

VisitAble Housing in First Nations Communities

UBC Learning Circle Presentation



BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS)

- The Canadian Centre on Disability Studies is the lead organization of the Visitability Project which is a three-year national initiative that takes place from April 2013-March 2016. This project has been funded by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program-Disability Component
- There are 5 other task forces (Richmond, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Ottawa, and Kitchener-Waterloo)
- We are working in collaboration with two Vancouver Island First Nations Communities, our first nation task force consists of members from the Esquimalt and Beecher Bay (Scia'new) Nations as well as local stakeholders who are committed to supporting the accessibility and housing needs of First Nation's people.
- BCANDS is pleased to be part of the VisitAble Housing Canada, Visitability Project.

About the work we are doing

- Our task force is committed to bringing awareness of VisitAble Housing to First Nations communities across British Columbia by highlighting the lived experiences and reviewing current policies and practices, impacts, barriers and best practices.
- **What is VisitAble Housing?** VisitAble Housing or Visitability is the concept of designing and building homes with the most basic accessibility.
- VisitAble housing offers a convenient home for residents and a welcoming environment for visitors of all ages and mobility.

Three basic features to a VisitAble home

VisitAble homes have three basic accessibility features:

- No-step entrance (at the front, back or side of the house)
- Wider doorways and clear passage on the main floor
- A main floor bathroom (or powder room) that can be accessed by visitors who use mobility devices

Advantages of VisitAble Homes

- Easy access to the home and convenience in the home
- The Ability to “age in place”, people can remain in their home as they age
- Reduced risk of fall or injury in the home
- Convenience for everyone: people with mobility issues, those with young children in strollers, those carrying large or heavy items
- Reduced costs for home renovations at a time of mobility changes.

Example of a VisitAble home



Washroom on the main floor



Wider hallways



Why VisitAble housing in First Nations Communities

- houses built in community are built with environmental barriers which causes an inconvenience or limits accessibility to homeowners and visitors VisitAble housing helps make whole community more inclusive
- When needed, people can easily make a VisitAble home more accessible without undertaking a major renovation
- Disability rates of Aboriginal people in Canada are twice the national average 32% of Aboriginal people are living with a disability. Disability rates increase with age and nearly half of Aboriginal people over 60 years of age live with a disability which impacts mobility.
- Aboriginal communities often have multiple generations of family living in a home varying from young to elderly. VisitAble housing features support all stages of life.
- Often, when homes become inaccessible, community members are sometimes forced to leave their community. VisitAble housing features in communities will allow more members to remain in their homes and more importantly in community- maintaining connection with their families and culture.

First Nations Task Force

- Our main goal as a First Nation Task force is to promote VisitAble housing in and amongst First Nations communities.
- Also to promote VisitAble housing amongst builders and policy makers

A bit about the work of our Task Force

- As a task force we have developed and implemented strategies to raise awareness of VisitAble housing this includes supporting Renee Ahmadi (UNBC Masters student) with her research project on VisitAble Housing in FN communities
- Redrafting housing policy to include the 3 basic VisitAble Housing features into future housing projects in Esquimalt and Beecher Bay. These 2 communities are taking the lead in demonstrating support for accessible and sustainable housing in First Nations communities.
- The task force has also prepared a submission to the First Nations Summit in order to gain support and further strengthen the need for accessible, sustainable housing in Aboriginal communities in BC.

What is next?

- Our project concludes in September 2015-

Healthy homes

- Check for mould that can be seen, especially in damp areas like the bathroom.
- Clean up small areas of mould and get help with large areas.
- Remove unneeded materials that are stored inside.
- Fix leaks and clean up after leaks and spills.
- Turn on fans that vent outside or open windows wherever moisture can accumulate such as when showering or boiling water on the stove.
- Vent clothes dryer to the outside.
- Dust and vacuum regularly.

Mould

- Do not store items in your home that may allow mould to grow if they become wet, such as paper products, cardboard, leather, old clothes or fabric, especially items stored in the basement and closets
- If you discover mould on hard surfaces in your home Clean up small areas of mould with soapy water and dry the surface completely.
- Get help from an appropriate authority (such as Environmental Health Officer) when the mould covers areas larger than one square meter

Thank you

- Available links include www.bcands.bc.ca
- VisitAble Housing Canada www.visitablehousingcanada.com
- Canadian Centre on Disability Studies
www.disabilitystudies.ca
- Health Canada www.hc-sc.gc.ca