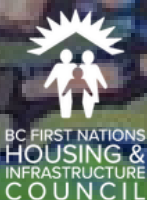


BC FIRST NATIONS HOUSING FORUMS 2026

*Strengthening First Nation Housing
through Collaboration, Learning
and Innovation*



March 2026



Message from the Director

It is truly an honour to share this year's Regional Housing Forums report with you. Over the past few months, we had the opportunity to gather in community with housing managers, leadership, partners, and service providers from across the province. These forums continue to be one of the most meaningful parts of this work — creating space to connect, to share honestly, and to learn from one another.

What stood out most this year was the depth of conversation. Across every region, housing managers spoke openly about both the successes they are seeing and the very real challenges they continue to navigate. From funding and capacity pressures, to the growing importance of energy efficiency, to the human side of this work — the need for support, balance, and well-being — the discussions were thoughtful, honest, and grounded in lived experience.

This report reflects what we heard. It captures not only the challenges, but also the ideas, innovations, and solutions that are emerging in communities. It is a reminder that while the work is complex, there is also incredible strength, knowledge, and commitment across the network of housing managers in BC.

I want to sincerely thank everyone who participated — those who shared openly at the roundtables, our presenters who brought valuable insights, and our sponsors and partners who continue to support this work. Your contributions are what make these forums so impactful.

At the BC First Nations Housing Managers Association, we remain committed to supporting housing managers in practical, meaningful ways. Whether through forums, training, or ongoing connection, our goal is to ensure you feel supported, informed, and connected in the work you do every day.

Thank you for the work you do in your communities. It matters more than ever.

Lory Oberst
Director,
BC FN Housing Managers Association





Forums Overview

The BC First Nations Housing Managers Association, in collaboration with FNHIC, hosted four Regional Housing Forums across the province in Nanaimo, Chilliwack, Kelowna, and Prince George.

These forums brought together housing managers, leadership, partners, and service providers to connect, share experiences, and learn from one another. The focus remained on practical information, real-world challenges, and community-driven solutions that support housing in First Nations communities.

This year, the forums were delivered over two full days, with presentations, roundtable discussions, and networking opportunities woven throughout the agenda. This format created a more integrated experience, allowing participants to move between learning, discussion, and connection in a natural and engaging way.

A key feature of the forums was the intentional design of the roundtable format. All attendees — including housing managers, presenters, exhibitors, and partners — sat together at the same tables for the duration of the event. This created a unique environment where relationships could form and grow organically, encouraging open dialogue, shared learning, and meaningful connections across roles and organizations.

By combining structured presentations with ongoing dialogue and peer exchange, the forums provided meaningful opportunities for participants to both gain new insights and share their own experiences.

Together, the forums continue to strengthen the network of housing managers across BC, supporting collaboration, capacity building, and shared approaches to housing.



Attendance

The 2026 Regional Housing Forums saw strong participation across all four regions, with a total of 305 attendees, including 180 housing managers and 125 sponsors, presenters, and partners.

Each forum brought together a balanced mix of housing professionals and industry partners, supporting both knowledge sharing and relationship building.

Attendance by Location:

- Nanaimo: 79 attendees (35 in 2025)
- Chilliwack: 78 attendees (37 in 2025)
- Kelowna: 67 attendees (42 in 2025)
- Prince George: 81 attendees (62 in 2025)

Overall attendance saw significant growth compared to 2025, reflecting increased engagement and demand for these forums across the province.

The Prince George forum saw particularly strong interest and reached full capacity ahead of the event. While registration was high, some last-minute cancellations and illness impacted final attendance numbers. Despite this, the forum remained well attended and highly engaged.



Presentation Highlights

A wide range of presenters joined the forums this year, offering insights into funding, housing development, energy efficiency, and community-driven approaches. Together, these presentations provided both practical information and broader context to support housing managers in their work.

Across all forums, updates were shared from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), and BC Housing, providing important information on current funding programs, priorities, and opportunities. These sessions helped clarify available supports while also reinforcing the importance of navigating multiple funding streams to advance housing projects.

