



Building Better

A First Nations National Building Officers Association publication

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Qualification versus Certification: Who's Confused?

If only FNNBOA had a toonie for every time someone asked what the difference is between a qualified inspector and a certified inspector.

It is time to address the confusion.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) state in their legal agreements that homes built by band councils must be inspected by a "qualified inspector," but they don't define "qualified."

Some CMHC regions and provincial territorial organizations have provided "designations" for some inspectors.

Meanwhile, FNNBOA and the Canadian Association of Home and Property Inspectors have established a national certification program.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines qualification as:

- a: fitted (as by training or experience) for a given purpose: Competent.*
- b: having complied with the specific requirements or precedent conditions (as for an office or employment): Eligible: Limited or modified in some way.*

The same dictionary defines certification as:

Having earned certification

To attest as being true or as represented or as meeting a standard.

To recognize as having met special qualifications (as of a governmental agency or professional board) within a field.

"Qualified" does not necessarily mean "certified," and vice versa.

Some organizations that issue a designation to show someone is qualified do not have an official certification process. It means that a person who knows something about buildings and meets the designation criteria (for example, five years of experience as a carpenter) may be deemed qualified, but not necessarily certified.

A "qualified" First Nations inspector faces several challenges. There are no clear standards to determine the skills, knowledge and competencies of a qualified inspector. This lack of standards contributes to further confusion. For example, in the housing agreements between First Nations and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), INAC relies on the approximately 650 Band Councils to define qualified inspector.

It is unclear how each band council determines whether an inspector is qualified. If an individual has built a shed or garage does this mean they are qualified

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President's Message

At a recent session of Let's Clear The Air (part of CMHC's Quality Housing Initiative) in a northern Alberta Community, I was reminded that in the Cree language, some words have dual meanings, and that care is needed to ensure these words are used in the proper context. The same can be said of the English language for example: A piece of cake can either be a desert selection or a task easily accomplished.

The session provided an introduction to Indoor Air Quality and discussed both biological and chemical contaminants found in our homes. During the introductions, I asked a simple question:

What housing issues is the community facing?

You can guess the response. Everyone had an opinion on what needed to be done to improve housing. Overcrowding, mold, shoddy construction, incomplete houses, patronage, applicant selection, nepotism, etcetera. Community members were happy to "clear the air."

I offered a challenge. "Tired of living in overcrowded, shoddy houses?" I asked this group in northern Alberta. "Well then, quit building overcrowded, shoddy houses."

Several forward-thinking communities have worked hard and long to make changes to their housing programs. They have reviewed not just housing-department policies, but all band policies. The communities profiled in the

Healthy Housing™ seminars developed by FNNBOA have three things in common: a desire to improve housing, visionaries to turn dreams into goals and community support to turn goals into reality.

So where do you start? By acknowledging responsibility for the quality of houses built in your community. CMHC, INAC and Health Canada all agree that compliance to standards rests with the Authority Having Jurisdiction and that the AHJ sets the standards to which homes are built. In practice, this means the standards set are to minimum requirements of the National Building Code. In fact, some communities use 1985 Building Codes in an effort to reduce construction costs. Older requirements did not envision issues relating to mold caused in part by tighter building envelopes and lack of ventilation.

Code compliance inspections in many communities with mold issues are lacking and verification of project completions are all that is being submitted. Many communities rely on engineers to sign off on projects, but their inspection reports are only a verification of structural integrity, not that the unit will provide a healthy environment for the tenants.

Many communities have bought in on global warming and are designing homes to be more air-tight and energy-efficient. While admirable, without an acknowledgement of how these changes impact

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Top Ten Missed Maintenance Items

Maintenance and home repairs help ensure the integrity of the structure and utility systems (electrical, plumbing, heating, water and gas). Regular repair and maintenance decrease the health hazards, the mold and rot, poor indoor air quality and inadequate ventilation.

The Basic Home Maintenance course delivered under the Quality Housing Initiative has a good checklist for preventing small problems from becoming big ones.

People who take the course are surprised to hear that you can extend the life of your hot water tank by draining it regularly to remove sediment build-up.

