



**Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw**

Squamish Nation

# Allocations Policy Engagement

## Phase 1: What We Heard

July 2024



**Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw**

Squamish Nation

# Table of Contents

Part 1: Overview

Part 2: Previous Engagement

Part 3: Community Survey

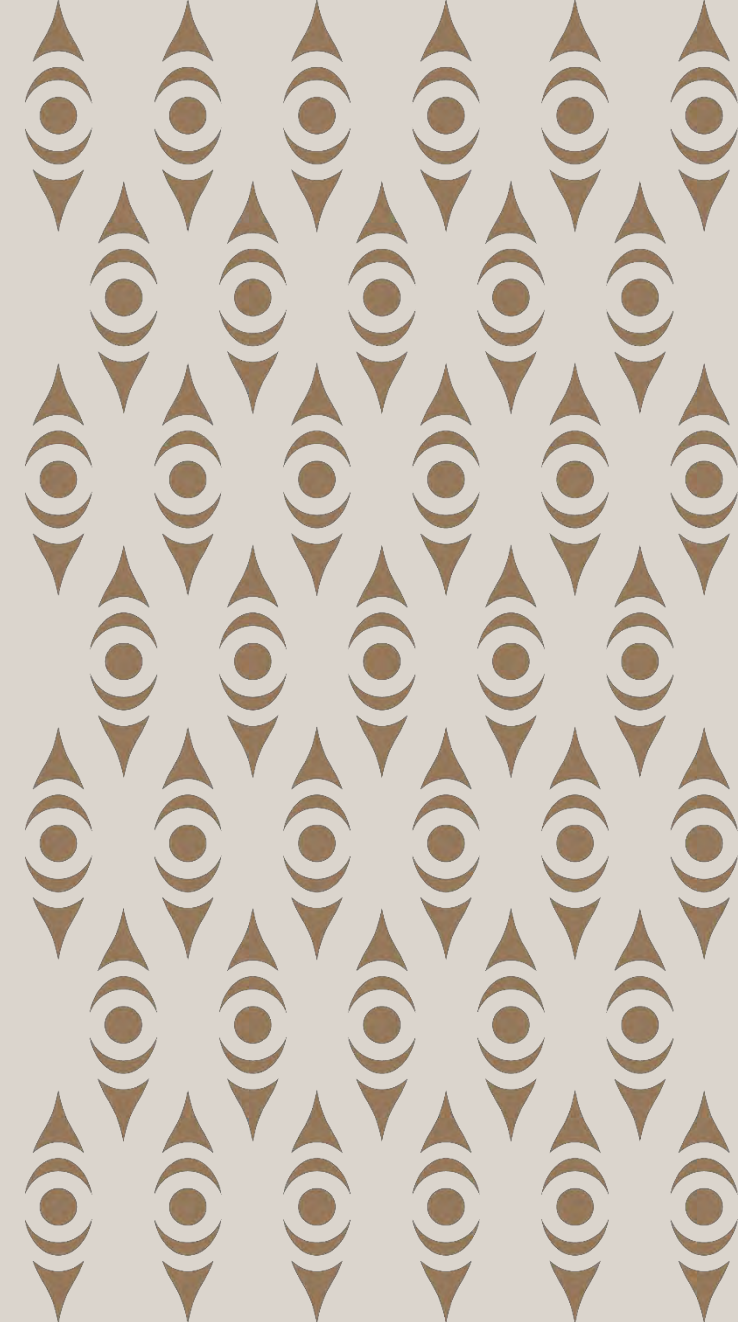
Part 4: Focus Groups

Part 5: Social Media

Part 6: Other Themes Related to Housing

Part 7: Lessons Learned

Part 8: Next Steps



# 1. Overview

## About the Project

Squamish Nation's policies related to Housing are guided by the Housing Policy Framework. The Framework directs that the 2006 Housing Policy will be separated into individual policies. One of these is the Allocations Policy.

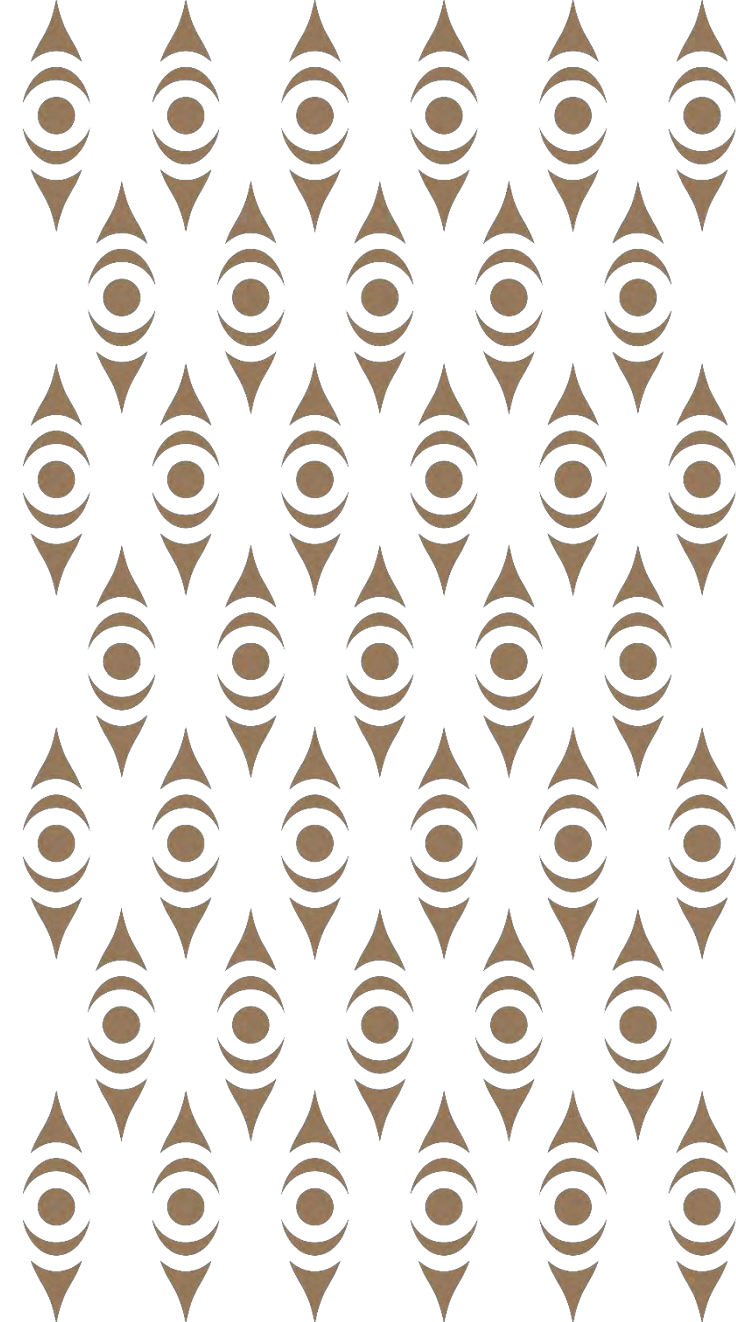
As part of the work to create a standalone Allocations Policy, the Nation is working to make improvements to increase the **clarity, transparency, and consistency** of both the policy and process related to making lot and home allocations. The Nation is committed to making improvements that honour the past, present, and future experiences of Squamish households.

