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# RESEARCH REPORT

ACCEPTANCE OF MANUFACTURED  
HOUSING IN FIRST NATIONS  
COMMUNITIES OF  
THE ATLANTIC REGION



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## **Acceptance of Manufactured Housing in First Nations Communities of the Atlantic Region**

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## ACCEPTANCE OF MANUFACTURED HOUSING IN FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES IN ATLANTIC CANADA

### BACKGROUND

First Nations are growing population groups that experience a disproportionate share of housing-related challenges and can benefit from an increased number of affordable and quality housing options. The aim of this project was to identify barriers to, and opportunities for, economic and social development that can be derived from the broader adoption of manufactured housing on First Nations reserves in Atlantic Canada.

The study explores provision of manufactured housing as one of the approaches to addressing housing needs on First Nations reserves in Atlantic Canada by identifying:

- challenges to greater acceptance of manufactured housing;
- potential strategies to overcome these challenges; and
- economic and social development benefits that may be derived from manufactured housing.

### METHODOLOGY

Study goals were achieved by undertaking several steps, including:

- provision of relevant and practical information to help First Nations representatives identify the pros and cons of manufactured housing for their particular communities;
- facilitation of a collective forum and exchange of opinions and ideas between First Nations and manufactured housing industry representatives in the Atlantic Region;
- establishment of a reference base for potential comparison among First Nations communities and researchers in this region and across Canada.

Specifically, this was achieved through:

- project planning;
- meetings, interviews and contextual information collection;
- manufactured housing product demonstrations and plant tours;

- follow-up and stakeholder consultations; and
- preparation of a research report.

A participatory approach to the research was taken in order to collect qualitative data and encourage joint learning and increased communication among stakeholders. It included consultations with the project participants and informants, periodic validation of information acquired, and refinement of inquiry tools. The main sources of primary data were meetings with manufactured housing sector representatives and in-depth interviews with representatives of First Nations communities in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Informant feedback was received on particular aspects of manufactured homes, including:

- cost
- design
- technical performance
- installation and building material quality control
- service and warranties
- relative depreciation
- operating costs

First Nations community and manufactured housing industry representatives shared valuable suggestions toward potential action steps to be taken in order to turn manufactured housing into a more competitive housing alternative on First Nations reserves in Atlantic Canada.

## FINDINGS

The findings provide insight into general characteristics of manufactured homes on First Nations reserves in Atlantic Canada including their relative share in the overall housing stock, their age and condition. Over the last 20 years, First Nations communities in Atlantic Canada experienced a marked increase in numbers of manufactured homes. Of course, the numbers, age and condition of manufactured homes vary from one community to another. Overall, the share of manufactured homes on reserves is around 10 per cent of all housing. This represents approximately half of the estimated share (about 20 per cent) of manufactured housing in the Atlantic region's non-Aboriginal communities.

Attitudes toward manufactured housing vary among individuals/families in the same community and from one First Nations community to another. The reputation of manufactured housing among First Nations community leaders is closely related both to previous experience with manufactured housing products and to the potential of manufactured housing to encourage community economic development.

Respondents agreed that they would embrace manufactured housing more fully if the communities themselves could benefit more from the housing production itself.

Informants suggested steps be taken to:

- facilitate information provision and consumer education;
- support the manufactured housing industry education efforts on housing-related issues of First Nations populations;
- strengthen First Nations capacity to implement their own housing policies, programs and plans;
- involve First Nations communities and their membership in the production aspect of manufactured housing;
- promote First Nations homeowners' efforts to care for their homes by introducing and supporting an education program focusing on manufactured home maintenance and repairs;
- make manufactured housing more competitive in the First Nations context;
- create First Nations manufactured housing industry business interaction and conflict resolution mechanisms. This would foster greater transaction transparency and closer communication between First Nations representatives (including political and housing professionals), manufactured housing producers, suppliers and retailers.

## CONCLUSION

By bringing together Atlantic region representatives of First Nations communities and the manufactured housing industry, a better understanding was fostered of the perceptions, needs and opportunities. This could be useful to First Nations, the manufactured housing industry, and program providers in improving housing access and supply to First Nations communities.

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## RÉCEPTION DES MAISONS USINÉES DANS LES COLLECTIVITÉS DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS DU CANADA ATLANTIQUE

### CONTEXTE

Les Premières nations constituent des groupes en croissance de la population qui éprouvent une part disproportionnée des problèmes de logement et qui pourraient profiter d'un nombre accru de choix de logements abordables et de qualité. Le but de ce projet était de relever les obstacles à l'expansion économique et sociale et les possibilités que peut offrir, à cet égard, l'adoption plus généralisée de l'habitation usinée dans les réserves des Premières nations du Canada atlantique.

L'étude explore l'offre de maisons usinées comme moyen de contribuer à la réponse aux besoins de logement dans les réserves des Premières nations du Canada atlantique en faisant ressortir :

- les difficultés liées à une meilleure réception de l'habitation usinée;
- les stratégies qui pourraient servir à surmonter ces difficultés;
- les avantages sur le plan de l'expansion économique et sociale qui pourraient découler du recours aux maisons usinées.

### MÉTHODOLOGIE

On a réalisé les objectifs de l'étude grâce aux mesures suivantes :

- communication de renseignements pertinents et pratiques visant à aider les représentants des Premières nations à préciser les avantages et les inconvénients de l'habitation usinée pour leurs collectivités particulières;
- facilitation d'une tribune collective et d'un échange d'opinions et d'idées entre les Premières nations et les représentants du secteur de l'habitation usinée de la région de l'Atlantique;
- établissement de données de référence en vue d'une possible comparaison des collectivités des Premières nations et chercheurs de cette région, avec ceux du reste du Canada.

Plus précisément, cela a été possible grâce à ce qui suit :

- planification du projet;
- réunions, entrevues et collecte d'information contextuelle;

- démonstrations de produits liés à l'habitation usinée et visites d'usines;
- suivi et consultations auprès des groupes intéressés;
- préparation d'un rapport de recherche.

On a adopté, pour la recherche, une démarche participative qui a permis de recueillir des données qualitatives et a favorisé un apprentissage collectif et une communication accrue entre les intéressés. La démarche comportait des consultations avec les participants au projet et les personnes interrogées, une validation périodique de l'information recueillie et l'affinement des outils d'enquête. Les principales sources de données primaires étaient des réunions avec des représentants du secteur de l'habitation usinée et des entrevues en profondeur avec des représentants des collectivités des Premières nations du Nouveau-Brunswick, de la Nouvelle-Écosse, de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard et de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador.

On a recueilli les réactions des personnes interrogées sur des aspects particuliers des maisons usinées, notamment :

- le coût;
- la conception;
- le comportement technique;
- le contrôle de la qualité de l'installation et des matériaux de construction;
- le service et les garanties;
- la dépréciation relative;
- les frais de fonctionnement.

Les représentants des collectivités des Premières nations et du secteur de l'habitation usinée se sont fait des suggestions utiles sur les mesures qu'il faudrait prendre pour que l'habitation usinée devienne une solution de logement plus concurrentielle dans les réserves des Premières nations du Canada atlantique.

