

Building Better

A First Nations National Building Officers Association publication

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FNNBOA: Building the Capacity of First Nations Building Officers to Help Build Better Communities

The unique housing system of First Nations communities requires a unique kind of building inspector – one whose role is comparable to that of a municipal building inspector, private home inspector, fire safety officer and property assessor all rolled up into one. Wanting to develop this complex role, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) hosted a session bringing together a number of First Nations and Aboriginal inspectors. The result was the formation, in 2003, of the First Nations National Building Officers Association (FNNBOA).

“Our main goal as an association is the professional development of First Nations building officers,” explains FNNBOA president, Bud Jobin, who was involved in the initial discussions. “We want them to meet certain occupational standards so we can ensure the health and safety of the homes and other buildings in our communities.”

FNNBOA began by developing national occupational standards, which describe the skills, knowledge and abilities required to perform the duties of a First Nations building officer. In turn, the occupational standards form the basis of a voluntary certification process, which the Association developed along with an independent Certification Council. The council, made up of industry experts, certifies building officers based on the skills, knowledge and competencies described in the national occupational standards. It is the first national council of its kind in Canada.

“The development of the national occupational standards and the Certification Council is our biggest success so far” says Jobin, who has himself been a building inspector since 1999 and is one of 30 FNNBOA members to be certified to date. The Association has 192 members in all.

To be certified, members must meet both educational and work-experience requirements. For the educational requirements, FNNBOA has agreements with the Alberta Safety Codes Council and the Ontario Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs, as well as CMHC and various colleges, to adapt their building-code and inspection-related training for First

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Membership Renewals due April 1, 2011

Early-bird members who pay their renewal fees by April 14, 2011 will be eligible for a chance to win a Rigid SeeSnake® Camera!



“Pictures are one of the Inspector's best tools”
- Vince Genereaux

“Make it a nice one!”
- Jim Munroe

“I'd love to win one of these!”
- Bud Jobin

You can find the registration form on page 8.

Communities Wanted!

Does your community want to improve housing conditions? Are you planning to improve how band homes are built? If you've answered yes, FNNBOA wants to hear from you.

Over the past few years, INAC has funded projects in which FNNBOA provides an overview of your building and inspection activities, at no cost to the community.

FNNBOA gets many requests and resources may be limited. Priority will be given to those who contact FNNBOA first and provide the necessary supporting documents. If interested, please send an email to info@fnnboa.ca or contact Bud Jobin at (780) 523-8357.

President's Message

I broke down and bought a snow blower last winter. There are many reasons why, but the biggest was that my driveway was getting too long and the snow was heavier than I remember. Interestingly enough, when I was assembling it I found a section of the box had a label which read "Not For Sale In California." They probably don't have much of a market in San Diego, but I was curious as to why you can't sell a snow blower in California. Turns out that small engines sold in California must be CARB-compliant (California Air Resources Board). CARB compliance basically means that the engine sold meets the stricter emission standards required in California. Here in Canada, several consumer-protection agencies exist to ensure that the products we buy have met some sort of standard that measures fire resistance, emissions, safety and structural stability. Canadian Standards Association (CSA), Underwriters Laboratories of Canada (ULC) and Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) are a few of the companies that ensure product safety.

The question is: Does that protection extend into First Nations communities?

I've requested the band send back framing lumber that was twisted, warped and rotten. "What happened here?" I've asked. "Did all this lumber come off the Indian pile?" You know, lumber that is short of the quality demanded by off-reserve contractors and homeowners, that ends up in our communities' housing packages. Turns out that unscrupulous suppliers have been selling products that are under recall elsewhere, or that no longer meet NBC Standards. In addition, clearance items or products of companies no longer in

business end up in our communities. Some of these products, such as discontinued range-hood fans that no longer meet SONE ratings are an inconvenience (they are loud, and homeowners don't use them), but some affect the health and safety of occupants.



Product Recall - Safety Upgrade Program - 2006 - USA

Venmar is voluntarily and immediately announcing a Product Recall Program which applies to selected Heat Recovery Ventilators. It has come to Venmar's attention that an unlikely series of circumstances could lead to a motor overheating in certain HRV models, that may result in a potential fire hazard. This Product Recall Program affects only certain models produced between 1991 and 2001.

Is your furnace recalled?

The Unitary Products Group of York International Corp. has announced that Coleman, Coleman Evcon and Red T brand furnaces sold as new and replacement equipment in manufactured housing, between 1995 and 2000, may be a fire hazard. They have been implicated in at least 27 fires.

Several of our inspectors have reported seeing these products end up in hous-

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About This Issue ...