The Nation is making these improvements so that all applicants:

- Have the information they need to understand how lot and home allocations are made.
- Feel confident in the decision-making process.
- Expect to be treated fairly and equally, in line with the allocation eligibility criteria.

In the recently approved 2024/2025 budget, Nexwsxwníwntm ta Úxwumixw (Council) approved funding for 15 lot and home allocations. **These allocations are planned for end of 2024 and will take place under the new standalone Allocations Policy.**

Between May 22 and June 20, 2024, staff launched the **first round of engagement** to better understand what a **clear, transparent, and consistent** policy and process would look like for the community.



# 1. Overview

## Timeline



## Engagement by the Numbers

<p><b>Social Media Posts</b></p> <p>Posted 3 updates on the Squamish Nation Facebook page.</p>	<p><b>Website Updates</b></p> <p>Posted 3 updates with project-specific information.</p>	<p><b>Newsletters</b></p> <p>Promoted the engagement process through a paper and online newsletter.</p>	<p><b>Background Review</b></p> <p>Reviewed <i>Housing Policy Engagement Report</i> and <i>Decolonizing Gender &amp; Sexuality: Recommendations for Greater Inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ Members of the Squamish Nation</i>.</p>	<p><b>Community Survey</b></p> <p>Hosted a survey which gathered feedback from 250 respondents.</p>	<p><b>Focus Groups</b></p> <p>Facilitated in-depth discussions at 4 focus groups with a total of 15 attendees.</p>	<p><b>Pop-up Booth</b></p> <p>Joined Indigenous People's day celebrations to raise awareness for the community survey.</p>	<p><b>Housing Policy Community Working Group</b></p> <p>Ongoing advisory committee of Squamish People dedicated to Housing Policy updates.</p>
INFORMED			REVIEWED	ENGAGED			

# 1. Overview

## Key Takeaways: Improving Clarity



44% of survey respondents felt that the Allocations Policy and process were not clear and easy to understand. The engagement process identified many questions people had about how the Housing List and allocations worked.

### Key issue areas:

- Lack of clarity about how Housing List categories work
  - How is eligibility determined if someone seems like they could fit within multiple categories? Example: If an Elder is caring for children, would they be eligible for both the Pensioner and Single Parent category?
  - Why are allocations distributed as they are? The current distribution is 8 for the Married / Common Law category, 4 for the Single Parent category, and 3 for the Pensioner category.
  - **What happens to someone's position if they change categories? How does that affect other applicants?** Example: What happens if someone moves from the Married / Common Law category to the Single Parent category because of a divorce?
  - Can a spot on the Housing List be inherited if the applicant passes away before a home allocation is made?
- More information about eligibility needed to apply for the Housing List
  - Are Squamish People with disabilities eligible to apply for the Housing List?
  - Are Squamish People who are also American citizens eligible to apply for the Housing List?

### Opportunities for improvement:

- Bring the Housing List to the current year
- Create a visual summary booklet that explains the policy and process
- Improve communications about the Housing List, Allocations Policy, and lot and home allocations

# 1. Overview

## Key Takeaways: Improving Transparency



56% of survey respondents felt that the Allocation Policy and process were not transparent.

### Key issue areas:

- Housing List is out of date and does not include all applicants
- Lack of regular updates on the Housing List and allocations
- Poor communication in the past around applications and changes to the Housing List
- Lack of transparency in the past about how the Housing List is maintained and how allocations are made
- Women affected by Bill C-31 have a later application date than they would have if they had been able to retain their Membership
- Some people report being improperly removed from the Housing List

### Opportunities for improvement:

- Better communication and information sharing, regular communications about the Housing List and upcoming allocations, confirming receipt of new applications, confirming any changes to an applicant's information, and more publicly available information (videos, website content, information sessions)
- Opportunity to address past issues, such as a process of appeal

# 1. Overview

## Key Takeaways: Improving Consistency



63% of survey respondents felt the Allocations Policy and process were not consistent.

### Key issue areas:

- Some past decisions have been inconsistent with policy, creating concerns about favouritism and improper allocations decisions
- Inconsistent information and communications, e.g., Housing List not published annually, different information provided by different representatives of Squamish Nation

### Opportunities for improvement:

- Publish the Housing List every year by a certain date
- Create a guide or a flowchart for Council and staff to use during an allocation to support consistent allocations decisions
- Consistent application of eligibility criteria (no special cases or exceptions)
- Regular and improved communication to Squamish People with a focus on accuracy and consistency
- Provide a list of past allocations and the reasoning behind them to address concerns about nepotism

# 2. Previous Engagement

## Housing Policy Engagement Report, 2022

Over the past few years, Squamish People have been engaged on housing programs and policies, including the Allocations Policy. All previous engagement findings are being carried forward to inform this policy update. Some key findings from previous engagement related to the Allocations Policy include:

- Squamish People are frustrated with the time it takes to be allocated a home, with some people reporting that they have been on the Housing List for decades.
- Before homes are allocated, Squamish People should have the opportunity to build a case outlining why they need a house more than other Squamish People.
- Squamish Nation should allocate ten single family homes per year, but only to Elders.
- Squamish Nation should allocate homes as follows: three for married couples, five for Elders, four for single parents, and three for singles.
- Five homes should be allocated under each category every year.
- If someone is not stable or ready for a home, they should not be allocated a home.

During previous engagement on housing, Squamish People were asked if there should be any changes to the allocation categories. Almost half (47%) of survey respondents were supportive of changing the number of allocations per category. However, changes to categories are not being considered in this work because of the impact on people waiting on the Housing List for many years.

