

WORKSHOP SUMMARY REPORT

LIVE GREEN, SAVE GREEN: TAKING ACTION ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Vernon BC
February 16, 2017

On February 16, 2017, Fraser Basin Council and Okanagan Nation Alliance co-hosted the “Live Green, Save Green: Taking Action on Energy Efficiency” workshop in Vernon. The purpose of the workshop was to engage and build the capacity of elected and administrative leaders and community champions to plan for and implement energy efficiency projects. The workshop also highlighted stories of how communities have transitioned to clean energy and educated their members about energy use.

This report is a summary of the key issues and ideas that the workshop participants identified and discussed.



WHAT ARE THE KEY ISSUES?

ACCESSING RESOURCES

Communities have difficulty affording energy efficient homes and need subsidies to build efficiently. At times, it is hard to find funding that matches up with housing projects and that can become a waiting game. Communities face the risk of losing money in renovations. They want to see improvement in funding application approval timelines.

UNDERSTANDING ENERGY EFFICIENT DESIGN

Communities want better understanding of energy efficient design approaches, such as pre-fabricated housing and what works for each climate zone. There are concerns that sealing the housing envelope will lead to ventilation issues. People want more information on the impacts on air quality from sealing homes and the costs of maintaining air ventilation.

STAFF CAPACITY

The scope of work for one staff member is huge, and can include the Comprehensive Community Plan to overseeing maintenance. Support organizations need to communicate better with staff when they update systems, as new systems can end up setting communities back. People want to see more educational opportunities for staff. Lots of work gets contracted out so there is not enough skills development within the community.



GETTING SKILLED WORKERS

It is a challenge to get qualified and independent builders or inspectors, especially to remote communities, as they are booked up months in advance. There is a barrier of setting the bar too high and then not getting any builders. We also need to look beyond builders, as plumbers and electricians are not being trained in energy efficiency.

Jobs in communities are getting filled by temporary agencies. Youth in communities are finding it difficult to get Red Seal certified. They need guidance on how to approach employers and get into the certification process. Government funding agencies have focused on providing funding for housing, but they need to offer more support for finding the labour to construct those homes.

HOW CAN WE MOVE FORWARD IN COMMUNITIES?

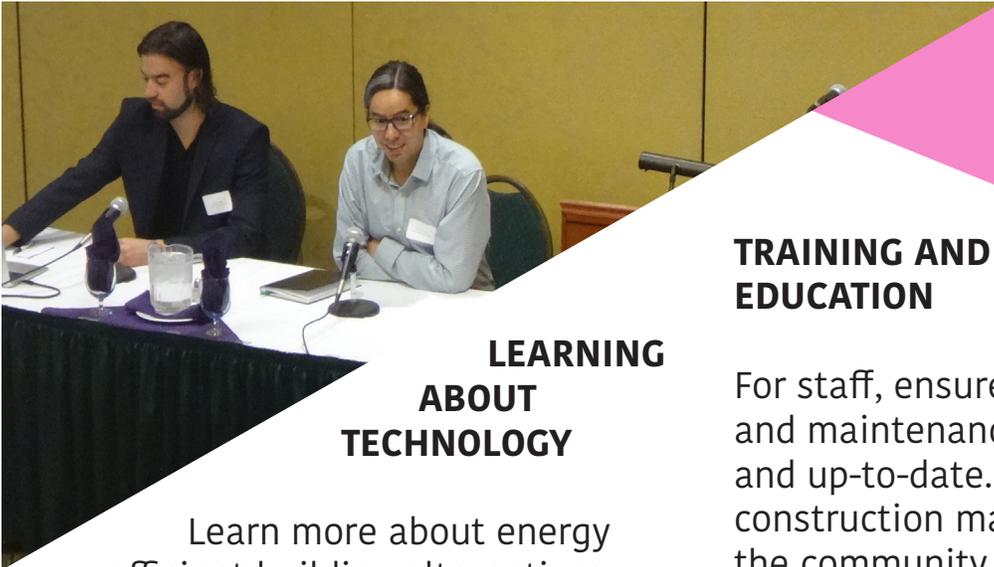
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Invest time into community outreach and education. If possible, hire an energy ambassador. An effective approach is door-to-door community outreach. Make sure to engage youth in environmental issues and projects.

PLANNING AND POLICY

Recognize the importance of having energy efficiency in housing policy. This standard can help justify extra costs with INAC. Create a long term housing plan.





LEARNING ABOUT TECHNOLOGY

Learn more about energy efficient building alternatives, such as modular homes, shipping containers, and tiny homes. Look into opportunities to arrange bulk purchases to save on costs.

WHAT CAN SUPPORT ORGS DO?

FUNDING RESOURCES

Bring funding organizations together to share resources and offer collective funding that can support deeper retrofits and new construction. Include energy efficiency as a criteria in funding programs and ensure the extra cost of energy efficiency is covered. Provide pre-planning funding and staged funding opportunities. Be more proactive in planning around building seasons rather than funding seasons.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

For staff, ensure that education and maintenance training are done and up-to-date. If possible, hire a construction manager that works for the community. Or you can start by setting a quota for local contractors and work towards fully local labour. For community members, help develop mentorship opportunities. Providing apprenticeships in communities can be a step towards Red Seal certification. Offer education that is hands-on and have people learn how to do improvements for their homes. Energy conservation can be added to existing “Ready to Rent” programs.

CLARIFY ROLES

Clarify governance structures with organizational charts, job descriptions, and program descriptions. Provide a directory of key people in the energy efficiency field and their contact details. Create more awareness of what each organization does and where they may overlap in topics.

ACCESSING SKILLED WORKERS



Ensure that there is a common place to show construction bids that stays current, which can include a database listing for First Nations Red Seal certified builders that are willing to travel. Create a Better Business Bureau for builders. Provide access to energy advisors and help fund regional energy managers. Offer specific guidance and information to assist northern and remote communities. A potential tool is a tax rebate for builders that travel to remote regions.

CAPACITY BUILDING

After delivering funding, provide more ongoing project implementation support to communities. Host easily accessible online tools for community planners and housing managers. Support builders teaching energy efficiency in different regions across BC. Understand that energy efficiency awareness needs to increase in all trades, not just builders.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE

Create more learning opportunities about energy efficient design, including education at a technical level. Ensure that there is training on the maintenance of new technologies, such as HRVs. Provide a cost benefit analysis of different energy efficiency retrofit approaches, which includes the lifetime cost. Identify an evaluation framework for different heating options.

**WANT
TO LEARN
MORE?**

To find out more about the First Nations Home EnergySave program, contact Eliana Chia at 604-488-5377 or echia@fraserbasin.bc.ca.