What else can the homeowner do to ensure hazards are identified, anticipated and addressed during the life of the house? Here are the top ten maintenance items that homeowners should do on a regular basis.

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Note the build-up on valve and lack of valve stem.

1. Turn on and shut off plumbing valves. Test plumbing shut-off valves to ensure they are working and to prevent them from seizing. Besides a main valve that turns off water to the entire house, every sink and appliance will also have shut-off valves.
2. Clean gutters and downspouts of debris. The eavestroughing system is designed to divert water away from the foundation: a full gutter will not direct water away.
3. Vacuum bathroom fan grills. Beside the obvious problem of not effectively removing moist air out of the building, the built-up lint can become a fire hazard if the fan motor overheats.
4. Check the basement floor drain to ensure the trap contains water. Refill with water if necessary. The floor drain has a P trap designed to prevent sewer gases from entering the building. If you are going to be away from home for awhile, antifreeze will not evaporate as fast as water will.
5. Disconnect the duct to the dryer, and vacuum lint from the duct, the areas surrounding your clothes dryer and your dryer's vent hood outside. If you are using flexible hose, consider installing rigid, smooth-walled ducting, as it will collect less lint.
6. Check and reset exterior GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter). If the GFCI plug trips regularly, contact a qualified electrician to replace the plug and check for overloads.
7. Clean & check refrigerator drip pan. Vacuum radiator grilles on back of refrigerators and freezers, and empty and clean drip trays. Believe it or not, pests such as mice will drink the water from the drip pan, so clean with a disinfecting detergent.
8. Clean or replace furnace air filters every other month during the heating season. Periodically check vents outside (intake and exhaust) to make sure they are not blocked by snow or debris. Then vacuum all heating supply registers, return grills, baseboards or radiators inside the home.
9. Check smoke and CO alarms to see if they work. Vacuum fire and smoke detectors, as dust or spider webs can prevent them from functioning.
10. Drain the hot-water tank to remove sediment. In addition, check the pressure-relief valve to ensure it is working. Water systems on wells may deposit iron and calcium, preventing the relief valve from working. Replace if needed. A stuck pressure-relief valve can turn the hot-water tank into an IED (bomb).



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to conduct inspections?

Similarly, CMHC has no national definition of qualified inspector. NISI guidelines fall short of establishing any true standards for the industry. A greater concern is that a person who is qualified, but not certified, has a less likely chance of obtaining errors-or-omission insurance.

A crucial aspect of ensuring that a person's qualification is relevant is to take into account recognized professional standards and competencies (skills and knowledge) for that sector or industry.

The only professional standards that exist for First Nations inspectors have been established by FNNBOA. This includes the development of national occupational standards, codes of ethics, and the establishment of a national certification program. The process was supported by CMHC, INAC and the associations that represent municipal building officials and home inspectors.

Familiarity with building codes, plumbing and building science, experience conducting inspections or meeting the standards established in a national occupational standard, and an independent review of qualifications, are important for certification.

The development of national standards and certification model for First Nations is in response to several factors.

In 2003, the Office of the Auditor

General questioned whether homes built in First Nations met National Building Code standards. There was a need to establish consistency in terms of national training and education programs.

Home inspection and building officials established national occupational standards for their respective sectors. There was a clear understanding that a First Nations inspector required the skill and knowledge of both a home inspector and a municipal building official.

FNNBOA took both national occupational standards and revised them to reflect the required skills and knowledge for someone inspecting homes in First Nations communities.

Various government reports raised the issue of poor First Nations housing construction, as well as constant overruns in spending. They recognized that it is of paramount importance for building inspectors to have the required skill sets and training to conduct a proper inspection.

Finally, there was a growing demand for First Nation inspectors to receive recognition for their experiences and training, both within First Nations as well as by the municipal-building-official and home-inspection sectors. Similar training modules and review of competencies had to be put in place. This can only be done through a certification process.

Through the development of a certification model and required competencies, skills and knowledge FNNBOA has moved the First Nation Building Officer to another level.

Those certified by FNNBOA can be compared to municipal building officials and certified home inspectors.