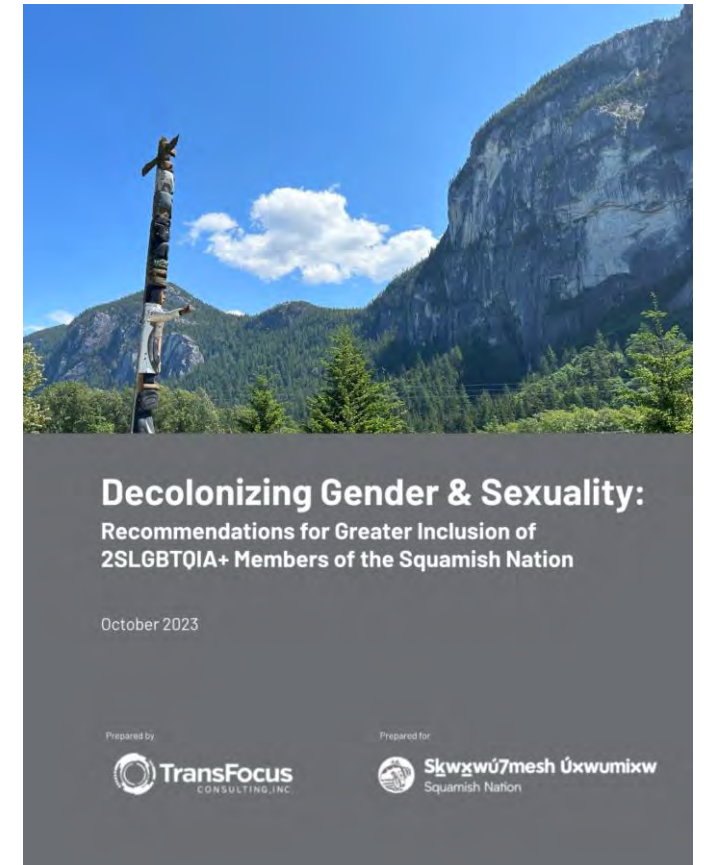


# 2. Previous Engagement

## Decolonizing Gender and Sexuality Report, 2023

The Decolonizing Gender and Sexuality Report documents the experiences and needs of Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, agender, and asexual (2SLGBTQIA+) Squamish People along with the insights and needs of cisgender, heterosexual (cis-het) Squamish People. The findings are used to provide guidance on the housing issues facing this community and possible areas to improve the Allocations Policy and process. These include:

- **The Housing List should include Squamish People's chosen names; seeing one's past legal first name can be painful for many 2SLGBTQIA+ people, especially for transgender and non-binary people.**
- 2SLGBTQIA+ Squamish People are less likely to attend community events or meetings than Cis-het Squamish People. In the future, targeted engagement opportunities may be advisable to ensure 2SLGBTQIA+ representation is included in the allocations policy engagement process.



# 3. Community Survey Overview

A community survey was distributed online and at community events between May 22 and June 23, 2024. The survey was advertised through the following channels:

- Squamish Nation social media
- Community newsletters
- Allocations Policy focus groups
- **Booth at the Indigenous Peoples' Day event at Chief Joe Mathias Centre**
- Direct outreach

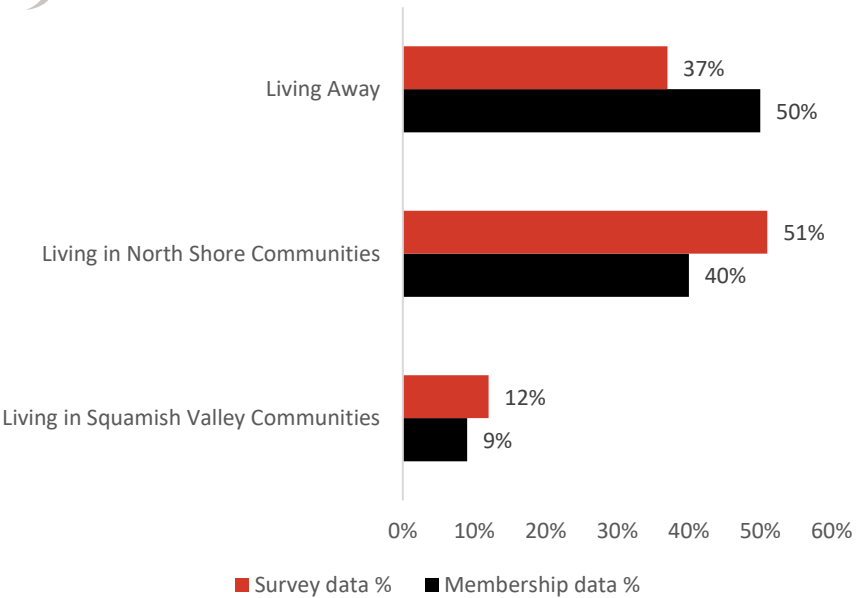
This section summarizes the results of the survey. In total, 250 people completed the survey. All survey questions were optional, and participants were able to skip questions. Each graph notes how many respondents provided an answer to each particular question.



# 3. Community Survey Demographics



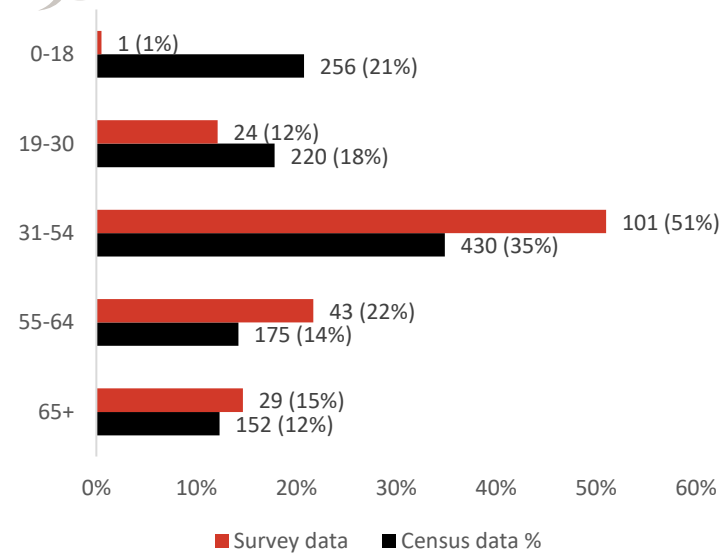
Where do you live?