## CONSTATATIONS

Les constatations permettent de comprendre les caractéristiques des maisons usinées dans les réserves des Premières nations du Canada atlantique, entre autres sur le plan de leur part respective du parc de logements, de leur âge et de leur état. Au cours des vingt dernières années, on a constaté dans les collectivités des Premières nations du Canada atlantique une hausse marquée du nombre de maisons usinées. Bien entendu, le nombre, l'âge et l'état des maisons usinées varient d'une collectivité à l'autre. Dans l'ensemble, les maisons usinées représentent environ 10 % de la totalité des logements. Cela correspond à peu près à la moitié de la part estimative (environ 20 %) des maisons usinées dans les collectivités non autochtones de la région de l'Atlantique.

Les attitudes relatives à l'habitation usinée varient d'un particulier et d'une famille à l'autre, à l'intérieur d'une même collectivité, et d'une collectivité des Premières nations à l'autre. La réputation de l'habitation usinée parmi les dirigeants des collectivités des Premières nations est étroitement liée à l'expérience acquise, quant aux produits de l'habitation usinée, et aux possibilités qu'elle offre pour ce qui est de favoriser l'expansion économique communautaire.

Les personnes interrogées ont admis qu'elles auraient moins de réserves à adopter l'habitation usinée si les collectivités pouvaient tirer profit de la production des maisons.

Les personnes interrogées ont proposé des mesures à prendre pour :

- faciliter la communication d'information et l'éducation des consommateurs;
- soutenir l'information émise par le secteur de l'habitation usinée sur les questions liées au logement des populations des Premières nations;
- améliorer la capacité des Premières nations à adopter leurs propres politiques, programmes et plans;
- faire intervenir les collectivités des Premières nations et leurs membres dans l'aspect de la production des maisons usinées;
- promouvoir les efforts que les propriétaires-occupants des Premières nations devraient déployer pour s'occuper de leurs logements en instaurant et en soutenant un programme d'éducation mettant l'accent sur l'entretien des maisons usinées et les travaux de réparation;
- rendre l'habitation usinée plus concurrentielle dans le contexte des Premières nations;
- créer des mécanismes d'interaction et de résolution des conflits entre les Premières nations et le secteur de l'habitation usinée, ce qui favoriserait une plus grande transparence sur le plan des transactions et une communication plus étroite entre les

représentants des Premières nations (y compris les politiciens et les professionnels de l'habitation), les producteurs de maisons usinées, les fournisseurs et les détaillants.

## CONCLUSION

En réunissant les représentants des collectivités des Premières nations et du secteur de l'habitation usinée de la région de l'Atlantique, on a favorisé une meilleure compréhension des perceptions, des besoins et des possibilités. Cela pourrait aider les Premières nations, le secteur de l'habitation usinée et les organismes qui offrent des programmes à améliorer l'accès au logement et l'offre de logements dans les collectivités des Premières nations.

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## 1.0 Executive Summary

This project brings together representatives of First Nations communities and manufactured housing industry representatives of the Atlantic Region. The aim is to identify barriers to and opportunities for economic and social development that can be derived from the broader adoption of manufactured housing in Atlantic Canada's First Nations reserves.

In order to provide the audience with a perspective on the manufactured housing industry's profile and trends, available National and North American data and research are briefly discussed. 1996 and 2001 Census-based research summaries reveal key findings about First Nations community members living on- and off-reserve. First Nations are growing population groups that experience a disproportionate share of housing-related challenges and can benefit from an increased number of affordable and quality housing options.

This report explores provision of manufactured housing as one of the approaches to addressing housing needs in the Atlantic Region's First Nations by identifying:

- challenges to greater acceptance of manufactured housing;
- potential strategies to overcome these challenges; and
- economic and social development benefits that may be derived from manufactured housing.

Study goals were achieved by undertaking several action steps. They included:

- provision of relevant and practical information that can help First Nations representatives identify the pros and cons of manufactured housing for their particular settings;
- facilitation of a collective forum and exchange of opinions and ideas between First Nations and Manufacturing Housing industry representatives in the Atlantic Region; and
- establishment of a reference base for potential comparison among First Nations communities/researchers in this region and across Canada.

Specifically this was achieved through:

- project planning;
- meetings, interviews and contextual information collection;
- manufactured housing product demonstrations and plant tours;
- follow-up and stakeholder consultations; and
- research report preparation.

A participatory approach to the research was taken in order to collect qualitative data and encourage joint learning and increased communication between stakeholders. It included consultations with the project participants and informants, periodic validation of information acquired, and refinement of inquiry tools. The main sources of primary data were three meetings with manufactured housing sector representatives and a series (eighteen) of in-depth interviews conducted with First Nations representatives. Fourteen communities in New Brunswick, Nova

Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador were chosen as target communities in this study.

The research findings are based on the responses of Atlantic Region First Nations community members (including feedback and housing information from fourteen focus communities) and manufactured industry representatives serving the Atlantic Region. The findings provide insight into general characteristics of manufactured homes on First Nations reserves in Atlantic Canada including their relative share in the overall housing stock, their age and condition. Over the last 20 years First Nations communities in Atlantic Canada experienced a marked increase in numbers of manufactured homes. According to the interview responses, the numbers, age and condition of manufactured homes vary from one community to another. Overall, the share of manufactured homes on reserves is around 10% of all housing. This represents approximately half of the share of manufactured housing (around 20% according to Manufactured Housing Association of Atlantic Canada ((MHAAC)) indications) in the region's non-aboriginal communities.

While the communities' attitudes toward manufactured housing are mixed, varying among individuals/families in the same community and from one First Nations community to another, the reputation of manufactured housing among First Nations political leaders is closely related to particular experiences with manufactured housing products and manufactured housing's potential to encourage community economic development.

Informant feedback was also received on particular aspects of manufactured homes including their:

- cost;
- design;
- technical performance;
- installation and building material quality control;
- service and warranties;
- relative depreciation; and
- operating costs.

First Nations community and manufactured housing industry representatives shared valuable suggestions toward potential action steps to be taken in order to turn manufactured housing into a more competitive housing alternative on the Atlantic Region's reserves. All respondents agreed that they would embrace manufactured housing more fully if the communities themselves could benefit more from the housing production itself.

Informants suggested the following action steps to:

- facilitate information provision and consumer education;
- support the manufactured housing industry's education on housing-related issues of First Nations populations;
- strengthen First Nations' capacity to implement their own housing policies, programs and plans;
- involve First Nations communities and their membership in the production aspect of manufactured housing;
- promote First Nations home-owner efforts to care for the homes by introducing and supporting an education program focusing on manufactured home maintenance and repairs;
- make manufactured housing more competitive in the First Nations context; and
- create First Nations – manufactured housing industry business interaction and conflict resolution mechanisms. This would foster greater transaction transparency and closer communication between First Nations representatives (including political and housing professionals), manufactured housing producers, suppliers and retailers.

A better understanding of perceptions of manufactured housing among this specific group of Atlantic Region residents should be viewed as an important piece of a puzzle guiding the housing industry, the manufactured housing industry in particular, and local and federal housing policy and social program providers. The goal is more effective, efficient and equitable housing access and supply to First Nations populations. A number of practical directions shared by First Nations and industry representatives should be considered as elements of a mandate for a coordinated action strategy to be undertaken jointly by community leaders and members, and industry and government representatives.

## **2.0 Introduction**

In Atlantic Canada, past experiences with poor quality of manufactured housing products and installations have left an image in some First Nations communities that this is not an acceptable form of housing for reserves. Another concern expressed by First Nations communities is that using manufactured housing can reduce economic benefits that communities often garner from local employment generated by site-built housing construction.