Presentations from FNHIC and the BCFNHMA highlighted ongoing initiatives, services, and supports available to housing managers, while the First Nations Market Housing Fund (FNMHF) shared perspectives on creating pathways to homeownership and long-term community prosperity.

A number of sessions focused on building better, more sustainable homes. BC Hydro and FortisBC introduced the PIEER program, supporting energy efficiency and innovation in housing, while the Canadian Forest Business Council (CFBC) provided guidance on energy-efficient building practices and First Nations building codes. A session on radon raised awareness about potential health risks in homes and the importance of testing and mitigation.

Interactive and engaging learning was also a key part of the forums. The Community Power Housing Game provided a hands-on opportunity to explore housing decision-making, collaboration, and the real-world challenges that housing managers navigate in their work.



Additional speakers were featured at one or more of the forums, bringing forward practical tools, real-world experience, and innovative approaches. Urban Systems / Urban Matters shared stories of collaboration and partnership in housing projects, while ServiceXCEL provided insights into full-cycle project planning from concept through to completion. Purpose Driven focused on capacity building and best practices for First Nations development, and Riverside highlighted opportunities for incorporating renewable energy solutions, including solar power, into community housing. In Prince George, immanu'El Cabinets spoke to the importance of building local capacity, creating employment opportunities, and fostering pride within First Nations communities through housing-related work.



Overall, the presentations offered a balance of technical knowledge, funding updates, and community-based approaches. Together, they supported housing managers in understanding available resources, exploring new ideas, and strengthening their ability to plan and deliver housing projects in their communities.

Funding Programs and Supports

Across all four forums, this discussion generated a lot of engagement. Housing managers were very open about what is working, but even more so about the realities of trying to access and navigate funding. While there is appreciation for the programs that exist through ISC, CMHC, and BC Housing, there was a consistent feeling that getting funding into communities — in a way that truly meets their needs — is still a challenge.

Many participants shared that existing funding programs do make a difference when they are accessible. ISC funding continues to be a core support that communities rely on, particularly because it is familiar and more predictable. CMHC programs were often highlighted for enabling larger housing projects and offering opportunities to explore different housing models, while BC Housing was noted for providing partnership-based opportunities in some cases.

At the same time, there was a strong and consistent message that accessing these programs is not easy. Housing managers spoke about the time and effort required to apply, the complexity of navigating multiple funding streams, and the capacity challenges that many communities face. For some, simply having the staff time and expertise to complete applications and manage reporting is a significant barrier. A number of participants also shared that there are funding streams they would like to access but have not been able to, particularly those related to infrastructure, maintenance, and planning. While funding for new builds is important, many communities are struggling with aging housing stock, overcrowding, and limited infrastructure — and current programs do not always address these realities in a holistic way.

Overall, this discussion highlighted a shared reality: funding is available, but accessing and aligning it remains one of the biggest challenges facing housing managers today. There is a strong opportunity to improve how funding systems work — not by creating entirely new programs, but by making existing ones more accessible, flexible, and better connected.





Common Challenges Identified

- Complex and time-intensive application processes
- Limited staff capacity to apply for and manage funding
- Difficulty navigating multiple programs across ISC, CMHC, and BC Housing
- Eligibility criteria that do not always reflect on-reserve realities
- Lack of funding for maintenance, infrastructure, and pre-development work

What's Working Well

Despite these challenges, participants did highlight several aspects of funding that are working:

- Long-standing relationships with ISC program officers
- Opportunities to combine or “stack” funding in some cases
- Programs that offer flexibility in how funds are used
- Multi-year or more predictable funding arrangements

These elements were seen as critical in allowing communities to move projects forward.

Opportunities for Improvement

There was a strong sense that small changes could make a big difference. Housing managers shared a number of practical ideas, including:

- Simplifying application and reporting requirements
- Increasing flexibility within existing programs
- Expanding eligibility to better reflect community needs
- Providing more direct support to lower-capacity Nations
- Increasing funding levels to better match actual construction and repair costs

Working Better Together

One of the strongest themes across all groups was the need for better coordination between funding bodies. Participants spoke about how ISC, CMHC, and BC Housing often operate independently, which can make it difficult to align funding for a single project.