Total respondents: 186

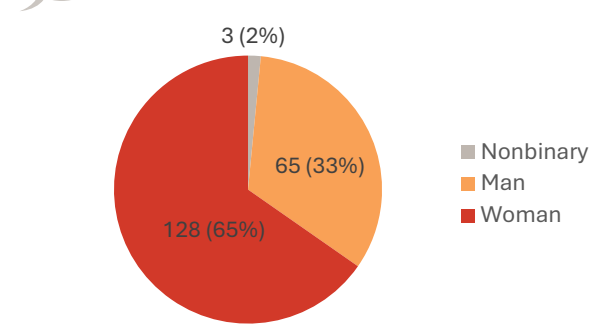
The survey has diverse representation across communities and adult age groups.

How old are you?



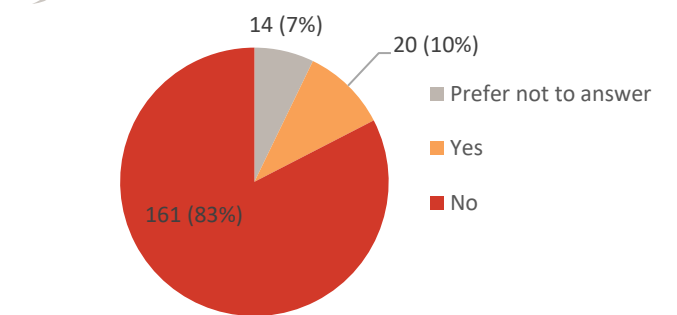
Total respondents: 198

How do you identify your gender?



Total respondents: 196

Do you identify as 2SLGBTQIA+?

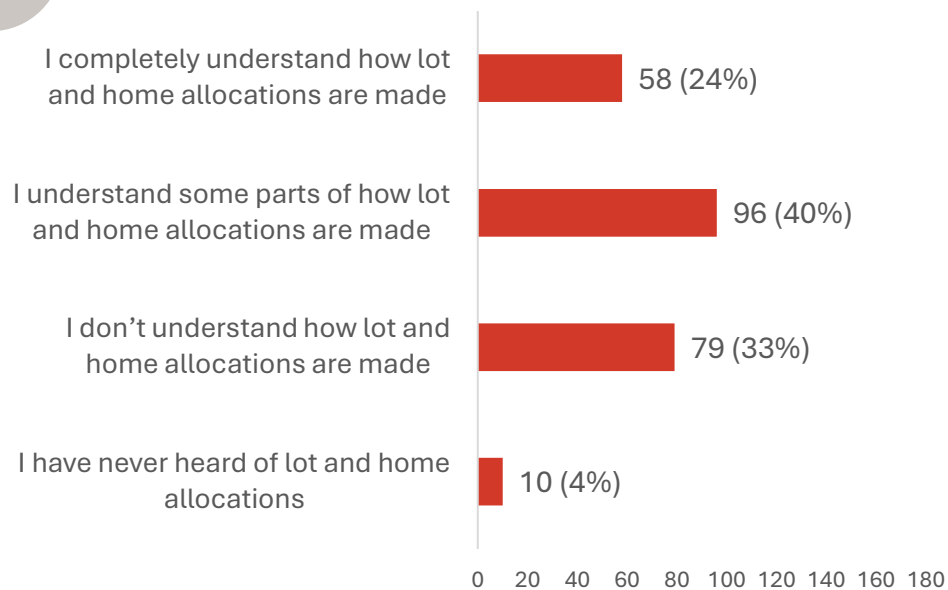


Total respondents: 195

# 3. Community Survey Introduction

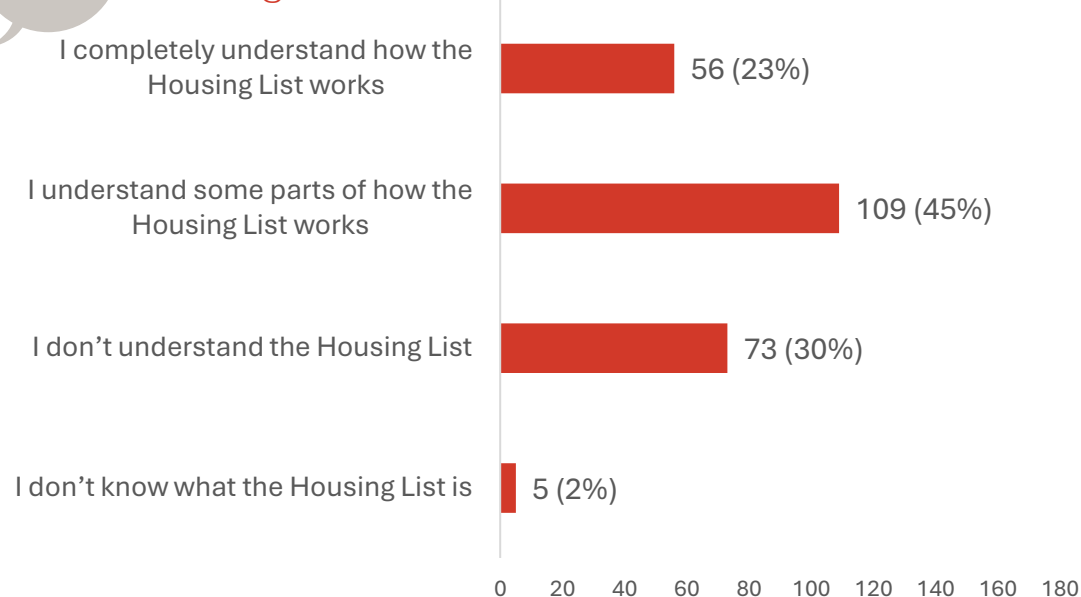


Please rate your understanding of how lot and home allocations are made.



Total respondents: 243

Please rate your understanding of how the Housing List works.



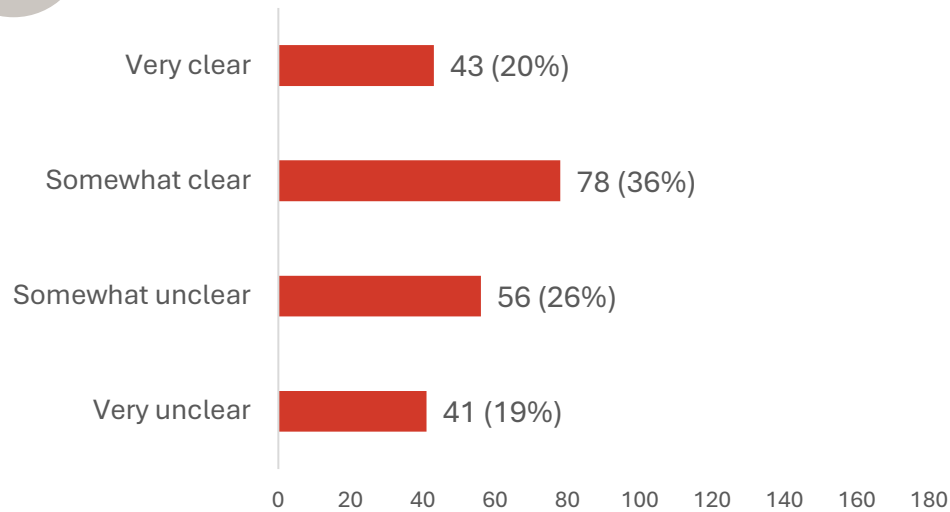
Total respondents: 243

64% of respondents had some understanding of how lot and home allocations are made. Similarly, 68% have some understanding of how the Housing List works. Those who were living away from the community were less likely to understand both processes, while Elders reported a higher level of understanding than other demographics.

