



Housing Resources Service

# March 2024 Gathering Summary

The March 2024 gathering was held at the Coast Kamloops Hotel & Conference Centre from March 12 to 13. The gathering was well attended and much valuable knowledge was shared between attendees and presenters. The Housing Resources Service (HRS) would like to thank all who attended in person and virtually. Your participation and expertise is always greatly appreciated and it is what guides the work of HRS.

The gathering began with an update from HRS. Since the last gathering in November 2023, HRS has completed a website update, launched the Housing Manager's Guide, and created new information "Tip Sheets". After the HRS update, the following interactive sessions began over the two days:

- 1. Fire Safety in First Nations Communities**
- 2. Maintenance Planning for the Four Seasons**
- 3. Data Collection for Housing and Future Planning**

## Fire Safety in First Nations Communities

The interactive sessions began with a very informative presentation about fire safety in First Nations communities. Leading the presentation was Dennis Pierre, HRS Steering Committee member and Housing Manager, and Emerson Adolf with the First Nations' Emergency Services Society (FNESS). Many thanks to both of them for a fantastic presentation that definitely created interest in having another session on this topic because there just was not enough time to answer all of the questions and further discuss the great topics that came from the presentation.

Dennis and Emerson gave the group some important information about fire extinguishers and how to use and test them. They taught the group about the different types of smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors and where you should have them in the home. Also, they stressed the importance of having a fire escape plan for your family and having fire drills twice a year to familiarize yourself with your fire escape plans.

Another relevant subject discussed was how to assess the outside of your home to reduce fire hazards. Things like, removing dry plant debris or other non essential materials that can be easily ignited by blowing sparks and embers from wildfires, stacking firewood away from the house, and keeping vegetation around the home cut and trimmed can all lower the risk of a fire igniting a house. Emerson provided some visuals about how you can do an assessment around and in your home that will guide you in reducing the risks of fire.

With climate change resulting in drier forests and drought conditions, considering more fire resistant building materials when doing new construction and fire resistant landscaping is more important now than ever before. The Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) Emergency Management FireSmart program is administered through FNESS who provides many great resources and supports to First Nations communities across BC. Visit the [FNESS Mitigation webpage](#) to learn more about how to protect your home from wildfires and if you have any questions, you can contact the FNESS Mitigation team at [mitigation@fness.bc.ca](mailto:mitigation@fness.bc.ca).



## Group Discussion Period

After the presentation, participants were asked to collaborate with one another and seek answers to two important questions. By working together, they were able to find effective solutions and their answers are summarized below.

### **Question 1: What part of the year is it best to FireSmart your home and property?**

Some things are better in the Spring and some in the Fall, depending on what you are doing. The summer and winter there is not a lot to do. Spring is more about concentrating on projects outside the home and the Fall is more about taking care of things inside the home.

### **Question 2: What can your community do to promote fire safety?**

The discussion on fire safety and how communities can reduce the risk of fires in their communities had so much engagement that it could have continued for the rest of the gathering. And even though the discussion had to end so other important topics on the agenda could be addressed, everyone in attendance continued to contribute over the two days to create a checklist to help communities promote fire safety.

✓ **The Community Fire Safety Promotion Checklist** can be found as a one-sheet at the back of this document for easy printing.

## Maintenance Planning for the Four Seasons

Historically, the People of the Upper Nicola, Nlaka'pamux and Secwépemc nations, have been expert caretakers of the land. Through knowledge passed down through the generations, we have learned that the gifts from the land were used for among other things, food, clothing, medicine, spiritual practices and housing.

The land and its resources are sacred to our People and traditionally, the use of resources was well planned with much thought and gratitude always considering past experiences and the future needs of generations still to come.

Today, we do maintenance planning to keep things in good condition which will keep costs down by preventing costly repairs. Routine inspections ensure the working order of important safety equipment like smoke alarms and fire extinguishers. Conducting regular inspections of our homes is useful for both managing budgets and providing reliable data for accessing and applying for funding.

Creating a plan is really a vision that naturally leads to organization and succession planning. To help communities build a maintenance plan, everyone at the gathering, both online and in-person, worked together to create maintenance lists for each season. These comprehensive lists wouldn't have been possible without the group's collaborative spirit and eagerness to share.

✓ **The Four Seasons Maintenance Planning Checklist** can be found as a one-sheet at the back of this document for easy printing.

In addition to The Four Seasons Maintenance Planning Checklist, Kamloops Native Housing Society (KNHS) has extensive experience and knowledge in property management and development and they have shared with HRS, the Maintenance Schedules they have developed to keep everything running smoothly with their many properties. [Click here to view and download a copy of the schedule.](#)

## Data Collection for Housing and Future Planning

Most times, without being aware of it, the topic of data collection comes up in nearly every discussion regarding housing and infrastructure. HRS Steering Committee member and Shuswap Nation Tribal Council (SNTC) Tribal Director, Maryann Yarama, presented this very important and timely subject in a brilliant manner that was easy for everyone to understand and connect to.

### Rethink How We View Data Collection

SNTC Tribal Director and HRS Steering Committee member, Maryann Yarama did an excellent presentation on the importance of data collection that encourages housing managers to look at data with a different lens. Maryann brought our attention to the fact that housing managers are responsible for multi-million dollar portfolios that their respective communities cannot live without. As the saying goes, "our greatest assets are also our greatest liabilities". With that being said, it may help housing managers to liken the management of these portfolios to any other high value investment such as a new vehicle that requires regular maintenance and care to keep in good working condition.

