

**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

**\*\* First Nations Housing Professionals Association to transition the Centre of Excellence on Matrimonial Real Property from the National Aboriginal Land Managers Association \*\***

**[OTTOWA ONTARIO, 2023-10-05]** – The First Nations Housing Professionals Association (FNHPA) is thrilled to announce a momentous leap forward in its mission to advance the First Nations Housing industry through education and training. Effective September 25, 2023, FNHPA will commence the transition of the Centre of Excellence on Matrimonial Real Property (COEMRP), previously under the National Aboriginal Lands Managers Association (NALMA). This transition marks a pivotal stride towards empowering First Nations communities in the management of their housing and land affairs.

The COEMRP was originally established by NALMA in 2013 in response to an Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) call for a proposal. The primary purpose of COEMRP was to provide a range of essential services, including guiding First Nations in the development of their Matrimonial Real Property laws, disseminating information on the protections and rights available to individuals and families residing on reserves, assisting with the implementation of provisional federal rules, and conducting research on alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

The Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act (the Act) is federal legislation that was enacted to address a specific issue related to the division of property on reserves in First Nations communities in the event of a relationship breakdown or the death of a spouse or partner. Before the Act came into effect, there was a legal gap in many First Nations communities regarding the division of property in the context of marital breakdowns or deaths. Provincial family law often did not apply on reserves, and many First Nations did not have their own laws addressing this issue. The Act was introduced to provide a legal framework for these situations.

The Act also recognizes that some First Nations may have their own laws or customs related to property division. It allows First Nations to develop their own laws in this area, provided they meet certain federal standards. This recognizes and respects the diversity of Indigenous legal traditions. The Act also influences property rights, housing stability, and the financial security of individuals and families living on reserves because it addresses Matrimonial Properties.

Through a three-year phased transitional approach, COEMRP will find its new home with the FNHPA; Canada's only national center for professional standards, certification, and services for existing and prospective First Nations housing professionals. FNHPA is enthusiastic about picking up the torch and continuing to expand upon the critical work initiated by NALMA COEMRP.

“Given the legislation of MRP in communities, we want to provide our members and our First Nation Housing Professionals with the necessary education, tools and resources to better respond to their community members. Building upon the foundation laid by NALMA over the past several years, our goal will be to assist members in understanding their options for navigating how MRP legislation impacts individuals and families living on reserve” states Candace Bennett, FNHP, CIL and Executive Director of the FNHPA.

The transition of COEMRP operations to FNHPA marks a significant milestone in the organization's efforts to champion the first Nations housing industry and reinforces the commitment to ensuring housing professionals have the resources and support needed to make a meaningful difference in their communities.

The baton has been passed and FNHPA is excited about the potential this transition brings for the future of Matrimonial Real Property initiatives and housing management within First Nations communities and continues to look forward to serving our members, communities, and partners in this important endeavor.

**For further information or inquiries, please contact:**

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**About FNHPA:**

The First Nations Housing Professionals Association (FNHPA) is the national professional association exclusively serving the needs of individuals working for or aspiring to positions in housing with First Nations organizations. FNHPA supports existing and future housing professionals in serving their communities by setting national standards, providing education and certification programs, encouraging communication and knowledge-sharing, and offering real, personal support and availability to First Nations housing professionals in Canada.

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