This project brings together Atlantic region First Nations community and manufactured housing industry representatives, and, through qualitative data collection and facilitation of stakeholder communication, identifies barriers to and opportunities for economic and social development associated with broader adoption of manufactured housing in Atlantic Canada's First Nations reserves.

While this study focuses on the First Nations segment of the housing market in Atlantic Canada, its findings are important in understanding the manufactured housing industry in the national context and its particular role in supplying quality affordable housing to First Nations populations.

### **2.1 Manufactured Housing Industry: Overview of Trends, Issues and Opportunities**

Building a comprehensive picture of Canada's manufactured housing industry poses certain challenges. According to Corbett (2002:2), some Canadian data exists, but "there are crucial information gaps in homeowner profiles, location of communities, number of communities and residents, impact on public services and the role of the Canadian manufactured housing industry in providing affordable housing."

The manufactured housing share in the Canadian housing market is lower than is the case in the US. In 1999 it represented three per cent of all new starts nationally when compared to almost 35 per cent of all new starts in 1999 south of the border (Corbett, 2002). However, growth rates in the Canadian manufactured housing industry are robust. According to CMHC's 2003 Canadian Housing Observer report "Using Prefabrication in Housing: Advantages and Issues", the increase in manufactured home building activity during 2002 was similar to that of traditional on-site building. "[M]anufactured housing shipments in 2002 were up about 26 per cent over 2001. Shipments of multi-section modular homes increased by about 20 per cent over this period, while shipments of single-section homes rose by about 28 per cent." (CMHC, 2003)

Despite the difference in scale, industries in both countries share important developmental trends and issues. The manufactured housing industry's steady growth and solid housing market share can be attributed to an increase in manufactured home size and quality (Beamish et al. 2001:375). Historically, in Canada and the US, manufactured housing has appealed to first-time homebuyers, retired families and lower income families. Trailers were once considered a low-

quality, cheap housing option for many people. The industry realities and the customer perceptions are changing “thanks to strict adherence to improved building codes and efforts by industry players”. (McNair, 2002: D9) As the quality of the product is improving, the demographic characteristics of households living in manufactured homes begins to mirror those of homeowners overall. (Beamish et al, 2001:9)

Manufactured housing is an especially important home-ownership option in rural areas. In the US, fully half of all owner-occupied manufactured homes are located outside metropolitan statistical areas. “The prevalence of manufactured housing in rural areas is in part a reflection of the costs and logistical challenges of site-built construction on relatively remote and scattered sites.” (Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, 2002:6).

Similarly, the industry is most prominent in relatively less urbanized New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, where manufactured homes accounted for over 20 per cent of all new homes in 1997. Further, the MHAAC reports a steady growth in the delivery of factory-built housing in Atlantic Canada (see table below).

<b>Annual Growth Rates of Industry Shipments in Atlantic Canada (according to MHAAC reports)</b>	
2001 - 2002	10 %
2002 - 2003	13.6 %
2003 - 2004	15.3 %

Source: Interview responses from MHAAC representatives.

As the manufactured housing industry is seeking to appeal to a mainstream housing consumer in order to successfully compete with the site-build housing industry, it aims to maintain one of its original advantages - its overall lower cost. According to the CMHC (2003) report, it takes one-third of required income to carry a manufactured home compared to a conventionally built home of the same size. Fixed housing price is another important advantage when dealing with cost overruns and aiming to maintain a set construction budget.

Manufactured housing’s affordability stems largely from cost savings in production processes. According to a report from the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation (2002), five factors primarily drive these efficiencies:

- economies of scale in high-volume materials purchase;
- ability to better coordinate production using assembly-line techniques;
- a controlled indoor environment devoid of weather or other delays;
- standardized design and materials; and

- reduced costs (primarily time) of securing approval from local code officials.

In addition to savings generated through production techniques and lower material and labour costs, factory-building methods allow for reduction of security costs by speeding up the production including siting manufactured housing units. For example, the entire process of ordering, building, shipping and assembling the house takes 12 to 14 weeks, regardless of season.

Despite all the advantages, the legacy of early mobile homes endures in the negative perceptions of manufactured housing today (McNair, 2002: D9). According to Douglas Penson (President of Quality Engineered Homes, Kenilworth, ON), the industry's biggest challenge is "getting the word out" to consumers about the benefits of manufactured housing (Adair, 2003).

Trends observed in the manufactured housing industry sector during the last decade suggest that the industry will continue having attractive growth opportunities in the US and Canada. According to Nkonge (2000:1) the types of strategic plans required to exploit these opportunities will, however, "change significantly." Effective planning considerations should include a recognition that changes are taking place in the competitive climate, target market characteristics, market factors and the actions of regulatory agencies.

Nkonge (2000) also suggests that vertical integration of the industry is key to the success of these strategies. The integration implies the consolidation, under common management, of production and /or marketing channel activities. Regardless of how such integrations are achieved, they ultimately reduce the number of institutions between the producer and the consumer (i.e., institutions responsible for manufacturing, transporting, retailing, financing, installation, follow-up and warranty services), while minimizing fragmentation and tightening control of marketing. In particular, the manufactured housing industry aims to address the claim made by its critics that "when something goes wrong, manufacturer, retailer and installer usually point fingers at each other, and consumers get nothing" (Krajick, 2003:7).

Nationally, the factory-built housing sector is aiming for greater industry integration and improved marketing efforts through its recently launched Manufactured Housing Consultant (MHC)<sup>TM</sup> Program (2001). This program offers a more standardized approach to training and certifying housing retailers nationally. Since its launch, seven courses have been held in Atlantic Canada. (MHAAC, 2003:20).

The target market for manufactured housing is changing with the emergence of new types of interested consumers. These include 'baby boomers', single parents, individuals with disabilities, immigrant families and aboriginal populations.

Conventional marketing practice suggests that as the target market for a product category grows in diversity and complexity, several developments can be expected. Nkonge (2000) identifies

three main developments currently underway and expected to continue to transform the industry. They include:

- commodization, where value bundling and value creation are achieved by offering similar products, streamlining the manufacturing process to maximize productivity and minimize costs;
- value bundling, where the customers are offered an individualized “package of delivered benefits”; and
- value creation, where some marketers may compete by making better products and selling them for less, in a quest for a volume-driven strategic advantage.

The value bundling strategy is exemplified by the introduction of the “Know Your Customer: the 55+” workshop developed by the Canadian Manufactured Housing Institute (CMHI) in partnership with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. This was introduced in Atlantic Canada in 2003. According to Don Lagacy, MHAAC Executive Director, “the workshop offers the opportunity for the Manufactured Housing Consultant™ to acquire the knowledge to develop a marketing plan that takes into consideration this growing market opportunity.” (CMHI, 2004:24)

## **2.2 Housing and First Nations**

First Nations community members living on and off reserves are growing population groups that experience a disproportionate share of housing-related challenges and can benefit from an increase in options for affordable and quality housing.

While more focused research is required in fully assessing the complexity of issues surrounding First Nations housing conditions and generating a comprehensive First Nations housing inventory region by region and nationally, an increasing amount of critical information has been garnered through the 1996 and 2001 Censuses.

According to the 2001 Census, “of the 396,100 Aboriginal households in Canada in 2001, 73,300 (18.5%) were located on reserves.” (Jacubec and Engeland, 2004:1) Between 1996 and 2001 the number of on-reserve Aboriginal households increased by 24.1 %. This growth rate is over three times the rate for non-Aboriginal households (7.1%).