On a greater scale, multi-million dollar assets require adequate Human Resources and solid short and long term planning to not only keep everything in good working order but to also keep track of the present repair and maintenance needs and to project the future asset management needs.

We thank Maryann for guiding us toward seeing data as a way to build our knowledge, inform research, tell a story, plan, prepare, evaluate and to influence policy. In addition we understand that recording and tracking information is particularly important because of high staff turnover and the increasing need to have reliable data available when applying for funding. As we move forward, housing managers may want to consider the value in sharing some of their data with their nations to provide a collective representation of the needs in our communities.

[Click here to view and download a copy of Maryann's PowerPoint presentation.](#)

### **Here are a few places to gather data from:**

- Tenants
- Health, Lands, Finance, and Social Development departments
- Inspection reports
- Community Events
- Conduct a socioeconomic study
- File review
- Past repairs and maintenance records
- Historical data and other department staff
- Community engagement
- Past records
- Land available
- Tenant relations records
- Chief and Council
- Contractor records
- First Nations Market Housing (FNMH) and Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC)
- Comprehensive Community Planning (CCP)
- Local municipal plans

## **In Closing**

Wrapping up the gathering was succinctly done by Ruth Williams and Rick Sabiston. An informal poll was taken to determine when the next gathering should be and mid-June was the time the group landed on. There are still so many topics to discuss and so much collective knowledge and experiences to be shared. Everyone that works in this field is to be lifted up and genuinely thanked for the work that you do every day to house and protect the people of your communities, responding to the needs of today and planning for tomorrow.





## Community Fire Safety Promotion Checklist

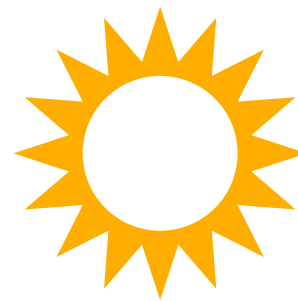


- ☐ Identify a community champion – for example a fire chief or Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to focus on fire safety efforts.
- ☐ Ask the First Nations' Emergency Services Society (FNESS) to do assessments and help plan host education sessions for the community.
- ☐ Purchase supplies ahead of time and store them safely before and after using them.
- ☐ Apply for funding to set up fire halls or fire departments or negotiate fire protection agreements with local municipalities.
- ☐ Apply for funding for fire boxes.
- ☐ Research how “Global Medic” can assist your community by calling your local Regional District office.
- ☐ If possible, have someone on staff who can dedicate time to research funding opportunities and who can complete the applications and follow up with funding sources.
- ☐ Share success stories by providing examples and before and after stories.
- ☐ Access Fuel Smart and FireSmart programs.
- ☐ Engage the administration departments, community and also other communities.
- ☐ Have an Emergency Response Plan.
- ☐ Include a FireSmart inspection with housing inspections.
- ☐ Check to see if the local fire department is hosting any FireSmart events in your community.
- ☐ Provide incentives for people who are working on cleaning up their yards and making their home more fire safe (example could be gift certificates, furnace filters, rent discounts etc.
- ☐ Look for community grants.





# Four Seasons Maintenance Planning Checklist



## Fall Checklist

- ☐ Firewood delivery
- ☐ Chimney cleaning and inspections
- ☐ Gutter inspections, repairs and cleaning
- ☐ Inspect and repair drainage points
- ☐ Check insulation, particularly water pipes
- ☐ Blow out irrigation lines
- ☐ Put away hoses and check outdoor hose bibs
- ☐ Inspect vents and crawl spaces
- ☐ Winterize windows and doors where needed
- ☐ Test smoke detectors and CO2 detectors
- ☐ Review fire safety plans
- ☐ Check bathroom exhaust fans
- ☐ Test indoor air quality
- ☐ Drain hot water tanks
- ☐ Clean out septic tanks and inspect septic fields
- ☐ Duct cleaning
- ☐ Clean out dryer vents
- ☐ Check for pests
- ☐ Register any new assets for ISC for O&M
- ☐ Gather supplies for snow and ice





## Winter Checklist

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- ☐ Report writing
- ☐ Asset management records
- ☐ Training, planning, workshops
- ☐ Connect with funding sources
- ☐ Budget preparation for next fiscal year
- ☐ Complete interior repairs on homes
- ☐ Check for ice in gutters



## Spring Checklist

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- ☐ Inspections – furnace, roof, foundations
- ☐ Renew Rental Tenancy Agreements
- ☐ FireSmart projects
- ☐ Community clean up on Earth Day
- ☐ Clean gutters
- ☐ Start planning outdoor repair projects
- ☐ Reports due – Replacement Reserve, Year End, new fiscal budgets
- ☐ Spend surplus dollars
- ☐ Cultural burn
- ☐ Planting
- ☐ HVAC projects
- ☐ Check for pests



## Summer Checklist

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- ☐ Septic cleaning/replacement
- ☐ Site prep
- ☐ Outside repairs
- ☐ Duct cleaning
- ☐ Energy efficiency checks
- ☐ Test fire hydrants
- ☐ Painting and staining projects
- ☐ New construction
- ☐ Assess fire protection services including education, checking fire extinguishers and hosting fire prevention awareness sessions
- ☐ Collaborate with Public Works for water etc.
- ☐ Start cleaning chimneys
- ☐ Coordinate work plans with O&M

\*Special note that the seasons start at different times for different communities based on geographical location.