There was a clear desire for:

- More collaboration between funders
- Streamlined or shared application processes
- Better communication about available programs

Many felt that improved coordination would reduce duplication, speed up projects, and ultimately lead to better housing outcomes in their communities.



Round Table Discussions

Well-Being in Community and in the Housing Manager Role

This roundtable created space for a different kind of conversation — one that moved beyond programs and policies and focused on well-being, both within the community and within the role of housing manager.

Across all regions, participants shared openly about what well-being looks like in their communities, what supports it, and what gets in the way. The conversation also turned inward, with housing managers reflecting on how they stay grounded in their work, and what they need to feel supported, valued, and sustainable in their roles.

When participants spoke about well-being in community, it often came back to a sense of connection, safety, and fairness. A healthy community was described as one where people feel supported, where communication is open, and where there is trust between members, leadership, and staff.



Many shared that a healthy and supportive band office plays a huge role in overall community well-being. This includes:

- Clear and respectful communication
- Leadership that is transparent and consistent
- Staff who feel supported in their roles
- A shared understanding of policies and expectations

Where these elements are in place, housing managers noted that their work becomes more manageable and more rewarding.

At the same time, participants were very honest about the challenges. What gets in the way of well-being often includes:

- High workloads and limited staffing
- Pressure from multiple directions (tenants, leadership, community members)
- Lack of clarity in roles and decision-making
- Conflict within the community or workplace
- Feeling undervalued or unsupported in their role

There was a strong recognition that the role of housing manager can be emotionally demanding, requiring not only technical skills, but also patience, empathy, and resilience.

Participants shared a range of ways they stay grounded and continue to show up in their roles:

- Building strong relationships within the community
- Setting boundaries where possible
- Leaning on peer support and connecting with other housing managers
- Taking time for self-care, even in small ways
- Focusing on the positive impacts of their work

There was also an appreciation for opportunities like the forums themselves, where housing managers can connect, share, and realize they are not alone in these experiences.



“You’re expected to be everything - housing manager, mediator, problem solver”



What Makes the Role More Difficult

Housing managers spoke candidly about the factors that make their work harder:

- Being expected to solve complex issues without adequate resources
- Navigating conflict without formal training or support
- Balancing compassion with policy enforcement
- Limited recognition of the scope and impact of their role
- Working in environments where systems or leadership are inconsistent

What Housing Managers Need More Of

A clear and consistent message across all discussions was the need for greater support — both practical and emotional.

Participants identified a need for:

- More staffing and operational capacity
- Access to training (particularly in communication, conflict resolution, and leadership)
- Stronger support from leadership and council
- Clear policies and consistent processes
- Opportunities for peer connection and mentorship
- Recognition of the importance and complexity of the role

What a Healthy Work Environment Looks Like

Participants described a supportive and healthy workplace as one where:

- Staff feel respected, heard, and valued
- Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
- Leadership provides consistent direction and support
- Communication is open and honest
- There is space for learning, growth, and collaboration

This discussion highlighted that well-being is foundational to effective housing management. When housing managers feel supported, valued, and connected, they are better able to support their communities.

Creating those conditions requires attention not only to systems and funding, but also to people — relationships, workplace culture, and the supports that allow housing managers to sustain themselves in this important work.



Energy Efficiency and Building Codes

This roundtable built directly on the presentations from FortisBC/BC Hydro on the PIEER project and the Canadian Forest Business Council (CFBC) on implementing building codes. The discussion focused on how energy efficiency and building standards are being experienced at the community level — what is working, what feels challenging, and what support is needed to move forward.

Across all regions, there was strong interest in improving energy performance in homes, but also a recognition that implementation is not always straightforward.

Participants shared that energy efficiency is increasingly seen as an important part of housing — not only for environmental reasons, but also for reducing long-term operating costs and improving comfort for tenants.