In 2001, 27.7% of on-reserve Aboriginal households lived in housing that failed to meet either the adequacy or suitability standard, or both, and could not afford acceptable housing. The data for Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick show that over 30% of Aboriginal households are in such a housing situation. (Jakubec and Engeland, 2004:7) One of the reasons for such disparity is that the income of on-reserve Native<sup>1</sup> households remains relatively low. For

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<sup>1</sup> *Note: The term “Native” households is part of the established Census vocabulary. Households are*

example, the average income of on-reserve Native Households in 1996 was less than half that of off-reserve non-farm non-Native households in housing that met all standards (\$59,852) (Spurr, 2002:12).

### **3.0 Research Objectives**

The report explores provision of manufactured housing as one of the approaches to addressing housing needs in the Atlantic Region's First Nations by identifying:

- Challenges to greater acceptance of manufactured housing;
- Potential strategies to overcome these challenges; and
- Economic and social development benefits that may be derived from manufactured housing;

The study's goals were to be achieved by undertaking several action steps which included:

- provision of relevant and practical information that can help First Nations representatives identify the pros and cons of manufactured housing for their particular settings;
- facilitation of a collective forum and exchange of opinions and ideas between First Nations and Manufacturing Housing industry representatives in the Atlantic Region;
- establishment of a reference base for potential comparison among First Nations communities/researchers in this region and across Canada.

### **4.0 Research Approach**

A participatory approach to the research was undertaken in order to collect qualitative data and encourage joint learning and increased communication between stakeholders. The approach involved included consultations with the project stakeholders, periodic validation of information acquired, and refinement of inquiry tools. The main sources of primary data were three meetings with manufactured housing sector representatives and a series of in-depth interviews conducted with First Nations representatives. Project stakeholders included:

- manufactured housing industry representatives (Manufactured Housing Association of Atlantic Canada, including regional manufactures, retailers, manufactured housing community owners and representatives of warranty, financial and transportation companies); and
- community political leaders, housing professionals, and community stakeholders representing First Nations in the Atlantic region.

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*defined as native when either a specified household member or a specified proportion of household members are Aboriginal individuals. This study includes persons who identified themselves in the 1996 Census as Aboriginal.* (Spurr, 2002:12)

Feedback and information provided covered most First Nations communities in the Atlantic Region. Fourteen communities in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador were chosen as target communities for this study.<sup>2</sup> In order to gain first hand knowledge of the communities' housing conditions and contextualize the interview feedback, nine First Nations were visited as part of the interview process.

First Nations communities were selected based on several criteria relevant to the diversity of the research sample set. These criteria include:

- the geographic location of the community (proximity to larger urban areas, and/or manufactured housing suppliers);
- the size of First Nation's affiliated population both in and outside of the community;
- the financial status of the First Nation; and
- existing policies.

While data gathered during this study provides a better understanding of the current status of the housing stock in fourteen focus communities, the information should be considered indicative of general trends and issues rather than a quantitative analysis of housing stock in First Nations communities.

## **5.0 Research Steps**

### **5.1 Project Planning**

Project planning was undertaken in close collaboration with CMHC Atlantic Office staff, First Nations and manufactured housing industry representatives during February and March of 2004. A set of project goals and activities including stakeholder consultations, interviews and a manufactured housing plant visit were identified during project planning phase. This phase was also critical in ensuring First Nations community buy-in. This was achieved by:

- holding preliminary discussions with First Nations leaders within the Atlantic Region; and
- communicating the value of the project's outcomes and end products to those potentially involved in the study.

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<sup>2</sup>Communities participating in this study included: Miawpukek First Nation, NL; Lennox Island First Nation, PE; Woodstock First Nation, NB; Burnt Church First Nation, NB; Saint Mary's First Nation, NB; Tobique First Nation, NB; Eel Ground First Nation, NB; Elsipogtog First Nation, NB; Chapel Island First Nation, NS; Eskasoni First Nation, NS; Millbrook First Nation, NS; Paq'tnekek First Nation, NS; Membertou First Nation, NS; and Indian Brook First Nation, NS.

## **5.2 Consultations, Interviews and Information Collection**

Consultations, interviews and other data and information collection was undertaken between April and September of 2004. Three meetings were held with manufactured housing sector representatives in June and September of 2004. These meetings included consultant's presentations on the project's progress and preliminary data findings gathered from interviews and First Nations community visits. An extensive exchange of opinions and discussion around the issues manufactured housing adoption in First Nations communities followed.

Interviews took place between April and August of 2004. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 18 individuals. At least one key informant from each First Nation community included in the study was sought and interviewed. When more time was available during a community visit two or three individuals were approached toward gathering more detailed feedback. Two individuals were interviewed in each North Shore Micmac District Council in New Brunswick and in Paq'tnekek First Nation, Nova Scotia, and three were interviewed in Tobique First Nation, New Brunswick. Interviewees included Band Chiefs, Band Councilors, regional and local housing staff and other First Nations community members. Interviews focused on collecting direct feedback on the experiences with and perceptions of manufactured housing, and evaluation of the overall condition of the manufactured housing stock in respective First Nation communities. Informants whose work involved serving several regional First Nations (e.g., North Shore Mi'kmaq District Council, Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq) were able to provide valuable regional data.

The interview questions (see Appendix 1) were formulated to gain qualitative, in-depth responses from informants. These responses helped in gaining a more situated and detailed understanding of the complexity of issues around manufactured housing adoption among First Nations communities in the Atlantic region.

Interviewees were asked to describe their community's housing stock and provide more detailed information on the MH in particular including the numbers, age and condition of these homes. The informants were also encouraged to reflect on the overall reputation and acceptance of manufactured housing in the community.

Certain interview questions were formulated to encourage respondents' feedback on particular characteristics of manufactured housing products. The questions focused on:

- cost;
- design;
- product technical performance;
- quality control;
- service and warranties;
- product depreciation; and
- operating costs.

Questions of a more general nature were posed at the end of each interview. Respondents were to give their views on:

- whether manufactured housing is a housing option for the community in the future;
- what must happen for manufactured housing to become a more competitive housing alternative in First Nations communities;
- what community economic benefits could be garnered from manufactured housing.

While interviewees were asked to allow their respective community affiliation to be revealed in this report, they were also told that individual names would be withheld.

### **5.3 Manufactured Housing Product Demonstration and Plant Tour**

A one-day manufactured housing tour took place in July 2004. It was jointly organized by CMHC Atlantic Office representatives, the consultant and the Manufactured Housing Association of Atlantic Canada.

The main goals of this step in the project included:

- provision of information on and exposure to the Manufactured Housing industry and its products; and
- facilitation of an opinion and ideas sharing forum for FN representatives.

Introductory presentations and factory floor tours were led by senior plant management at Kent Homes (Bouctouche, NB) and Prestige Homes (Sussex, NB). Tour participants were encouraged to and did ask a variety of questions about plant profiles, housing materials, building techniques and the range of products the manufacturers have to offer. Some First Nations community members were more interested in the actual process of housing manufacturing while others were focusing on the products available for purchase. A tour of model homes at the Prestige Homes plant was regarded as particularly informative.

## **5.4 Follow-up and Stakeholder Consultations**

Follow-up and stakeholder consultations took place between August and October of 2004. Follow-up electronic communication and phone calls to First Nations representatives who had attended the tour, and to selected manufactured housing industry representatives, were particularly useful in validating collected information and in seeking additional information and feedback.