# 3. Community Survey Clarity



How clear is the Allocations Policy and process to you?



Total respondents: 218

44% of survey respondents did not find the Allocations Policy and process clear and easy to understand.

What do you find unclear or hard to understand about the Allocations Policy and process?

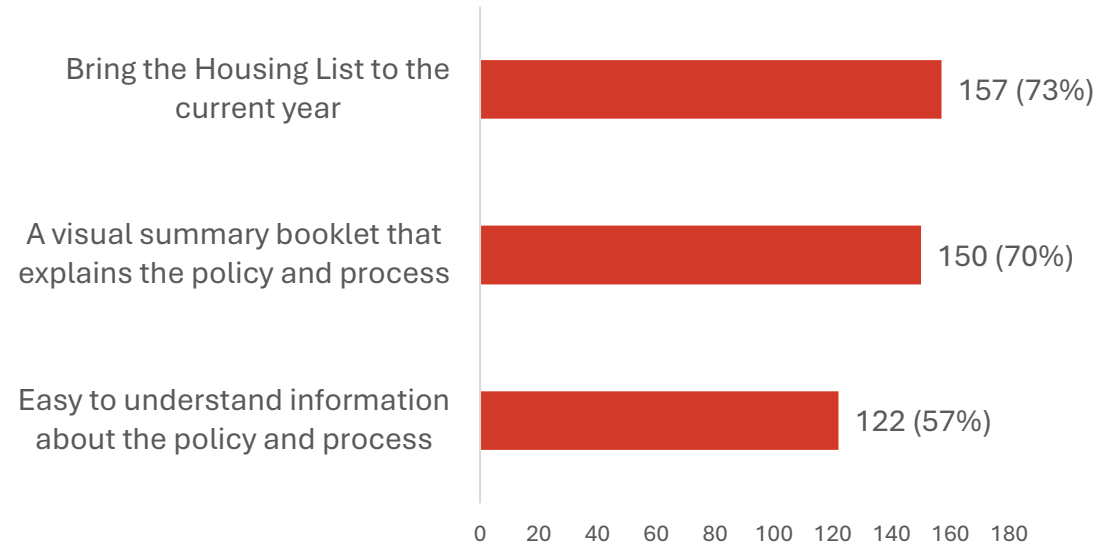
Theme	Description
Unclear how Housing List works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movement within categories (35)</li> <li>• Order of the List (unsure why certain names have moved, unclear about current positions, order of names is not accurate) (29)</li> <li>• Eligibility (children who are not Squamish People, people with disabilities) (13)</li> <li>• Inheriting List positions (unsure what happens with the list <b>position of a Squamish Person's name if they pass away</b>) (4)</li> </ul>
Unclear how allocations process works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocations/allocation selection (more information is needed about the process) (35 comments)</li> <li>• Lot development and selection (unsure how lots are chosen, which lots are developed) (10)</li> <li>• Leadership and decision-making (unsure who decides how lots and homes are allocated) (5)</li> </ul>
Confusion with the Allocations Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More information needed about the Policy overall (22)</li> <li>• Wording is too complex, there is too much information in the Policy (16)</li> </ul>

Total respondents: 114

# 3. Community Survey Clarity



Here are some initial ideas about how we can make the Allocations Policy and process clearer and easier to understand. Select all the ideas you think would be helpful:



Total respondents: 215

The majority of respondents were supportive of each of the three ideas to make the Allocations Policy and process clearer.

What would a clear Allocations Policy and process look like to you?

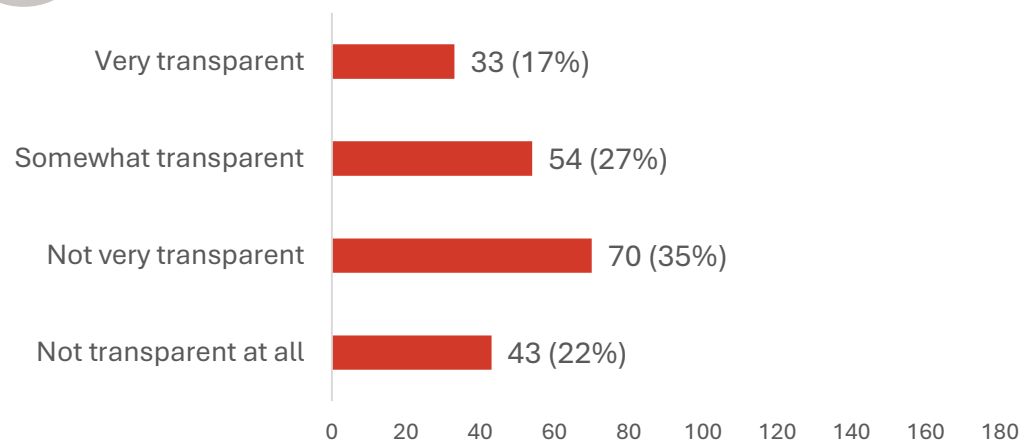
Theme	Description
Make the Policy easier to understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use clear, easy to understand language (31)</li> <li>Include visuals (22)</li> <li>Clarify the eligibility criteria and the categories (6)</li> </ul>
Supporting documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear step-by-step guide (12) / manual (6)</li> </ul>
Change Housing List order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sort List by date of application (9)</li> <li>Sort the Housing List by date of birth (2)</li> </ul>
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide clearer timelines for individuals on the List (4)</li> <li>Faster responses needed from staff (2)</li> </ul>

Total respondents: 90

# 3. Community Survey Transparency



How transparent is the Allocations Policy and process to you?



Total respondents: 200

What about the housing Allocations Policy and process do you find not transparent?