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ing, and we have to ask why. What quality-control mechanisms assure products are safe? Does the band have a specification sheet attached to the invitation-to-bid form that outlines product expectations and restrictions? Has the band adopted the 2010 NBC for usage? Statistics on the durability of housing in First Nations communities are dismal. Major renovations costing over \$5000 are required within five to seven years in a large number of homes. When we asked our fellow inspectors to provide input on life-cycle costing, we asked: How long do components last compared to expectations? We listed the following possible responses:

Most common cause for premature repairs: (1) vandalism/neglect; (2) code infraction; (3) substandard material; (4) shoddy construction; (5) overcrowding; (6) other.

Surprisingly, items 2) and 3) generated the most debate. The points made were that using substandard material was a code infraction, First Nations were being used as a testing site for new materials (for example, SIPs are sold to First Nations that have no CSA Certification); price was the overriding factor in selection of materials.

I am continually surprised that in most communities, the adopted code is the 1995 NBCC or provincial equivalent. The NBCC is a model code that needs to be adopted or adapted by the Authority Having Jurisdiction to become a regulation. It is not a how-to manual on engineering or construction. The NBCC does not list acceptable building products, it merely establishes the performance criteria building materials, products and assemblies have to meet.

From the NBCC preface:

“The design of a technically sound building depends upon many factors beyond simple compliance with building regulations. Such factors include the availability of knowledgeable practitio-



I wanted a snow blower with an electric starter and a wide blade that could throw snow 20 feet away. I stopped short of a heated cab and MP3 player, and figured I could find the edge of my sidewalk without a GPS unit. Now if I could just find a way to haul it up on the roof....

ners who have received appropriate education, training and experience and have some degree of familiarity with the principles of good building practice and experience using textbooks, reference manuals and technical guides.”

The “best buy” principle is one in which the cost is measured against the life of the product. Under this principle, the durability of the product has more weight than initial capital costs. Several communities in areas of high wind have stopped using vinyl siding because of premature failure, while others have specified brand plumbing fixtures to be used for consistency. These issues can be addressed through regulatory mechanisms that reflect community realities.

As seen in our continuing series, Building Approval Systems, community growth can be regulated by ensuring that houses are built on approved sites, using approved contractors and community standards.

More information on building permits is available on our website, through our newsletter, or on request. In addition, FNNBOA is working with several FNs to develop a building-permit process. We have support for initiating this process.

If you wish to be involved in moving forward, please contact FNNBOA at info@fnnboa.ca.

Eagle's Eye on Housing:

Community planning materials for First Nations communities

A charrette (design workshop), sponsored by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), was held in Gameti Ko, 240 km northwest of Yellowknife in 2004. The objective was to explore issues related to the community's traditional and indivisible ties to the land and their link to the future—the younger generation.

The Gameti Ko workshop continues to be an inspiration to communities wanting change, without sacrificing cultural values. Developing comprehensive community plans requires that dialogue be initiated by the community—particularly elders.

The elders' longer-term ambition for Gameti Ko is to design and build a contemporary housing prototype that evolves out of their traditional knowledge. They also hope that such a prototype will encourage more appropriate community planning.

However, the essence of the project, in the eyes of the elders, is to formally link a modern home, their homeland, and their traditional ways.

This project can only be fully understood in its broader context. It is a response to housing that does not reflect Tlicho culture, in day-to-day use or symbolism. Designed to replicate southern Canadian models, the existing housing stock of Gameti Ko does not provide the people with a real sense of place within their First Nations homeland. In addition, an imported design, provided without consultation, does not engender any sense of propriety.

The workshop has been a tool for developing a framework that directs the project towards realizing the community's vision of sustainable development and cultural continuity. The most practical consequence of the second workshop was a broad definition of the characteristics of a Tlicho house. In the words of the elders, this is a place that is:

- safe for elders and young people.
- where people share food, stories, knowledge, skills.

- where people can observe other people working, so they can learn.
- open enough for people to learn and share stories, languages and skills.
- where people can see and hear each other.
- where both the traditional Dogrib and modern ways can be followed and learned: *“Even if young people are doing homework and studying for school—they should be able to hear the Dogrib language, stories and learn Dogrib knowledge and skill. Thus, even if youth are not actually listening to stories they can still hear them.”*
- peaceful and harmonious.
- comfortable enough to both talk about and solve the problems that family and community face.
- easy for people to work together, both within and around the home.
- flexible, because family is important and children come and stay for periods at a time, as do grandparents and grandchildren.
- has outside storage, a smoke house, and a place to prepare skins.
- includes log construction and is made from local resources.
- has at least two doors, one for the meat to come through and another for menstruating women to use; this latter door should be at the back, near the bathroom and away from the meat.
- is part of the environment, with easy access between the interior and outside.