## **5.5 Research Report Preparation**

The final Research Report was developed and reviewed between October and December 2004. The goals of this report include:

- communication of the main research findings;
- assisting individuals and communities in determining the best housing type or types given their profile and realities; and
- provision of policy recommendations aimed at improving access to affordable and quality housing in the context of FN communities.

Several key First Nations informants and CMHC representatives were asked to provide feedback on drafts of this document.

## **6.0 Research Findings**

The summary of research findings is based on responses of Atlantic region First Nations community members (including data from 14 focus communities) and manufactured industry representatives serving the Atlantic Region. All feedback and interview responses are organized according to the themes of inquiry.

### **6.1 Overview of Manufactured Home Stock on First Nations Reserves in Atlantic Canada**

Over the last 20 years First Nations communities in Atlantic Canada experienced a marked increase in numbers of manufactured homes. According to the interview responses, the numbers, age and condition of manufactured homes vary from one community to another. According to MHAAC representatives' feedback, the share of manufactured homes on reserves is around 10% of all housing. This represents approximately half of the share of manufactured housing (around 20%) in the region's non-aboriginal communities (MHAAC).

Fast growing populations, overcrowding and long housing waiting lists are facts of life in most of First Nations communities. Many interview respondents noted that over 60% of their respective communities' populations are under 30 years old.

Some manufactured housing is introduced to the communities through federal government housing programs. The number of homes subsidized through these programs is based on the population in each community. The choice between site-built and manufactured housing in this case is made by the band council which is accountable to its membership. One example of a larger manufactured housing development is in Saint Mary's First Nation, NB. This community had its development provided by the federal government in early 1980s. The 100 manufactured homes that comprise this development represent a significant part of the community's housing portfolio.

More First Nations communities are able to increase their housing stock by either guaranteeing bank loans, or providing band subsidies or 'startup money' for band members to build or purchase their own homes. In these cases it is up to individual community members to decide what type of housing they want to acquire. Sometimes bands themselves become landlords, taking loans to build apartments or town houses to alleviate their housing shortages (e.g., Millbrook First Nation, NS; and Membertou First Nation, NS).

## **6.2 Age and Condition of Manufactured Housing**

Interview respondents identified two distinct categories of manufactured housing in their communities - older stock (including bungalows, single section homes such as 'trailers' or 'mini homes' and some row housing) that is between 20 and 8 years old and the newer stock consisting predominantly of modular manufactured homes.

Many communities are trying to phase out their older manufactured housing stock. However, as many respondents involved in housing management in their communities noted, decommissioning of such buildings is not an easy task. Removal of old buildings is problematic and there are no clear guidelines for proper disposal of such structures. It was also noted that leaving these older homes empty is dangerous. Repairing them is frequently cost ineffective, however some communities decided to do it anyway as their housing shortage is very acute. For example, 15 year old bungalows in Millbrook, NS, and Indian Brook, NS, require more extensive repairs than site-built houses of similar age. As the respondent from Saint Mary's, NB, noted, in order to be successful in maintaining older manufactured housing stock, the community should be prepared to make a significant capital investment and have in place strong housing maintenance policies.

Most communities included in this study have their housing policy and housing plans in place. However, as interview respondents reported, the degree of endorsement of and compliance with housing policies and plans varies. In the end, “the decisions over housing are quite often politically motivated.” Some communities, however, have comprehensive community plans in place and, in situations when they can afford it, take their housing construction and maintenance programs further than plans and policies require.

### **6.3 Prevailing Experiences and Opinions Related to Manufactured Housing**

Interview respondents were asked to reflect on the reputation and levels of acceptance of manufactured housing among members of their respective communities. According to their feedback, two main clusters of opinions are formed within First Nations communities.

One form of opinion was shared by many community political leaders. The reputation of manufactured housing in First Nations is closely related to issues of economic development. The leaders’ mandate is to deliver communities’ economic self-sufficiency through housing and economic development. All interviewees noted that their council members are mandated to “squeeze” the most value out of government housing subsidies in order to cope with chronic housing shortage. This means that communities are aiming to build the biggest possible homes for a fixed price. Use of communities’ own construction crews is key to generating local employment. The majority of focus communities (11 of 14) are continuously upgrading and building their own construction trades capacity. In some communities local builders are working toward R2000 certification (e.g., Tobique). Respondents noted that because of these opportunities for employment and skills development site-built homes offer “an edge”. Some communities (e.g., Tobique, NB; Indian Island, NB) refuse to purchase any additional manufactured housing units because they feel shortchanged by some retailers who weren’t responding to calls for follow-up and warranty maintenance service.

Remote smaller communities and economically successful communities are more interested in the option to purchase a complete home. The reasons include a lack of a construction work force in more remote locations (e.g., Yarmouth, Chester, Bridgewater areas in Nova Scotia), or sufficient employment in other areas of the local economy and a parallel high demand for housing (e.g., Elsipogtog, NB).

General community membership attitudes are mixed and they vary from one individual/family to another within the same community and from one First Nations community to another. Differences in opinions are grounded in particular experiences in relation to manufactured housing. Several individuals noted that they hear that people in their community generally “like the looks” of newer manufactured homes but sometimes still prefer the quality of site-built homes. It was suggested that, overall, attitudes toward manufactured housing are gradually changing. This especially applies to manufactured housing’s stigma of being “inferior quality”.

It was noted that there is a segment of First Nations community members that is not educated about manufactured housing and don't know much about the differences between manufactured and site-built homes. These individuals are more interested in the house itself and its quality, rather than the way it was constructed.

All interview respondents related a fairly sophisticated understanding of the complex competition between the manufactured and site-build housing industries, especially as it related to the on-reserve communities. Further, many respondents claimed that these days these two products are fairly close in quality, but there are a lot of other issues at play when opinions are formed and decisions about housing are made in the on-reserve setting.

#### **6.4 Feedback on Particular Aspects of Manufactured Homes**

The following interview questions were formulated to encourage respondents' feedback on particular aspects of manufactured housing products.

##### **6.41 Cost**

All respondents were asked whether it was financially advantageous to their community to purchase a manufactured home rather than building a home of the same overall size and quality. All respondents agreed that the cost of manufactured homes was lower, but they also had many qualifiers to add to this answer.

In some communities the cost advantage of a manufactured home is carefully weighed against the cost of site-built housing. These communities (e.g., Tobique, NB; Millbrook; NS) have invested much effort and time into nurturing their own skilled and disciplined construction labour force capable of offering competitive service with relatively low cost overruns. In addition, local building materials quality and pricing considerations can enter into this equation and swing a community's choice in favour of either site-built or manufactured housing. Over the last several years, as many Atlantic Canada manufacturers are working at full capacity, the amount of time from the initial order to the final installation of the home takes 3 to 4 months. Some First Nation local crews are able to build a house on site in the same time.

In communities such as Paq'tnekek, NS, even if the cost of manufactured homes is lower, the whole cost issue "boils down" to local employment. As one of the community leaders noted, "we really don't save much if we are not able to employ our own people."

Additional comments relating to the cost of manufactured housing included a recognition that a fixed price for housing is in many cases an advantage. It allows communities to plan and

estimate their housing budgets more effectively. However, the actual cost of manufactured housing varies depending on the supplier and additional costs associated with the delivery (i.e., remote communities).

#### **6.42 Issues Related to Design**

Interview respondents were asked to discuss the opportunities and barriers in design of manufactured homes. They were probed to compare conventional (site-built) housing and manufactured design features.

