

Building Better

A First Nations National Building Officers Association publication

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Eagle's Eye on Backfill Boards

Once in awhile, a totally wonderful invention comes along that makes the work so much easier and more economical.

Such is the case with what we call the backfill board, shown here.

When the distance from the foundation walls to the sides of the excavation is excessive, and high-porosity soils must be trucked in for backfilling, the operation is going to be expensive.

A sheet of 5/8 plywood, with two 2"x 6" members nailed along the 8' dimensions, forms the basis of the backfill board.

Short spacer boards are nailed across the top of the backfill board to hold it a given distance from the foundation wall.

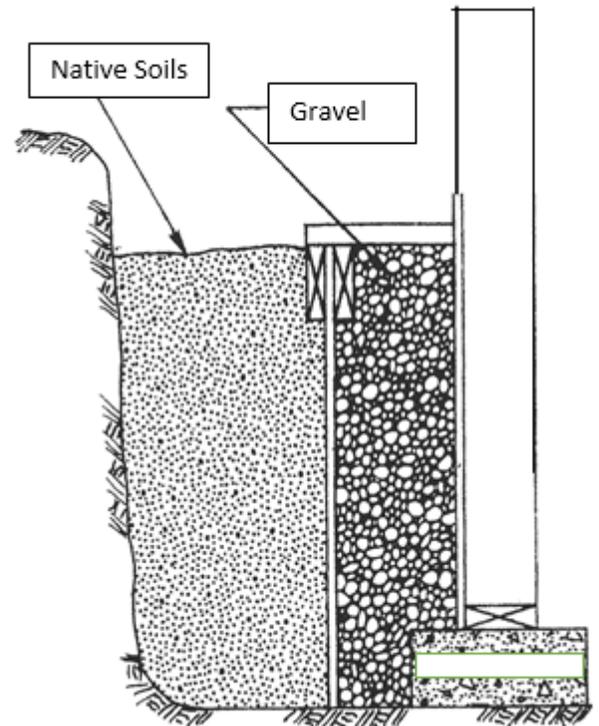
A length of logging chain (not shown) is fastened with large eyehooks, from end to end, at the top of the backfill board.

Procedure

- 1) With the backfill board positioned against the foundation wall, the backfilling machine places native backfill materials on the outside of the board, to a height of approximately two feet.

This forces the backfill board against the wall, with spacers holding the board the desired distance from the wall.

- 2) The machine now fills the cavity between the board and the wall with the high-porosity materials that have been trucked to the site.



- 3) The machine now completes backfilling the outside of the board with native soils.
- 4) To extract the backfill board, the chain is looped over several of the teeth of the backfill machine's bucket, and the machine pulls the board free.
- 5) The board is slid along the wall until it is positioned, and the backfilling procedure is repeated.
- 6) Field tests have shown that it takes approximately one hour to backfill 120 lineal feet around a 1200 square foot house.

Taken from Sure-West Engineering Consultants with permission

President's Message

Nothing's changed

The Native Inspection Services Initiative (NISI) celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. NISI provides for the contracting out of CMHC inspections relating to on-reserve programs for First Nations technical/inspection service providers. Any First Nations technical-service provider is eligible, such as a Tribal Council, First Nations technical/professional firm, or individuals whose experience meets the NISI minimum technical qualifying (MTQs) criteria. NISI allows CMHC to hire, on a contract basis, qualified First Nations inspection services to undertake construction plans review, and inspections of existing projects on its behalf. The purpose of plans review and inspection is to provide CMHC with reasonable assurance that construction conforms to minimum building-code requirements, and that the completed project provides good value for the loan.

Through this initiative, First Nations have accepted and developed the capacity to assume responsibility for their own housing stock, and now have access to competent inspectors for advice on building-code issues. Sadly, the initiative applies only to houses built under the National Housing Act (Section 10, Section 95), and repairs under the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program. Homes built or renovated under the Indian and Northern Affairs (now AANDC) minor capital program have been declared complete by bands, with no oversight on code compliance.

Concerns have been raised about the overall housing conditions in First Nations communities. These are well documented: poor construction; units built

with unsuitable materials; lack of adequate inspections and verifications; shortages in housing, leading to severe overcrowding; lack of plumbing; poor heating; no electricity; poor insulation; toxic mould; and an accumulation of units in need of major repair.



Bud Jobin

NISI inspectors have provided some relief from these conditions through the provision of plans review, inspections, recommendations for repairs, technical advocacy and advice for building in First Nations communities. The NISI provider has evolved from its original mandate, and now provides more than inspection services to First Nations. NISI inspectors now provide mentoring services, assistance in budget development, proposal writing, policy development, contract writing, and best-practice examples.

Recently, CMHC made the first real change to verifying code compliance by requiring First Nations to submit a Certificate of Building Code Compliance for all housing units that receive assistance through the On-Reserve Non-Profit Housing Program (Section 95). The certificate will serve as supporting documentation for the declaration forms provided by First Nations to attest that Section 95 homes are being built to meet or exceed National Building Code of Canada standards. The attestation must be signed by a "qualified inspector." NISI inspectors will continue to provide progress reports for the pur-

(Continued on page 3)

About this Issue ...

"Building Better" is published by the First Nations National Building Officers Association.