The next step is to work with Band Councils to inform them about the importance of hiring a certified inspector, rather than one deemed qualified.

CMHC and INAC must also acknowledge the importance of using certified inspectors rather than qualified inspectors. Unfortunately, a qualified inspector just does not meet the required skills sets.

It is also important for insurance companies to understand the potential risks associated with Band Councils using qualified inspectors. New home owners in First Nations must also understand the differences between a qualified and certified inspector.

When new home owners do not have access to home-warranty programs, it is even more important for these individuals to hire certified inspectors.

Finally, while many individuals have applied for certification, it is important that more follow their lead. Certification means you have validated your knowledge, skills and abilities as an inspector. It will provide you with a decided edge in terms of marketability and respect among your colleagues. It gives you better job performance that employers can count on. It may even give you a larger pay cheque.

Now that is something to take into consideration!



Building Safety Week—Strategies for Success

Building Safety Where You Live, Work and Play

When you enter a house or building, most likely you're not thinking about whether it is properly constructed and safe. Fortunately, your local safety experts think about these issues every day.

To help raise awareness of building safety, the Siksika First Nation celebrated Building Safety Week from June 8 through 15, 2009.

Across the nation, communities promote the use and understanding of building safety and fire prevention codes to protect lives and property. The theme this year was "Building Safety: Where You Live, Work and Play."

"The important work we do is often overlooked until a catastrophic tragedy occurs," said Fire Chief Tom Littlechild of Siksika First Nation.

"When safety and fire-prevention experts inspect buildings during and after construction, we help to ensure that the places where you live, learn, work and play are safe," added FNNBOA president Bud Jobin.

Building safety and fire prevention codes address all aspects of construction, such as structural soundness of buildings, reliability of fire prevention and suppression systems, plumbing and mechanical systems, and energy efficiency and sustainability.

Ensuring buildings are safe requires the active participation of safety and fire-prevention officials, architects, builders, engineers, and others in the construction industry, as well as property owners.

"Public safety is our number one concern," said Chief Leroy Goodeagle.

Local events to celebrate Building Safety Week included:

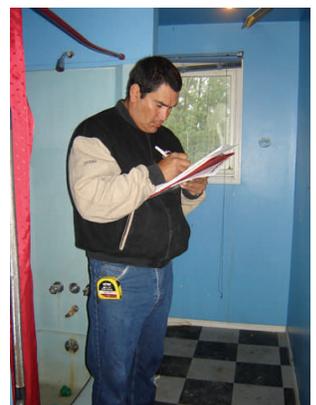
1. **Basic Home Maintenance** - Eric Redgun and Doug Breaker led a group of homeowners through a home inspection, identifying and

illustrating homeowners' duties and responsibilities.

2. **Home Fire Safety** - Tom Littlechild led a group of homeowners through a home inspection, identifying fire hazards, the need for replacement of fire-safety devices (breakers, smoke alarms), a fire evacuation plan and location of shutoff devices in the event of a community evacuation due to flooding.
3. **New Home Construction** - Bud Jobin discussed with participants how a house under construction can benefit from a building approval process, pointing out code issues, best practices, reporting and asset-condition reporting.
4. **Indoor Air Quality/Mold** - Bud Jobin facilitated a session on Indoor Air Quality, why it is important and how can we improve it.

Building Safety Week, first observed in 1980, is sponsored by the International Code Council, a membership organization dedicated to building safety and fire prevention, of which FNNBOA is an active member.

The International Code Council develops codes used to construct residential and commercial buildings, including homes and schools. Most U.S. cities, counties and states choose building safety codes developed by the International Code Council. As part of celebrating the first ever Building Safety Week in FN communities, FNNBOA has developed a template to use in hosting the event in your communities. Check our website for details on the Members-Only page.



File: Doug Breaker



Eagle Eye on Housing: Assessing Renovation Projects

Over the years, we've developed a good understanding of how buildings perform. Construction techniques for new homes have changed rapidly. Most of these improved techniques also apply to renovations. If you plan carefully, you can renovate your home to make it look better, work better, last longer and be more comfortable.

Before renovating, it's important to assess the condition of your home to determine if any significant underlying problems must be addressed before or during your planned renovation project.