Several significant advantages of manufactured housing design were identified by the interview respondents. They included:

- greater flexibility with regard to interior layout;
- suitable range of home designs for modest accommodations;
- improved exterior design which is hard to differentiate from site-built housing; and
- better overall indoor climate control.

A number of individuals representing communities located in higher elevations and coastal areas suggested increasing design and construction standards in manufactured housing toward responding to their respective climate variations.

Since additional living space is one of the chief priorities in most First Nations communities, many communities insist that all their manufactured homes have full basements. Basements are preferred over the crawl spaces which more readily gather moisture. The goal of maximizing additional living space also prompted design improvement suggestions relating to interior layout. These included increasing the size of bedrooms and opening transition spaces such as walkways and hallways.

While most respondents expressed their satisfaction with the newer manufactured home exterior treatments, they expressed an interest in seeing more affordable options in exterior colour and detailing, and more individuality, reflecting First Nations traditions.

#### **6.43 Financing Issues**

None of the interviewed First Nations informants expressed a lack of knowledge or concern over the financing opportunities available to their communities. Two streams of home financing are currently available on First Nation reserves. They are:

- financing provided by federal government programs administered through CMHC such as the Non-profit Rental Housing Program (Section 95); and

- Section 10 Insured loans for individuals, Band rentals or Band financing, where the Band provides startup money for individuals taking personal loans from the bank, (many community members do not qualify for private loans).

Several communities within the Atlantic Region are able to use capital generated through fisheries and other business enterprises to build or purchase new homes.

When making decisions about the type of housing to be built using Section 95 funding, First Nations band leaders have to take into account their memberships' mandates which include economic development through generation of local employment. In the case of Section 10 financing, bands do not promote one type of housing over another. Eligible families and individuals decide for themselves which type of housing (within a determined price range) suits their needs better.

More confusion regarding home financing on reserves, including a lack of awareness about on-reserve land ownership issues, was observed among some of the Manufactured Housing industry retailers during meetings and individual conversations over the course of the study. Again, some manufactured housing retailers were well informed about the home financing options on reserves as they had long-term relationships with specific First Nations communities in the region.

#### **6.44 Technical Performance Concerns or Advantages**

Interviewees were asked to offer feedback on the system performance in the manufactured homes. In particular, the respondents were encouraged to evaluate plumbing, ventilation, electrical, cooling and heating systems. Housing professionals were particularly helpful in answering these questions as many of them have had direct long-term experience in repairing and maintaining manufactured homes in their communities or regions.

All respondents agreed that product technical performance has improved over time. No negative feedback was received about plumbing, electrical or heating systems. Some stressed, however, that better communication between suppliers, sales representatives and communities would help in overcoming existing technical problems.

The main area of concern identified in the interviews was manufactured home air exchange/ventilation systems. Respondents noted that ventilation problems were frequent in their older (10 - 12 year old) manufactured homes. Many residents stopped using the systems as they were excessively noisy. Air exchange systems were also prone to frequent malfunction, but they were hard to access for repairs and maintenance as they were placed in the attic. Most respondents noted that the attic was as a poor location as the units were also exposed to temperature extremes. As a result, it didn't take long time for mold to collect in many of these

homes. The respondents recognized that a combination of factors including residents' lack of compliance was partly to blame for poor air exchange and mold problems in manufactured homes. Most newer homes have upgraded air exchange systems which work better and are easier to access in case any repairs or maintenance is required.

#### **6.45 Quality Control in Relation to the Product and its Assembly**

Interviews revealed the prevailing opinion that quality control in newer manufactured homes (including materials and finishes) and their assembly is improving. Several respondents noted that their communities did not experience any major problems in this regard in the last couple of years. Some, however, related that as a community, they were still not completely certain and confident about the quality control because they feel removed from the whole production process at the factory.

The range of quality control problems identified by the respondents varied from one community, and one manufactured home supplier, to another. Examples of these problems were:

- inferior site preparation for some homes later caused flooding;
- after installation home foundations were left bare;
- some materials (e.g.,  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch instead of  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch plywood used for sub-floors) and fixtures (e.g., bathtubs) were of lower quality than those in comparable site-built homes; and
- older stock had some hangs in joining wall panels, low quality windows and inferior insulation.

It was also suggested that more durable materials were needed for bathroom and kitchen cabinets as laminated cabinets did not withstand heavy use by large families with children.

Overall, interview respondents had fewer concerns directly related to product installation. Only occasional transportation related damage (e.g., gypsum rock drywall cracking, twisted panels) was mentioned. However, it was noted that in these cases it was hard to get suppliers back to fix the problem.

#### **6.46 Operating Costs and Energy Efficiency**

Interviewees were asked to compare energy efficiency and ongoing maintenance requirements for their community's manufactured and site-built homes of similar size and age.

While sufficient supply of housing is a paramount issue in most of the focus communities in this study, at least half of the respondents noted that energy efficiency of their homes is recognized by their communities as a growing concern and an area deserving attention and investment. Three of fourteen focus communities are seriously committed to building R2000 homes and have local crews that are certified or close to being certified R2000 builders.

Nevertheless, as one of the respondents noted [representing the concerns of many community stakeholders in the region] “there is no way we can effectively monitor or evaluate energy efficiency performance. It is very unfortunate and something should be done in this regard.” In many communities power bills are very high. Bands administer utility payments and charges. This is a likely reason for the lack of individual residents’ concern over energy savings.

As some individuals noted, an incentive program may be a way to encourage resident compliance. Such a program “should come from the Band level, and people should not be penalized for saving energy (e.g., reducing their subsidy amounts).” Another suggested strategy included establishment of a cap on energy expenditures for each household.

Those interview respondents that had available data on the housing operating costs noted that the operating costs of site-built and manufactured homes were close.

One regional First Nations housing services representative from New Brunswick related that when comparing overall operating costs, “it takes 3 to 5 years before you start having more serious problems in manufactured homes, and it takes about 10 years in site-built homes”. When looking specifically at energy efficiency of the newer generation of manufactured homes, their standards are higher and come closer to R2000 standards.

#### **6.47 Community Housing Value**

Housing market value depreciation and appreciation are important quality indicators of housing market stock in a given area. In the context of First Nations communities where the land is owned by the band and housing can’t be purchased by or sold to non-band members, home value depreciation and appreciation are still relevant in the community context.

When comparing value growth or decline of site-built and manufactured homes, many respondents observed that site-built homes were fairing better over time. In some cases (for example, Tobique, NB, in 1985-86) it had to do with the overall quality of a specific shipment of homes, but more often manufactured home depreciation was and continues to be accelerated by heavy use and overcrowding. It appears that site-built homes fare better in these circumstances.

It is important to note that the frequently observed “atmosphere of neglect and apathy” among residents of Band housing is a factor in deteriorating home values. In these cases Bands cover a significant portion of home maintenance costs. One interviewee noted that their maintenance costs on Band housing are higher when compared to private homes in the community. The overall lower levels of disposable family income is another factor in proper maintenance of housing by residents in First Nations communities.

Some communities (e.g., Saint Mary's, NB) have long established and proactive home maintenance programs and the success of these programs determines the value of the home on-reserve whether that is a site-built or manufactured home .

Generally, many interviewees agreed that the value of a home in their communities depends on the original quality of that home, a proper maintenance and repair program, and commitments from individual residents to care for their homes the best they can.

#### **6.48 Warranty and Follow-up services**

When referring to the older manufactured housing stock, several respondents (most were in New Brunswick communities) recalled problems such as warping doors and windows only one year after installation. These problems were dealt with at the community level as the basic warranty covered manufactured homes for 12 months after the installation.