The land we live on is our home.
Madeleine Drybones, 1996

CMHC Technical Series Order # 63669

“Processes that are driven by the community, for the community are most effective at achieving positive change. That's why the comprehensive community planning process is inclusive and represents the perspectives of all members, whether they reside within or outside the community. All members of the community, including elders, youth, and family representatives, can

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A message from FNNHMA to FNNBOA

Join our network!

The First Nations National Housing Managers Association (FNNHMA) is a non-profit membership association that represents the needs of First Nations Housing Managers across Canada.

Our mission is to promote and enhance the professional development of housing managers, and to create a central professional network for sharing best practices. We are a centralized source of information to support front-line operations, and provide a knowledgeable voice to housing managers, and on their behalf, while respecting the diverse needs of First Nations communities.

The idea for an association was developed in 2005, through a consultative process sponsored by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Soon after that meeting, our board was established.

Over the past five years, we have collaborated with INAC, CMHC and Vancouver Island University (VIU), and are in the final stages of a compre-

hensive six-course training program that covers housing administration, finance, communication and construction. Once the curriculum has been developed, the university will evaluate it and determine its cost, and whether it will be a certificate or diploma program. Our association will deliver this training in collaboration with institutions across the country.

This is the first certified nationally acknowledged housing managers' training in Canada. We have all waited a long time for this, and we are excited to be so close to the completion of the project. If you want training, put it in your plans now, because the program will be available in Fall 2011.

Building capacity is a critical need in First Nations housing. Therefore, the FNNHMA is creating a hub to connect First Nations housing professionals with education and training programs, best practices and other experienced corporate and housing professionals. Our website will provide an exciting networking opportunity. Together we will build on our collective strengths.

To do this we need your community to join our network. We have recently undertaken significant organizational planning and have been primarily focused on the developing the capacity in our Association to deliver effective and efficient representation. We want to stay in touch to let you know that we will soon be taking memberships.

Over the winter of 2010/2011 we will develop a communications and marketing plan, which will have a comprehensive membership and partnership program. If you are interested in our Association and wish to have more information we encourage you to contact us to discuss membership opportunities directly.

For more information please contact:

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offer unique and valuable perspectives on community needs, values and priorities.

A comprehensive community plan addresses key planning areas, all of which are interrelated and interdependent: governance, land and resources, health, infrastructure development, culture, social issues, and the

economy. Consideration of all key planning areas through one unified process defines community planning as a holistic and integrated exercise that can lead to sustainable development."

CCP Handbook - Comprehensive Community Planning for First Nations in British Columbia Date: August 2006 ISBN: 0-662-43482-X

Tsuu T'ina Nation Building Process – A Case Study

By John Kiedrowski and Bud Jobin

Building houses in Tsuu T'ina Nation

Tsuu T'ina Nation, on the southwestern edge of Calgary, is enjoying a building boom these days. Over the next year, it hopes to build approximately 64 homes for its members. The community is facing an increase in the number of people moving back. Being in close proximity to Calgary, Tsuu T'ina Nation is a prime location for members to live in the community and work off reserve. They also want to build safe and healthy housing. The community does not want to house its members in army barracks, or in residential units so unsuitable for living, they've been condemned.

Homes built in Tsuu T'ina Nation are constructed under the authority of council. The council selects which members will receive a home, and provides direction to the housing department. The potential home owner is involved in selecting plans, and can choose, for example, the colour of siding and interior paints. The homes are constructed by carpenters who mainly reside in the community. Once a home is completed, it is turned over to the owner.

The housing construction program must follow the community comprehensive plan (CPP). The objective of the CCP is to determine current and future needs of the community, and includes appropriate guidelines for development, while addressing environmental, social, and economic sustainability. It will guide development

of the Tsuu T'ina community for the next five to 50 years, and help support funding applications. The CCP involved four elders and five members from the community, who took into account the views of all Nation members.



Bud Jobin (FNNBOA) and Raymond Vaivada (Tsuu T'ina Nation) at Future Land Development

A Community Plan for Residential Construction

All "new" residential building and renovation projects in Tsuu T'ina Nation must be approved. Community bylaws and resolutions state that these buildings must adhere to the Safety Codes Act (Alberta) and any other standards in place in the province. Tsuu T'ina Band Council's process incorporates many key elements of any building-permit system, as well as good governance practices, to control the development of homes in Tsuu T'ina. These include:

- designation of lands for residential use
- involvement of all departments impacted by development (Lands, Membership, Community Infrastructure)

- approval of budgets and time frames
- ready supply of engineered plans complying to building-code standards
- reviews of engineered plans for compliance to band specification
- an approved general contractors' prequalification process to ensure competency
- an inspection system, from site approval to signing off, that the building is safe for the occupants

This process minimizes the liability and other legal issues associated with Tsuu T'ina being the authority having jurisdiction. It shows how the community has developed specifications that go beyond code compliance and focus on quality control for residential building.