Theme	Description
Lack of information about the Housing List	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of transparent information and updates (48)</li> <li>No public access to the Housing List (44) / the List that was published was outdated (32)</li> <li><b>Lack of information about individual's Housing List position (5)</b></li> </ul>
Lack of information about the allocations process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of insight into how decisions are made (switching the number distributed to each category, no reliable communications to the community) (47)</li> <li>Lack of transparency in evaluation criteria and why certain allocations were made (17)</li> <li>Younger Squamish People are receiving allocations before Elders (3)</li> </ul>
Lack of trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examples of misconduct with housing allocations (nepotism influencing allocation decisions, lost applications, intentionally removing names from List, corruption) (21)</li> <li>General lack of trust over decision-making (6)</li> </ul>

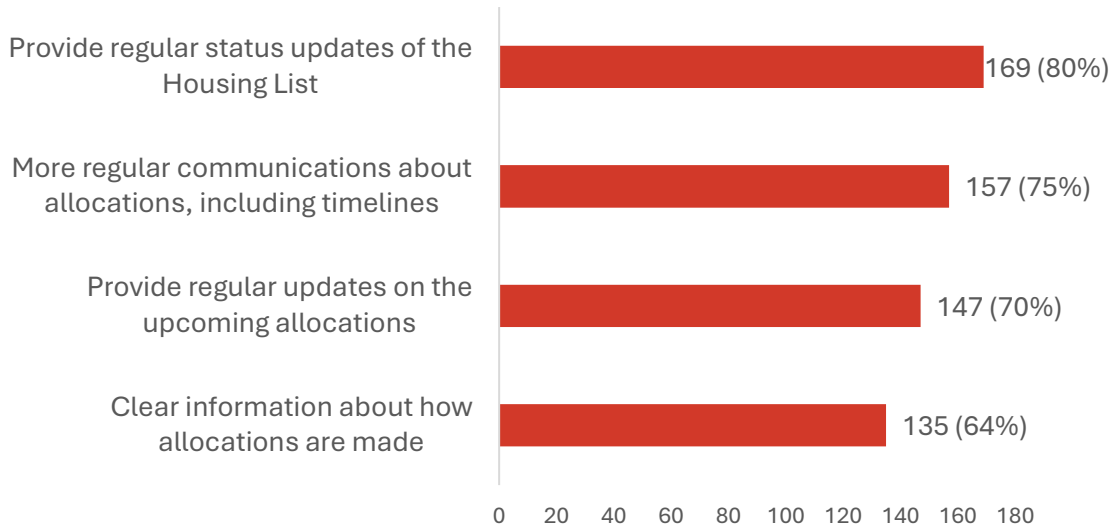
Total respondents: 128

56% of respondents did not find the Allocations Policy and process were very or somewhat transparent. Those living in community on the North Shore were more likely to feel the Policy and process is transparent.

# 3. Community Survey Transparency



Here are some initial ideas about how we can make the Allocations Policy and process more transparent. Select all the ideas you think would be helpful:



Total respondents: 210

The majority of respondents were supportive of each of the four ideas to make the Allocations Policy and process more transparent.

What would a transparent Allocations Policy and process look like to you?

Theme	Description
Accessible information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post the updated Housing List publicly (62)</li> <li>Outline the allocation criteria (35)</li> <li>Provide consistent allocation timelines (18)</li> <li>Provide allocation numbers by category each year (13)</li> <li>Provide a list of historical allocations (7)</li> <li>Provide the list of decision makers (7)</li> <li>Explore facilitating allocations through a third-party (4)</li> </ul>
Transparent communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More communications about allocations and the Housing List overall (35)</li> <li>Develop informative videos (12)</li> <li>Post more information on the website (7)</li> <li>Inform individuals on their status on the List (4)</li> <li>Host information sessions for youth (3)</li> <li>Develop an explanatory audio book (2)</li> <li>Notify Squamish People when application has been received and the name has been added (2)</li> </ul>
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide more engagement opportunities (10)</li> </ul>

Total respondents: 122

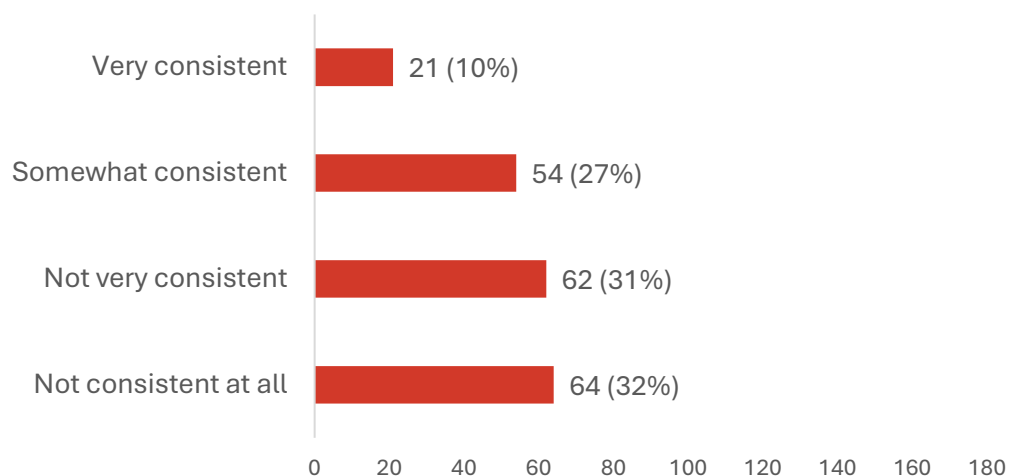


# 3. Community Survey

## Consistency



How consistent is the Allocations Policy and process to you?



Total respondents: 201

63% of respondents did not find the Allocations Policy and process were very or somewhat consistent. Younger respondents (between the ages of 19-30) felt that the Allocations Policy and process were more consistent than older respondents.

What do you find inconsistent about the Allocations Policy and process?