A great variation in responses was observed with regard to warranty and follow-up services for the newer manufactured homes in First Nations communities. Some communities (e.g., Elsipogtog, NB) are impressed with the timing and the level of services from the manufactured housing retailers, and others (e.g., Woodstock, NB; Tobique, NB) are providing contrary feedback. More First Nations communities are purchasing an extended five-year warranty for their manufactured homes. The decision to make this additional investment is often based on the previous collaborative track record with the manufactured housing industry representatives.

It appears that the post-construction service is somewhat uneven across the region. It depends on the individuals involved in delivering such services to the communities and on the quality and transparency in working relations between First Nations and the manufactured housing industry. As one respondent pointedly summarized, "the whole process of making a housing deal should become more transparent."

When presented with the initial interview findings, manufactured housing industry representatives expressed a similar concern over the industry's relations with First Nations communities. It was suggested that in order to avoid the "blame game" there is a need to pursue greater transparency and closer communication between First Nations representatives (including political and housing professionals), manufactured housing producers, suppliers and retailers.

In addition, several industry representatives suggested introducing and supporting an education program focusing on manufactured home maintenance and repairs. Such a program could be targeted to First Nations housing professionals and residents. It was suggested that it could be accomplished through a collaborative partnership agreement struck directly with First Nations communities.

## 6.49 Manufactured Housing Provision and Community Economic Benefits

Interview participants were asked to share their opinions and ideas about potential economic benefits that manufactured housing provision could bring to their communities.

Many respondents reiterated their earlier point about their community's concern over the construction jobs being taken away as manufactured homes are purchased. Many of these communities have good local construction and trades labour forces, enabling them to build quality site-built houses. Generating valuable winter employment is a very political issue. Further, as one respondent put it, "housing construction is the only game in town for some people."

Despite these reservations and an acknowledgment that in many cases "people tend to stick with what they know and are resistant to new developments," all interview respondents agreed that they would embrace manufactured housing more fully if the communities themselves could benefit more from the housing production itself.

Ideas about involving First Nations communities in the provision of manufactured housing ranged from training local community members to prepare construction sites and install housing units, to developing manufactured housing plants in these communities. The diversity of these ideas below reveals a genuine interest in establishing more involved and innovative relations between the industry and the region's First Nations.

- An employment training opportunity for First Nations youth in communities located near manufactured housing plants was highlighted as an example of a viable collaborative initiative. The effectiveness of such work internships would depend on availability of affordable transportation and the distance to the destination training site.
- Some larger First Nations communities have the capacity to build a sufficient number of new homes every year. They would benefit from having their own certified manufactured housing installers. Experienced local construction workers would be prime candidates for such training as they would expand their qualifications and gain valuable new skills.
- Several communities expressed an interest in participating in one or another aspect of manufactured housing production. For example, in one case it was suggested that provision of fifty percent complete roof tight homes, rather than a turn key type of product, would allow for assembly work at the community level.

In addition to the highlighted community economic development opportunities to be pursued through manufactured housing provision, it was noted that the industry could also channel its attention and effort toward the emerging private housing sector in First Nations communities. While reserve land is owned by individual Bands, more community members are able to purchase homes through Section 10 insured bank loans.

### **6.5 Strategic Opportunities**

First Nations community and manufactured housing industry representatives shared valuable suggestions about potential action steps aimed at turning manufactured housing into a more competitive housing alternative on Atlantic region reserves.

First Nations representatives interviewed for this study noted a number of times that the manufactured housing industry can't be solely responsible for the lower product adoption rates in their communities. More ingrained social and economic inequality manifesting itself through chronic underemployment and a lack of communal or private capital to meet basic housing needs is partly to blame for these lower rates. At the same time these same interviewees stressed that First Nations, the government and the industry should undertake some responsibility over changing the status quo.

Manufactured housing industry representatives participating in this research project were in agreement that while the industry is in excellent shape, in the longer term it is heading toward a plateau and that it has to pursue niche markets in order to ensure a steady performance for years to come. Many industry representatives agreed that First Nations represent an important and fast growing segment of the regional and national population and should be viewed as a potentially significant industry partner and an important client. The industry should devise a long-term strategy to make sure that these opportunities are not missed. In part, success will depend on how economically self-sufficient First Nations will become and how many of their members will have the choice to build or purchase a manufactured home. The industry can make a contribution to First Nations in this respect by forging strategic business partnerships that encourage value-added industries and generated employment on reserves.

### **7.0 Conclusion**

A better understanding of the perceptions of manufactured housing among First Nations of the Atlantic region should be viewed as an important piece of a puzzle guiding the housing industry, the manufactured housing industry in particular, and local and federal housing policy and social program providers toward a more effective, efficient and equitable housing supply to First Nations populations.

Findings of this study can be beneficial as comparison material for parallel research undertaken in other national regions such as British Columbia which is home to the greatest number of on-reserve households (15,000), Ontario which experienced the fastest growth rate (40%, 12,700), and in 2001 surpassed Manitoba as the province with the second largest number (13.2%, 12,600) of on-reserve households. (Jakubec and Engeland, 2004:7)

A number of practical directions shared by First Nations and industry representatives can be considered as a strategy to be undertaken jointly by the community leaders and members, industry and government representatives.

The following steps were identified as integral to such strategy:

- to facilitate information provision and consumer education. All participants on the manufactured housing tour organized during this research study agreed that similar plant tours or visits and other information sessions targeting First Nations Band Councillors and Chiefs would be critical in establishing ongoing relationships and educating a potential consumer base. Therefore it would be beneficial for the industry to consider development of a consultation and communications strategy to familiarize potential home buyers with manufactured housing. In addition, development of unbiased communication, guiding First Nations consumers through the manufactured housing buying process, would be immensely useful. Such a publication could potentially resemble a Home Buyer's Guide created by the CMHC.
- to support the manufactured housing industry's education on housing-related issues among First Nations populations. Some industry representatives participating in this study suggested organizing a supplemental workshop on the First Nations consumer. It would be geared toward the Manufactured Housing Consultants and other industry members. The manufactured housing industry has recently introduced after-sales service and 55+ workshops.
- to strengthen First Nations' capacity to implement their own housing policies, programs and plans. As one of the interview respondents stressed, "we need to encourage long-term housing planning that would take into account economic, geographic and demographic issues facing our communities. Then manufactured housing may become a more obvious choice for some communities."
- to promote First Nations home-owner efforts to care for the homes through introducing and supporting an education program focusing on manufactured home maintenance and repairs. Such a program could be targeted to First Nations housing professionals and residents. It was suggested that it could be accomplished through a collaborative partnership agreement struck directly with First Nations communities.

- to involve First Nations communities and their memberships in the production aspect of the manufactured housing industry. These steps would vary from one specific community to another and it would need to be approached creatively. Government support in providing specific employment training funds and programs would go a long way in this regard.
- to make manufactured housing more competitive in the First Nations context. Along with already competitive manufactured home pricing, the industry should embrace continuous improvement of quality including the quality of building materials, and enforcement of more rigorous installation, transportation and site preparation standards. More innovative designs suitable to specific climatic and cultural contexts would be a welcome addition to a good range of existing building designs. An equal effort must be devoted to address the difficult conditions of many older manufactured homes. This could potentially include a partnership-based initiative that would oversee a rehabilitation and decommissioning of older manufactured units in First Nations communities.
- to create First Nations – Manufactured Housing industry business interaction and conflict resolution mechanisms which would foster greater transaction transparency and closer communication between First Nations representatives (including political and housing professionals), manufactured housing producers, suppliers and retailers. As one interviewee noted there should be “less profit-chasing and more focus on quality on both sides.”

