218 Keefer	45
Summer	341 E Hastings	30
United Rooms	139 E Cordova	44
West	488 Carrall	98
	Total Units	551

## 3 - Chinatown Programming

SRO Building	Address	Units
255 E Georgia	255 E Georgia	30
Hing Mee Society	553 Prior	7
Lew Mao Way Tong	349 E Pender	9
Metro	533 E Georgia St	34
Mt. Everest Rooms	242 E Hastings	25
Natives of Toi Shan Society	237 E Hastings St	33
Vancouver Tsung Tsin (Hakka) Asso.	542 Keefer	8
Wu Chuk On Tong	359 E Pender	9
Yin Ping Benevolent	414 Columbia	13
	Total Units	168