Contributors:
Bud Jobin
Gary Gibson

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Editor:
Moira Farr

Production and Electronic Distribution:
taybridge communications

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Inquiries:
Keith Maracle
Vice-President:
(613) 813-0199

~

5731 Old Hwy #2
P.O. Box 219
Shannonville, Ontario
K0K 3A0

info@fnnboa.ca /
www.fnnboa.ca

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pose of advancing funds. However, we've had to respond to many of our members who are unsure of the requirement. Questions such as: "I am a CET - does that meet CMHC's expectations?" Or, "I took my training through the Saskatchewan Building Official Association; does CMHC accept that training to work in Alberta?"

We forwarded these questions to CMHC and this was the response:

CMHC Senior Principal: *"In some provinces, the technicians' and technologists' associations have specific designations for home inspectors' competencies in code-compliance inspections. These technicians' and technologists' associations are recognized as professional associations in some jurisdictions. You would need to verify whether this is the case in your area. The requirement is to have inspections done by a 'qualified inspector' or certification to perform building-code inspections from a recognized professional industry organization.*

If an inspector is recognized as a 'qualified inspector to do code compliance' in a jurisdiction (municipality or regional government), and the First Nation chooses to acknowledge this recognition of competencies, this would meet the intent of the requirement.

It is the responsibility of the First Nation to ensure that the inspector is properly representing their qualifications. Part of the compliance form requires that the inspector identify their qualifications."

The formation of FNNBOA, whose goal is to advance the professionalism of the First Nations Inspector, was initially received as a positive towards mandatory inspections by certified inspectors – a point not lost on the Office of the Auditor General, which stated that neither INAC (AANDC) nor CMHC could verify code compliance on homes built in First Nations communities. In responding to the OAG's report, both groups promised to tighten up their reporting requirements, but stopped short of mandatory inspections by certified inspectors. CMHC for its part did revise the MTQs, and recognized FNNBOA members as an example of meeting the MTQs.

Media have highlighted deplorable First Nations housing conditions, such as the *Victoria Times Colonist* series on housing and, more recently, the Attawapiskat issues raised by northern-Ontario MP Charlie Angus. A report by Deloitte, entitled *Audit of the AANDC and Attawapiskat First Nation (AFN) Management Control Framework*, focused on several critical issues, including the qualifications of a housing inspector and the enforcement of the national building code. AANDC very generously supported FNNBOA in the development of regulatory frameworks to enforce code in several communities.

We view this as the first positive step towards mandatory inspections by certified inspectors, and made this and other recommendations in our 2013 report, *First Nations Housing and Building Crises: Management of the Change Process*. However, the responsibility for code compliance rests with the Authority Having Jurisdiction. Communities that have adopted building-permit systems will see no impact from this change, as they already provide verification of code compliance from certified inspectors, either through a municipal agreement, such as in Westbank, or through training received from provincial MBOs. Saskatchewan leads the way in terms of setting the standards. All NISI inspectors must receive training through the SBOA, and building-permit systems are in place at PAGC, with several communities to follow.

There will be little impact on FNNBOA members, since our process asks that you verify having completed code-compliance courses through accredited organizations. Regardless of qualifications, that attestation is meaningless, unless FNBOs are able to enforce its provisions. FNBOs and other inspectors cannot stop construction, or order that work be redone in compliance with the building code in all jurisdictions. Expanding FNBOs' powers to allow them to ensure that all new construction meets accepted building standards would be a significant step forward, and could address many of the concerns about the need for safe, quality housing.

From that perspective, nothing's changed.

AGM Update

FNNBOA held its fourth annual general meeting in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in conjunction with the 2014 Regional Technical Services Conference. RTC's conferences are well-run and well-attended, and this year's was no exception. A conference line was set up for those not able to attend in person. To ensure all FNNBOA members had the opportunity to vote on the resolutions, a process was set up using our website's Members Only section.

The key resolution was the acceptance of the auditor for our yearly reporting requirements. FNNBOA welcomes Al Lafond to the board. Al has been involved with FNNBOA since our inception and we gratefully welcome his input. Watch for regional meetings to discuss issues arising out of motions agreed on at the AGM, and direction initiated at the Saskatchewan meetings.

Election Results

- Bud Jobin, AB - President
- Keith Maracle, ON – Co-President
- Vince Genereaux, SK – Treasurer
- Al Lafond, AB/SK - Secretary

Resolutions

- Resolution Thirty Four—Acceptance of Auditor (Passed)

For more details and other motions discussed at our AGMs, go to the Members Only section on the FNNBOA website.

FNNBOA Membership Form

Current Home Mailing Address	
First Name	
Middle Name	
Last Name	
Suffix (e.g. Jr. Sr.)	
E-mail address	
Address	
City or Town	
Province	
Postal Code	
Home Telephone	
Office/Business Mailing Address	
Contact First Name	
Contact Middle Name	
Contact Last Name	
Suffix (e.g. Jr. Sr.)	
E-Mail Address	
Company Name	
Address	
City or Town	
Province	
Postal Code	
Office Telephone	
Office Fax	
Type of Membership	
<input type="checkbox"/> Full (\$100/yr plus a one-time \$50 Initiation Fee)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Associate (\$250/yr)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate (\$500/yr) - includes 5 memberships	
<input type="checkbox"/> Student-Internship and Mentorship (\$50/yr)	
Mail your cheque to:	
First Nations National Building Officers Association Att: Keith Maracle 5731 Old Hwy #2 P.O. Box 219 Shannonville, Ontario K0K 3A0	