There is also a need for more comprehensive research work to deepen the knowledge of the manufactured housing industry and its markets in the national context. Focused studies offering in-depth understanding of specific markets and population groups is crucial in building responsive policy and business strategies for more effective quality housing provision that takes into account an evolving housing consumer base.

## **8.0 List of First Nations Communities**

Miawpukek First Nation, NL  
P. O. Box 10, Bay D'Espoir  
Conne River, NL A0H 1J0  
Phone: (709) 882-2146  
Fax: (709) 882-2292

Lennox Island First Nation  
P.O. Box 134  
Lennox Island, PE C0B 1P0  
Phone: (902) 831-2779  
Fax: (902) 831 3153

Woodstock First Nation  
3 Wulastook Crt.  
Woodstock, NB E7M 4K6  
Phone: (506) 328-3303  
Fax: (506) 328-2024

Burnt Church First Nation  
620 Bayview Dr.  
Burnt Church, NB E2G 2A8  
Phone: (506) 776-1200  
Fax: (506) 776-1215

Saint Mary's First Nation  
35 Dedam Street  
Fredericton, NB E3A 2V2  
Phone: (506) 458-9511  
Fax: (506) 452-2763

Tobique First Nation  
13156 RTE. 105  
Perth Andover NB E7H 5N7  
Phone: (506) 273-5400; 5490; 5499  
Fax: (506) 273-3035

Eel Ground First Nation  
47 Church Rd.  
Eel Ground, NB E0K 1B0  
Phone: (506) 627-4600  
Fax: (506) 627-4602

Elsipogtog First Nation  
R. R. # 1, 373 Big Cove Road  
Big Cove, NB E4W 2S3  
Phone:(506) 523-8200  
Fax: (506) 523-8230

Chapel Island First Nation  
Box 538  
Chapel Island, NS B0E 3B0  
Phone: (902) 535-3317  
Fax: (902) 535-3004

Eskasoni First Nation  
63 Mini Mall Drive,  
P.O. Box 7040  
Eskasoni NS B1W 1A1  
Phone: (902) 379-2800  
Fax:(902) 379-2172

Millbrook First Nation  
PO Box 634  
Truro, NS B2N 5E5  
Phone: (902) 895-4365  
Fax: (902) 893-4785

Paq'tnkek First Nation  
R.R.#1 Afton B0N 1W0  
Antigonish County, NS B0H 1A0  
Phone: (902) 386-2781  
Fax: (902)386-2043

Membertou First Nation  
111 Membertou St.  
Sydney, NS B1S 2M9  
Phone: (902) 564-6466  
Fax: (902) 539-6645  
E-Mail:Membertou

Indian Brook First Nation  
118 Sesame Street  
Indian Brook, NS  
Phone: (902) 758-3372  
Fax: (902) 758-3736

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Spurr, Peter; Ian Melzer and John Engeland. **Special Studies on 1996 Census Data: Housing Conditions of Native Households.** CMHC Research Highlights, Socio-economic Series, Issue 55-6. Ottawa: CMHC, 2001.

## 10.0 Appendix 1: Sample of Interview Questions

**Interview date:**

**Interview location:**

*This study addresses concerns, issues and visions of opportunities in relation to housing (and in particular manufactured housing) in the reserve setting. At the beginning of the interview each First Nations community's housing profile and its overall experiences with the manufactured housing stock is explored.*

### 1. Please introduce yourself

### 2. Please describe the manufactured or mobile homes in your community.

Are there many of them (please estimate percentage)?

How old are they?

What condition are they in?

*Further, a set of detailed questions is developed to provide feedback on logistical constraints to or opportunities for greater acceptance of manufactured housing.*

### 3. Please describe your community's experiences and opinions related to manufactured housing and its:

#### - **reputation and overall acceptance**

Please describe any differences in perceptions between site-built housing and manufactured housing.

#### - **cost**

Is there a cost advantage to the First Nations communities when they make the decision to build a manufactured home vs. a site-built home of the same overall size and quality?

#### - **design**

What are the opportunities and barriers in design of manufactured homes?

What home design features would be beneficial to First Nations communities (i.e., foundation, open house plan)?

Is there anything done in the area of conventional (site-built) housing design that can't be accommodated (or is too expensive) in manufactured housing?

#### - **financing**

Do you have private home construction on your reserve?

Are there any differences between site-built and manufactured housing financing?

Please describe these differences (i.e., types of loans offered, equity building rates, etc.)

- **product technical performance concerns or advantages**

Please provide your feedback on the system performance in the manufactured homes (i.e., plumbing, ventilation, electrical, cooling and heating).

- **quality control (in relation to the product and its assembly)**

Please provide your feedback on manufactured homes' construction (i.e., quality of materials and finishes) and installation quality (i.e., interior fit of doors/windows, cracks; or separation of walls).

How prevalent is the "shifting of blame" between the manufacturer and installer when a problem arises?

- **operating costs (energy efficiency and ongoing maintenance)**

How does existing manufactured housing in the communities compare to site-built housing with regard to energy efficiency and ongoing maintenance requirements?

Are there any differences in the manufactured housing operating costs to the resident and/or the community (i.e., differences in utility charges when compared to site-built housing)?

Is there an interest in R2000 certified homes?

- **product depreciation or appreciation**

Are there any specific issues related to manufactured homes in this respect (i.e., resale value when compared to site-built alternatives on reserve; home and/or land ownership concerns; etc.)

"Independent appraisal studies confirm that manufactured homes can appreciate in value the same as other forms of housing." [www.manufacturedhousing.org](http://www.manufacturedhousing.org)

- **service**

Is there a perceived or actual discrimination/bias when manufactured housing suppliers and/or distributors deal with populations of First Nations communities (i.e., follow-up services)?

- **insurance and warranties**

Please provide any information on the availability of warranties and supplier compliance with these warranties; availability of suitable home insurance, and the premiums.

Can you comment on any differences in this respect between manufactured housing and site-built housing on reserve?

- **community economic benefits**

How important is employment creation through site-built housing's construction trades in your community? Do you see any opportunities for capacity building among youth on reserve in relation to manufactured housing provision (i.e., The Youth Internship program which helps subsidize their wages for a 6-12 month internship at the manufactured housing plant)?

Are such manufactured housing advantages as fast construction, better inventory control and protection of building materials important in your community? Please explain.

*In addition to the questions exploring current experience with the manufactured housing stock in First Nations communities, several questions aim to gauge First Nations representatives' attitudes toward future housing provision strategies and the range of opinions on what kinds of changes have to take place (if changes are seen as necessary) in order to introduce a greater variety of housing options in First Nations community setting.*

**4. Does your community have a housing plan for the next five or ten years?  
Is manufactured housing considered a possible housing option for the community? Why?**

**5. What has to happen in order to turn manufactured housing into a more competitive housing alternative for your community?**

What kinds of steps (i.e., communication and information exchange, policy development or changes) can be taken by the industry, government, First Nations and/or other organizations to ensure a better range of quality housing options (including manufactured housing) available to your communities?

Who is responsible for making these changes, taking these steps?

**6. Is there anyone else in the community who may have some ideas or valuable opinions on to this topic?**

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