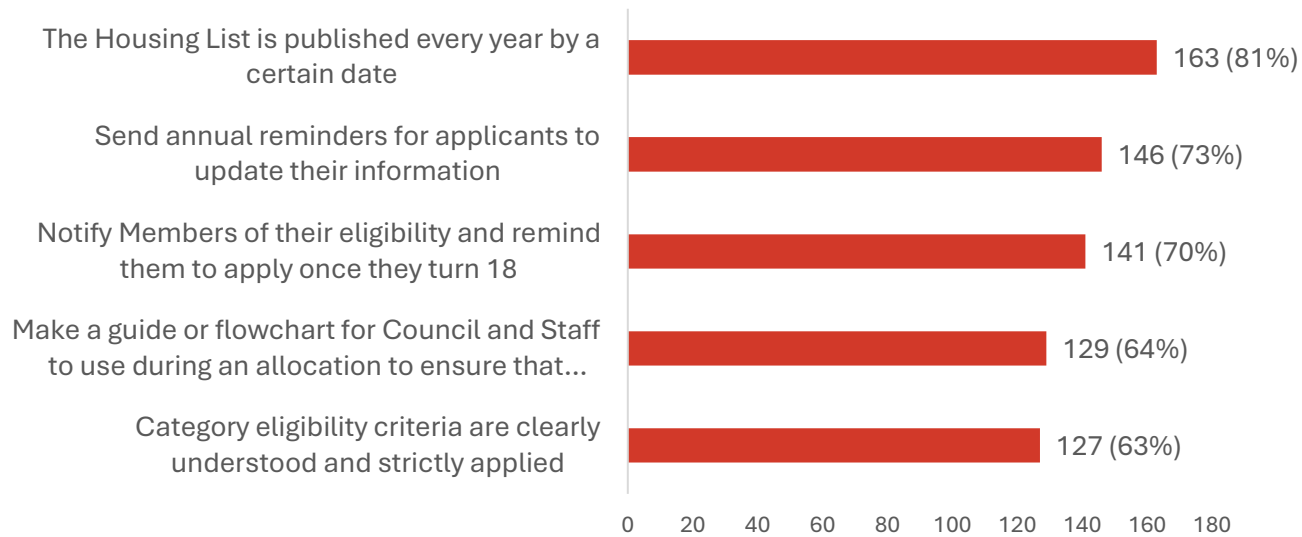
Theme	Description
Inconsistent allocations process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of consistency in allocations selections (some Squamish People are allocated multiple houses, selection criteria are not always followed, houses are allocated based on connections) (30)</li> <li>Inconsistent allocations timelines (far behind, not being told reasons for delay) (17)</li> <li>Housing List has changed and Squamish People have not been notified (names have been withdrawn, rules have changed, allocation selection has changed) (7)</li> </ul>
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of consistent updates to the community (irregular communications, inconsistent information) (37)</li> <li>No confirmation of applications (no verification letters) (3)</li> </ul>
Inconsistent policy application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inconsistent policy application (Policy applied differently to different people, different versions of the policy are being given out) (10)</li> </ul>

Total respondents: 96

# 3. Community Survey Consistency



Here are some initial ideas about how to make the policy more consistent. Select all the ideas you think would be helpful.



Total respondents: 201

The majority of respondents were supportive each of the five ideas to make the Allocations Policy and process more consistent.

What would a consistent Allocations Policy and process look like to you?

Theme	Description
Improve the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to increase number of houses for more consistent allocations (8)</li> <li>Need to eliminate unfairness and nepotism (6)</li> <li>Make the List op-out instead of opt-in so everyone would be signed up (4)</li> <li>Don't allow people to move down the List (3)</li> <li>Require Squamish People to report regular status updates (3)</li> <li>Don't remove names without confirmation (2)</li> <li>Create a process to recover lost applications (2)</li> </ul>
Consistent policy application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow the written policy consistently (10)</li> </ul>

Total respondents: 42

# 3. Community Survey

## Other Improvements



Is there anything else you want us to consider as we work to make improvements to the allocations policy and process?

Theme	Description
Categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prioritize Elders on the Housing List (5)</li><li>• Allocate homes to single Squamish People (unfair for those whose relationship status changes to be bumped down the list) (5)</li></ul>
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More transparent decision making needed (13)</li><li>• Update the Housing List and make it publicly accessible (17)</li><li>• Identify who the decision makers are (4)</li><li>• Provide a list of previous allocations (3) and their reasoning (3)</li><li>• Provide more information on the website (3)</li></ul>
Housing options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offer multi-generational housing allocations (4)</li><li>• Buy/clear more land (3)</li></ul>
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There has been a lack of communication overall (no regular updates) (14)</li><li>• More information sessions needed (6)</li><li>• Need more information about the process (6)</li><li>• More community involvement needed (5)</li></ul>

Total respondents: 99



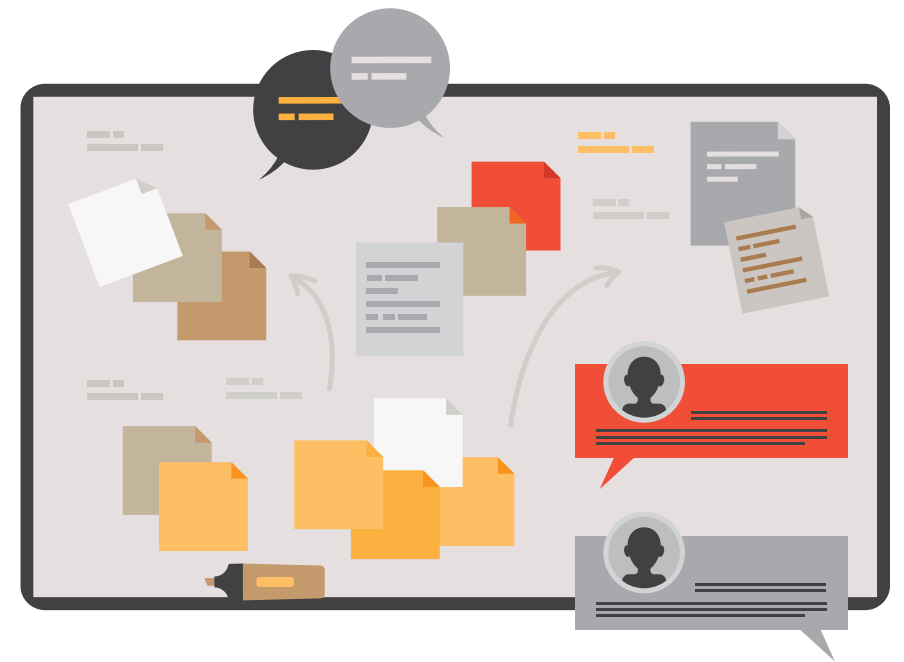
# 4. Focus Groups Overview



Virtual and in person focus groups were held to answer questions and provide an opportunity for more in-depth conversations about the Allocations Policy and process. In total, 15 Squamish People attended across four sessions:

Totem Hall: June 10 6 to 8 p.m	Virtual: June 11 6 to 8 p.m	Chief Joe Mathias Centre: June 13 6 to 8 p.m	Virtual: June 20 6 to 8 p.m
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An additional session was offered at the Fraser Heights Recreation Centre in Surrey but was cancelled due to a lack of registrations.