Why renovate?

- *To upgrade or improve outdated or deteriorated systems*—replacing an outdated furnace, old siding or windows are common upgrades.
- *To maintain and repair various elements of the house*—re-shingling a roof or fixing foundation cracks are typical renovations.
- *To address lifestyle needs*—converting unused attic space to living quarters, add a sunroom or build a home office.

When assessing your project, consider the principles of Healthy Housing™ (Occupant health, energy efficiency, resource efficiency, environmental responsibility and affordability) and the House as a System.

A house is much more than just four walls and a roof—it's an interactive system with many components, including the basic structure, heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment, the external environment and the occupants. Each component influences the performance of the entire system.

A renovation allows you to improve how your house performs. Ask yourself how changing particular components will affect the performance of the whole house.

For example, as part of a bathroom renovation, you may

want to add a hot tub, which will generate large amounts of humidity during operation. Your existing ventilation may be inadequate to handle the increased moisture levels. It will be important to provide proper ventilation to avoid mold growth, poor indoor air quality (IAQ) and damage to the structure or finishes. You may need to consult a qualified home inspector or professional renovator.

Avoid Surprises

A systematic and thorough inspection will help you to assess the condition of your home. Look for any signs of deterioration and the possible causes. Start your inspection in the basement. Many problems in other parts of the house originate there. Depending upon the size of your project, you may want to ask a qualified home inspector or a professional renovator to help you assess your building and develop a plan.

Rewards

Correcting structural flaws, fixing leaks and ensuring that all services are adequate will make your home safer, more efficient and more durable. Then, other renovations can be done to make your home more pleasant, attractive and suited to your lifestyle.

Skills to Do the Job

You can assess most of your house with the help of a CMHC inspection checklist. Professional home inspectors are also available to do a thorough inspection for you. Repairing serious structural, mechanical or electrical problems will require the help of an expert.

From About Your House Series CMHC Order # 62246

Healthy Housing Training Seminars are available through FNNBOA. Included with the Healthy Housing™ Training seminar; the Complete set of Healthy Housing About Your House fact sheets or you can order the fact sheets at the CMHC website.

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Priced Publications

- Healthy Housing™ Renovation Planner—Order No. 60957
- Homeowner’s Inspection Checklist—Order No. 62114
- Renovator’s Technical Guide—Order No. 61946
- Clean-Up Procedures for Mold in Houses—Order No. 61091

Free Publications

About Your House fact sheets:

- Hiring a Contractor—Order No. 62277
- Before You Start Renovating Your Basement—Moisture Problems—Order No. 62250

- Before You Start Renovating Your Kitchen—Order No. 62252
- Before You Start Renovating Your Bathroom—Order No. 62254
- Before You Start Window and Door Renovations—Order No. 62256
- Sample Renovation Contract—Order No. 62351
- Fighting Mold: The Homeowners’ Manual—Order No. 60516

A final note: CMHC does not recommend or endorse any individual home inspector or association. CMHC supports national uniform standards of competency for home inspectors.

For more information on the FNNBOA Certification Council, please refer to FNNBOA’s website http://fnnboa.ca/certification_council.html.

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the health of occupants, bands do a disservice to members.

A comprehensive approach to housing is required, one that links the five elements of Healthy Housing™: Occupant Health; Energy Efficiency; Resource Efficiency; Environmental Responsibility; and Affordability.

Nationally, when you ask housing staff about existing inspection services, customer satisfaction is inconsistent: There are not enough inspectors; you can’t get an inspector in a timely fashion; the inspector is holding back progress payments and delaying completion; and, finally, the inspector is incompetent.

While FNNBOA has made progress in improving houses in FN communities, we clearly have a way to go. We

have observed that the best housing is in communities that have taken a comprehensive approach. They have linked existing policies to an overall vision for the band, determined competency levels for all positions and instituted band by-laws to enforce codes, standards and certification requirements.

Certified First Nations Building Officers (FNBOs), through consultation with stakeholders, home and property inspectors, municipal building officers and program advisors have developed Occupational Standards — the basis for certification as a FNBO. Bands wishing to improve housing should demand that all inspectors working in the community be certified.