Many communities are already incorporating energy-efficient elements such as:

- Heat pumps
- Improved insulation
- Energy-efficient windows and systems

However, there was also a clear message that moving from interest to implementation comes with challenges.

One of the biggest themes was the complexity of building codes and energy requirements. Housing managers spoke about the difficulty of understanding evolving standards, interpreting what is required, and applying those standards within the realities of their communities — especially in remote or resource-limited settings.

“It’s not that we don’t want to do energy-efficient builds - it’s figuring out how to make it work here”





Common Challenges Identified

- Limited clarity and understanding of building code requirements
- Lack of technical capacity to implement energy-efficient designs
- Higher upfront costs associated with energy-efficient materials and systems
- Difficulty accessing qualified contractors with relevant experience
- Balancing code requirements with local conditions and realities
- Concerns about long-term maintenance and repair of newer technologies

What's Working Well

Despite these challenges, participants highlighted several positive developments:

- Increased awareness of energy efficiency and its benefits
- Access to programs like PIEER that support upgrades and innovation
- Growing interest in building better-quality homes that last longer
- Opportunities to learn from other communities and share experiences

There was a general sense that momentum is building in this area, even if progress can feel slow at times.

Opportunities for Improvement

Participants shared a number of ways to better support communities in this work:

- Clearer, more accessible information on building codes and requirements
- Training and capacity-building for housing managers and local staff
- Increased technical support during planning and construction phases
- Funding that better reflects the true cost of energy-efficient builds
- Support for long-term maintenance of energy systems

Bridging the Gap Between Policy and Practice

A key theme that emerged was the gap between policy expectations and on-the-ground realities. While building codes and energy standards are important, they are not always aligned with:

- Available resources
- Local capacity
- Geographic and logistical challenges

Participants emphasized the need for approaches that are:

- Practical
 - Flexible
 - Adapted to community context
- 

Looking Ahead

There was strong interest in continuing to move forward with energy-efficient housing, particularly when it leads to:

- Lower utility costs for tenants
- Improved comfort and health
- More durable, long-lasting homes

To do this successfully, communities will need ongoing support, training, and collaboration between housing managers, technical experts, and funding partners.

This discussion highlighted that energy efficiency and building codes are an important part of the future of First Nations housing — but success will depend on ensuring communities have the tools, knowledge, and support needed to implement these approaches in a way that works for them.



Housing Challenges, Pressures, and Where Support Is Needed

This roundtable brought the conversation back to the core realities of housing management — what challenges are showing up most consistently in communities, what is taking the most time and energy, and where housing managers are feeling the greatest pressure.

Participants also shared what solutions they are exploring, what is showing promise, and where they continue to get stuck. A key part of the discussion focused on identifying where FNHIC and the BCFNHMA can provide meaningful, practical support.

Across all regions, there was a clear and consistent message: housing managers are navigating multiple, overlapping challenges every day, often with limited capacity and resources.

Some of the most common pressures included overcrowding, aging housing stock, and the growing demand for new homes. Many communities are working hard to keep up, but the gap between housing needs and available resources continues to widen.

Participants also spoke about how much of their time is taken up by:

- Managing repairs and maintenance
- Responding to tenant concerns and conflicts
- Navigating funding and reporting requirements
- Coordinating contractors and projects

These responsibilities are not only time-consuming but can also be emotionally and mentally demanding, especially when housing managers are trying to balance fairness, urgency, and limited options.



Common Challenges Identified

- Overcrowding and increasing housing demand
- Aging homes requiring ongoing repairs
- Limited funding for maintenance and infrastructure
- Staffing shortages and capacity constraints
- Delays in construction and procurement
- Navigating complex funding and reporting requirements
- Managing tenant expectations and conflict

“Most of our time is spent putting out fires instead of planning ahead”

What's Taking the Most Time and Energy

Participants shared that much of their day-to-day work is reactive rather than proactive. A significant amount of time is spent:

- Addressing urgent repairs and emergencies
- Responding to community concerns and complaints
- Troubleshooting issues with contractors or suppliers
- Managing administrative and reporting requirements

This leaves limited time for long-term planning, policy development, or strategic housing initiatives.