Lead Department – Technical Services

The Technical Services Department (TSD) is generally responsible for design, seeking input from other departments, site inspections, project management, providing engineering advice, contract management and planning, cost estimating, funding submissions and coordinating the transfer of the home to the new owner.

The TSD conducts six mandatory building inspections:

- Site
- Prior to Backfill
- Framing

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- At completion of all rough-ins
- At completion of drywall installation
- At completion

Utility-service inspections are also mandatory:

- Electrical-permit inspections
- Gas-permit inspections
- Private sewage-disposal systems

The inspector may also recommend inspection from other qualified experts. This may range from having experts review the installation of the septic tanks and water systems, plumbing and heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC).

The inspector must provide progress inspections for the release of contractual dollars, together with adherence to community standards deemed necessary at any time during the construction of the house.

Occupancy Authorization

The housing manager notifies the owner when the home is ready for occupancy. The authorization is provided through a letter from the inspector or housing department.

Occupancy authorization may be provided before completion of the unit. Seasonal deficiencies are usually final site grading, spreading of topsoil, grass seeding and foundation parging. A holdback from TSD of double the value of outstanding issues ensures these items are addressed.

Conclusion

This case study focuses on how a First Nations community has established a process for approving and building homes. Many components used by Tsuu T'ina Nation are similar to those used in neighbouring off-reserve communities. The building of these homes is the responsibility of TSD. The TSD mandate is to enforce the building code and

to ensure structures for homes are safe over the long term.

Tsuu T'ina Nation has moved to the next level, introducing EnerGuide 80 for new houses. The rating is used to evaluate the energy efficiency of new homes. The building department also includes inspections and blower door testing at the vapor-barrier stage and at final completion of the project, to determine a home's air-tightness.

It is another step toward ensuring that the community has sustainable, safe and affordable housing for generations to come.



Home under construction

Join FNNBOA

Building a house takes many hands - skilled hands that have learned their craft over the years. The rapid evolution of construction techniques and materials, and changes in how we manage First Nations housing programs means that we must constantly learn specific content and update skills covering all aspects of housing - from funding to finishing.

FNNBOA can help you gain the skills and knowledge you will need to keep up with changes in First Nations housing.

FNNBOA can also help you develop networks and partnerships which will increase learning opportunities. FNNBOA strives to create improvements in First Nations housing conditions - your workplace. We are another helping hand working to build better opportunities for you and better homes for First Nations people.

In partnership with educational institutes, federal funding agencies, and First Nations technical-service providers, we are seeking First Nations inspectors, service providers and corporate sponsors to become members of the organization.

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Nations. FNNBOA also offers mentoring and internships for new building officers.

“We believe strongly that educating building officers and holding them to a certain standard is the way to improve housing conditions in First Nations communities and to protect the communities’ investments,” says Jobin.

FNNBOA’s initiatives would not have been possible, adds Jobin, without the support of CMHC. The Corporation provided funding to establish the national occupational standards, the certification process and council, and the training programs. In addition, CMHC is providing project funding for marketing and communications throughout Canada and has supported the development of the association’s website and newsletter. “CMHC has been a big supporter of FNNBOA and of its initiatives,” says Jobin. “We could not have got this far without them.” He adds that the association’s next step is implementing strategic business-plan activities leading to long-term self-sustainability.

While FNNBOA is working to hold housing officers to a certain standard, it is also working to hold First Nations themselves to a certain standard, by promoting building permit systems in individual communities. This INAC-supported grassroots project, one of FNNBOA’s biggest current initiatives, involves going into communities to present the benefits of building permit systems, and then letting the communities decide if it wants to implement such a system.

“Building permits are really about governance,” explains Jobin. “First Nations are responsible for the construction of all buildings and housing in their communities. Without a building permit system in place, they can’t ensure the buildings comply with national codes. So it’s all about ensuring code-compliance, which in turn is about ensuring safety.”

Out of more than 600 communities, only six currently have a code compliance mechanism, and FNNBOA is working with five more. Says Jobin: “There’s still a long way to go.”

But there’s no question FNNBOA itself has come a long way in its first seven years. The association is on track for becoming an indispensable service to building officers and the First Nations they serve. The FNNBOA banner sums it up: Building Better Careers, Better Homes, Better Communities Together.

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	
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Shannonville, Ontario K0K 3A0	