Clearly, there is a shortage of certified inspectors. It takes commitment to become one. In addition to requir-

ing knowledge of building codes and standards, the FNBO must demonstrate knowledge of Indoor Air Quality, Building Science, FN governance, funding-agency reporting requirements, estimating and budgeting. Certification assures Chief and Council that decisions made are informed ones.

FNNBOA is a not-for-profit professional organization that promotes the use and understanding of building codes and standards, demonstrates the effectiveness of how building by laws can improve code compliance and enforcement leading to healthy, safe and accessible homes, and recognizes the important role that Certified First Nation Building Officers play to ensure compliance of these building by-laws.



Member Profile: Durwin Chartrand

Durwin Chartrand knows how to get the job done. He has been involved in the construction industry since 1982 and received his interprovincial journeyman certificate for carpentry in 1989. During the early part of his career, he worked on several large-scale industrial projects as a union carpenter. After the construction boom of the mid- '90s, his interest quickly turned to building science technology. The City of Thompson, Manitoba offered him the position of municipal building inspector in the fall of 2000. During his three-year tenure, he obtained Part 9 and Part 3 certification through Manitoba's Emergency Services College in Brandon.

He is a certified member of the Manitoba Building Officials Association, with Part 9 large building and Part 3 BCQ status. He has also received Level 2 certification with FNNBOA,

and has certification in the design and installation of heating and ventilation systems with the Heating, Refrigeration and Air-conditioning Institute (HRAI) of Canada.

Durwin successfully developed a duct-sizing calculator that he uses regularly for the design of HRV units, range hoods exhaust fans and air-intake duct connections to F/A heating systems. On top of these accomplishments, he also has basic inspection certification with Wood Energy Technology Transfer Inc. (WETT).

In 2003, he received authorization from CMHC to perform inspections for RRAP, Section 95 Housing projects and Physical Condition Reviews (PCRs), on behalf of the Keewatin Tribal Council.

Durwin is also certified to perform in-home energy assessments for Canada's ecoEnergy program, delivered

by Manitoba Hydro. He has been performing these in-home energy assessments in northern Manitoba since the spring of 2003 as an independent sub-contractor. He was also involved in training fellow NISI inspectors under the old Energuide For Houses program.

Other skills and activities of Durwin's include providing auto-cad drafting services to a Thompson-based engineering firm that offers structural and mechanical services. These engineers rely heavily on his knowledge of codes and standards in design/drafting and building-code analysis. He also provides infrared thermography services to clients in and around Thompson.

His company, D.L. Chartrand Consulting, provides key take-back inspections and multiple-unit inspections for CMHC on a fee-for-service basis, and is registered with CMHC as an independent service-delivery agent.

FNNBOA in Action—Meetings and Presentations

First, a special thank-you to Michelle Arcand at TSAG for helping with the 6th annual AGM held in conjunction with the annual TSAG conference. Remaining as president is Bud Jobin, and remaining as treasurer is Vince Geneaux. The 2010 AGM will be held in eastern Canada at a venue yet to be chosen.

FNNBOA has been at a number of national conferences promoting the use of certified inspectors, including the National CANDO AGM and conference, where FNNBOA presented a session on Building Permits. Our booth was also at the OFNTSC and TSAG conferences, and we met with officials from the INAC minister's office in early spring. Other regional highlights:

BC: Vancouver Island University Inspector Course dovetailed with FNNBOA occupational standards. A roll-up

banner was developed . Thanks, Cliff Grant, for your support, and congratulations to

Nancy Hamilton and the rest of the VUI staff for making inspector training accessible.

Alberta: ABCAP supports FNBO attendance to CEAP informational meetings, ABOA AGM and TSAG Conference. CMHC/INAC support building-safety week. Thanks to David Pare and Peggy Roberts.

Saskatchewan: Mentorship proposal accepted. Thanks to Lorraine Bellegard.

In the spring newsletter, we will begin a series of articles on achieving EG80 and highlighting plans that can work in your community.

We will be at the March 2010 national AFOA conference in Ottawa and hope you visit us at our booth.