What's Showing Promise

Despite the challenges, participants shared several approaches that are making a positive difference:

- Exploring new housing models (modular, phased builds, etc.)
- Strengthening internal processes and documentation
- Building relationships with reliable contractors
- Investing in training and capacity development
- Sharing knowledge and learning from other communities

There was a strong sense that peer learning and collaboration are some of the most valuable tools available.

“What helps the most is learning from each other - what's working, what's not”



Where Communities Are Getting Stuck

Many housing managers described similar points where progress slows or stops:

- Securing sufficient funding to move projects forward
- Aligning multiple funding sources
- Navigating approvals and administrative processes
- Accessing skilled labour and contractors
- Balancing immediate needs with long-term planning

These challenges often create bottlenecks that delay housing projects and increase frustration.

Where Support Is Needed

Participants were very clear about where support would be most helpful. There is a strong desire for practical, accessible, and ongoing support, including:

- Tools, templates, and standardized resources
- Training opportunities (technical and operational)
- Support with funding navigation and applications
- Opportunities for peer connection and mentorship
- Advocacy to address systemic barriers
- Help bridging gaps between policy, funding, and implementation

There was also recognition that the work already being done through the forums, micro-courses, and ongoing engagement is making a difference — and that continued and expanded support is needed.

This discussion highlighted both the complexity of housing management and the resilience of those doing the work. While the challenges are significant, there is also a strong foundation of knowledge, innovation, and collaboration across communities.

With the right supports in place, there is a clear opportunity to strengthen housing systems, improve outcomes, and better support the people at the center of this work — the housing managers.



What We Heard Across the Forums

Across all four regional forums, housing managers shared a consistent message: the work is meaningful, but increasingly complex.

There are real and ongoing pressures — from funding challenges and capacity limitations, to aging housing stock, growing demand, and the increasing expectations tied to energy efficiency and building standards. At the same time, much of the work remains reactive, with housing managers spending significant time responding to urgent issues, leaving limited space for long-term planning.

Beyond the operational challenges, there was also a strong emphasis on the human side of the work. Housing managers are navigating complex relationships, community expectations, and emotionally demanding situations on a daily basis. The importance of well-being — both within the community and within the role itself — came through clearly in every region.

Despite these challenges, there is also a strong foundation of knowledge, collaboration, and innovation. Housing managers are sharing ideas, adapting approaches, and finding creative solutions within their communities. The value of connection — particularly through forums like these — was consistently highlighted as an important source of support.

Looking ahead, there is a clear opportunity to strengthen this work through:

- Improved access to and coordination of funding
- Increased capacity and training supports
- Practical tools and resources
- Continued opportunities for peer connection and knowledge sharing

Together, these forums reinforced that while the challenges are significant, so too is the commitment and leadership of housing managers across BC.



Sponsors and Partners

The success of these forums was made possible through the generous support of our sponsors and partners. We extend our sincere gratitude for their contributions, collaboration, and ongoing commitment to strengthening First Nations housing across BC.

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Closing Message

Thank you to everyone who attended, shared openly, and contributed to the success of this year's forums. Your knowledge, experience, and commitment are what make this work meaningful.

These forums would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of an incredible group of people behind the scenes.

A heartfelt thank you to Scott Barker, Sylvia St. George, Gina Taylor, Naiomi McKinnon, and Beverly Smith for their time, energy, and commitment in planning and delivering these forums across the province. Your efforts ensured that each gathering was meaningful, well-organized, and impactful for everyone who attended.

A very special thank you to Lesa Lacey for her ongoing support and for stepping in to assist with the Chilliwack forum in my absence. Your willingness to step up and ensure the forum's success is deeply appreciated.

We look forward to continuing this journey together — building stronger connections, sharing what works, and supporting one another in the important work of housing in our communities.

The work continues — and we move forward together.



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*Thank you to everyone who attended,
who presented, who helped make
these events the success that they
were.*



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