# 4. Focus Groups

## Clarity



### Key themes

- Uncertainty about movement within categories (e.g. why does the order of the categories change, why those who signed-up later are allocated before those who signed up earlier, if Squamish People are eligible for multiple categories which category are they included in)
- Confusion about application and processes for Squamish People with disabilities (e.g. the eligibility of those with disabilities for the Housing List, whether Squamish People with disabilities are prioritized on the list due to higher need, whether Squamish People with disabilities are being treated fairly throughout the process)
- Support for creating a standalone Allocation Policy (easier to understand than all policies combined in one document)

### Questions to clarify

- Are American citizens eligible to apply to the Housing List?

# 4. Focus Groups

## Transparency



### Key themes: Policy and process

- Applications have been lost and mismanaged; need more transparent internal file storage processes
- Concerns about nepotism
- Desire for an updated Housing List to be published and maintained properly
- Processes have not been fair in the past (younger people are getting allocations before Elders, houses are being inherited by non-Squamish People, previous mistakes have not been fixed)
- Confusion about reasons for names being removed from the List
- More timely responses needed from staff for questions or requests
- Confirmation system needed for applications to confirm their application has been received and they have been added to the Housing List

### Key themes: Information sharing

- More proactive notifications are needed (when Squamish People can apply, when allocations are expected)
- Desire for multiple methods of reporting back (infographic, detailed report, through website, social media)
- More housing information sessions needed
- Hardcopies of engagement materials or surveys are needed for Elders
- Support the use of the website and social media
- Support for more summary materials (reference guides, flowcharts)
- Online engagement options are more accessible for Squamish People living away from the community

# 4. Focus Groups

## Consistency



### Key themes

- There has been conflicting information/instructions from housing staff in the past
- Desire from Squamish People for staff to rectify past mistakes (make the adjustments that staff previously committed to, ensure processes that were not administered properly are corrected, add in lost applications)
- Perceptions that some people experience favourable treatment and Housing Policy is not always applied.

### Additional comments

- This work will be successful if the policies remain consistent and are not changed again a few years down the road
- Processes were not consistent when the applications process changed from paper to electronic
- Women affected by Bill C-31 have a later application date than they would have if they had been able to retain their Membership



# 5. Social Media

## Facebook Comments



### Key themes

- Frustration about Housing List (timelines are too long, policy keeps changing, List is outdated)
- Confusion about Housing List placement (name is not moving on the List, confusion about number on List and why it is changing)
- Name removal and documentation (names disappearing from List, lack of physical copies, lack of communication from staff)
- Misconduct (lack of accountability, missing applications)
- Outdated Housing List (out of date List)
- Inconsistent allocations (Squamish People have multiple houses, only certain categories are getting allocated)
- Public List access (confusion about where to access the List)





# 6. Other Comments Related to Housing



Throughout the engagement process, there were several comments made and questions asked that related to broader housing programs in the Squamish Nation. These comments and questions have been combined from the survey, focus groups, and social media comments and summarized below.

## Key themes

- Confusion with allocation inheritance (who receives a house when a single parent passes away, what happens if the children who inherit the house are not Squamish People)
- Policies needed to clarify renting/subletting allocated homes
- Concerns with the long timelines for housing allocations/Questions about the delay in allocations
- More support needed for housing maintenance
- More empathy needed from housing staff overall
- Explore other ways for Squamish People to sign-up for Housing List (online, by phone)
- Squamish app is not well-used by Squamish People
- Surveys should follow Indigenous methodologies
- Desire to develop more lots
- Housing allocation type should be based on criteria (different homes should be allowed for Elders vs. families)
- Access to housing is needed for **single people (kids & marriage isn't something everyone wants)**

## Questions to clarify

- **Questions about other housing programs (Hiyám' Housing, condos, Senákw) (how they are operated, how they all work together)**
- **Questions about access to emergency housing (how these programs are run, how they fit in with the housing delivery model)**

# 7. Lessons Learned

## AI & Engagement



### Changing engagement landscape

The online engagement landscape is changing with the evolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI), spamming scams, and online behaviour intended to be political disruptive. This project experienced some of these emerging issues.

It is common for surveys to include incentives such as prize draws to encourage participants. Surveys with prize draws, however, also attract fake submissions by AI bots or scammers seeking gift cards and other prizes. The Allocations Policy survey and the focus group registration form both experienced this issue.

Fake responses were primarily from Nigeria and China. The project team carefully filtered responses from IP addresses in unusual countries and added a question for participants to provide their Band Number.

The feedback reported in this document is only from respondents that the project team had a high level of confidence were from real Squamish People.

More unusual, the first virtual focus group attracted what were later found to be fake accounts. These fake accounts even participated in the workshop chat. The project team aimed to create a low barrier engagement method for those who could not meet in person. However, this also made it more vulnerable to fake participation. This was a new experience for the project team and reflects the changing engagement landscape. Significant effort was made to filter suspected fake accounts. This report only includes feedback from participants who were confirmed Squamish People.

### Lessons learned

This experience was shared with the Squamish Nation IT, Communications teams, and the Allocations Policy Inter-Governmental Staff Team to ensure broad learning. Lessons learned will be factored into future engagement method, including requiring participants to include their Band Number, requiring participants to turn on their cameras to verify their identities, adding extra layers in surveys to filter bots, and changing how incentives such as gift cards and prize draws are advertised to avoid drawing attention from bots and scammers.

# 8. Next Steps

## 1. Identifying Options and Recommendations

The feedback collected as part of Round 1 Engagement on the Allocations Policy will be used to identify options and recommendations for improving the policy and the process of making lot and home allocations. These options and recommendations will be reviewed by Squamish Nation Council in mid-July before being shared with the Squamish Nation community for feedback in mid- to late July 2024 as part of Round 2 Engagement.

## 2. Preparing the Allocations Policy and Procedures Documents

In August 2024, the Allocations Policy and Procedures documents will be prepared, incorporating feedback from both rounds of community engagement, as well as feedback from Squamish Nation Council. These documents will be internally reviewed then submitted to Council for review and approval at the September Council session.

## 3. Implementation



Once the Allocations Policy is finalized and approved, the Housing Officer will work to prepare an up-to-date Housing List in advance of the next allocation of 15 homes by the end of 2024.

If you have any questions about Phase 2 Engagement, please contact [pcprojects@squamish.net](mailto:pcprojects@squamish.net)