

Community Success Story

Getting Creative with Community Engagement at Musqueam Indian Band

Community Context

The Musqueam Indian Band is situated on the Fraser River estuary, an area Musqueam ancestors have called home for thousands of years. Many of Musqueam's 1,300 members live on a small portion of its traditional territory, known as the Musqueam Indian Reserve; however, Musqueam's traditional territory stretches as far as the areas known as Vancouver, Burrard Inlet, Burnaby and Richmond.

The name Musqueam relates back to the flowering plant, *məθkwəy*, which grows in the Fraser River estuary. Musqueam constantly strives to ensure a sustainable, self-reliant, vibrant community built upon its historical and traditional values. Leadership at Musqueam believes engaging the community is a vital first step towards ensuring community ownership over decisions. Community engagement is embedded in everything Musqueam does and is an integral part of processes that impact residents.

For Musqueam's Housing and Energy team, this community-focused approach is no different. Staff are constantly striving to think creatively about managing housing more effectively. From undertaking renovations and new construction to maintaining homes and implementing housing policies, community engagement is at the heart of everything Musqueam does.

Project Description

The Musqueam Indian Reserve includes 254 houses and is expected to grow significantly with new housing projects on the horizon. In 2016, Musqueam's Housing department adopted asset management software to meet the community's growing renovation and maintenance demands. The software significantly streamlined Musqueam's process for tracking its assets.

One thing that data is limited in providing is the trust and communication of residents. Lenny Kishi, Housing Accountant, explains, "It's about creating a communication stream with our residents to help us manage maintenance programs so that housing can last longer for future generations." This combination of data mapping and a focus on engaging the community at all levels of the housing decision-making process is why Musqueam has had success in meeting the needs of its residents and current housing stock.

Two great examples of Musqueam's commitment to delivering housing support in the community, for the community, are the E = MC2 and Game of Homes events hosted in August and October of 2021.



Photo credit: Musqueam Indian Band

FIRST NATIONS HOME ENERGYSAVE IS SUPPORTED BY:



Photo credit: Musqueam Indian Band

Collaborators

New Relationship Trust

BC Hydro

Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA)

FortisBC

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)

Funding Providers

E = MC2 Event - FortisBC

Game of Homes Event - University of British Columbia

Project Leads

Lenny Kishi

Housing Accountant, Musqueam Indian Band

Ehsan Haghi

Community Energy Specialist, Musqueam Indian Band

Kerri Timothy

Interim Manager, Musqueam Indian Band

Ronette Stogan

Tenant Relations, Musqueam Indian Band

Brittany Point

Administrative Assistant, Musqueam Indian Band



For more information about First Nations Home EnergySave visit:
www.fnenergy.ca

Milestones

August 2021

180 community members attended the E = MC2 event

October 2021

100 community members attended the Game of Homes event

October 2021

Both events led to a total of 60 ECAP applications and 43 new Energuide applications. This number of applications represents an impressively high percentage of households reached.

"By working hard to understand our residents' housing wants and needs, we are often finding community champions along the way. These folks are often prepared to spread the word on housing programs, and once you get enough community champions, you start to see your hard work pay off."

—Ehsan Haghi, Community Energy Specialist, Musqueam Indian Band

Photo credit: Musqueam Indian Band



Photo credit: Musqueam Indian Band

E = MC2 Event

Musqueam's Housing team hosted this event to promote a better understanding of how residents could reduce home energy and heating costs. Residents were encouraged to bring their Fortis & BC Hydro bills and take advantage of rebates for home improvements under FortisBC's Energy Conservation Assistance Program (ECAP). The event included a community fish & chips luncheon and other offerings for both adults and children.

Fortis BC's Energy is Awesome, an interactive (virtual) puppet show, taught children about energy sources, energy conservation and safety. Other support organizations, such as Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA), provided information on their project and career opportunities. The event was considered a great success. From this event alone, Musqueam received 25 applications for the ECAP program and opened a dialogue between residents and the Housing team.

Game of Homes Event

Musqueam's second housing event of the year, Game of Homes, focused on getting residents ready for winter, taking inspiration from the famous House Stark motto *"Winter Is Coming."* The emphasis of this event was on home maintenance. Residents were invited to a community dinner, provided information about a CMHC maintenance workshop being delivered on-nation, and given freebies like carbon monoxide detectors, furnace heater filter coupons and fire extinguishers. There were also games for people to enjoy.

Around 100 Musqueam members attended the event. Although there was plenty of information for residents to access, it was important to Musqueam staff that the focus of the event be on having fun. "We want to make information digestible to our residents without being too overbearing or prescriptive with what residents should or shouldn't do," says Lenny Kishi.

Musqueam staff acknowledge that good community engagement is a continual and consistent effort. The Housing team at Musqueam agree that it's important to diversify communications to reach as many people as possible. In September, Musqueam started a Housing Facebook page, which regularly posts information on initiatives and events. In addition, word of mouth has been effective in getting residents on board with steps to save home energy.

Lessons Learned

1. Lead with incentives and follow with information. Organizing events solely as information sessions can often put residents off from attending. It's important to find a good balance of informative yet fun when running events.
2. Catering to all ages is important. Where there are children, there will be adults! If you can make the event appealing to children, you have often won the hearts of adults.
3. Good community engagement comes in many forms. Varying your messaging to residents will increase the likelihood of it sticking. While some people may prefer face-to-face contact, others may favour messaging through social media or newsletters.
4. Children often share the home energy information they learn with their families, and become the energy champions in their homes.

FIRST NATIONS HOME ENERGYSAVE IS SUPPORTED BY:



For more information about First Nations Home EnergySave visit:
www.fnenergy.ca