WHAT SHOULD WE BE WORRIED ABOUT AND WHO CARES?
Updating Aanischaukamikw’s Emergency Preparedness Plan

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ABOUT
Aanischaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute (ACCI) is a museum, library, archive and education centre dedicated to preserving and sharing the culture and traditions of the James Bay Innu (Cree) for current and future generations, with a class A moveable cultural property certification.

THE PROBLEM
Our existing EPP did not address the risks to the institution and few staff knew it existed.

THE PROJECT
Updated the EPP with 3 key objectives:
- Embed EPP procedures with staff and wider community
- Match EPP to our organisational infrastructure
- Understand and respond to the specific challenges in our region

THE STEPS
1. Gather information: Completed a detailed risk assessment, gathered documents from other institutions and compiled a list of all our unique challenges.
2. Build a team: Organized a PLANNING team and RESPONSE team, arranged to meet monthly.
3. Follow in others’ footsteps: Assembled the plan using the CCI Emergency Response Planning Workbook (Version 2, 2014), and consulted EPP information from books, apps and advice from other institutions.
4. Adapt plan to our needs: Created extra documents and procedures to respond to our challenges.
5. Engage with staff and community: Addressed all staff with aspects of the EPP, organised drills, salvage training and developed relationships with local first responders.

TESTING OUR PLAN!
Since October 2015, ACCI had two minor emergency situations, and one community building had a major fire. This gave us the opportunity to test and adjust our plan. Each emergency brought up a challenge specific to our three objectives.

CHALLENGE 1: Lack of awareness about emergency preparedness
Ouje-Bougoumou (founded 1994) and ACCI (opened 2011) are both new and haven’t experienced many emergency situations. No other institution in the community has a comprehensive EPP and the needs of ACCI are perceived as different and labour intensive compared to other public buildings in the area. The fire highlighted that an emergency in our new community is possible, and helped staff and community to understand the importance of EPP as well as the need for clear information, dialogues, increased awareness, skills and confidence.

Addressing the challenge
- ACCI completed a comprehensive risk assessment with all staff. The activity raised awareness of risks in the institution and the community.
- ACCI EPP team responded immediately to the fire, by preparing the building to decline residents affected by the loss of heating. This service was not used as backup heating was available.
- ACCI EPP team participated in EPP workshops and activities organized by the local fire department, which has concurrently been upgrading the community-wide EPP.

CHALLENGE 2: Staffing structure
In October and December 2015 there were 2 – 10 hr power outages at ACCI. One during work hours, the other over holidays. No objects were damaged, but unsecured electronic data was lost.

Addressing the challenge
ACCI EPP team created checklists for each emergency scenario and each position of the emergency response team, to ensure that the first 12-24 hours of any emergency can be handled by any staff member. Giving time for the EPP team to arrive at the scene.

CHALLENGE 3: Living in a remote community
There are many challenges ACCI faces by being in a remote community. Two recurring problems are great distance from maintenance companies, and irregular telephone reception, few residents have cellphones and most communication happens on Facebook through WAT.

Addressing the challenge
- ACCI EPP team created a private Facebook group to keep staff up to date with progress of emergencies, and included Facebook names in the emergency call tree.
- ACCI EPP team incorporated expected maintenance wait times to procedural documents and training, and included contingency funds in EPP budget for expensive maintenance calls.

Looking Forward
Communication, patience and teamwork have been key to our emergency preparedness planning. We have completed our EPP and supplementary documents for all staff, and undertaken fire drills and tabletop scenarios. Later in the year we will be doing salvage training which we will open to staff and volunteer community members. We hope that our approach and solutions can be useful to others in similar situations. We also look forward to hearing what others have done!

If you would like more information, copies of our documents, or just want to chat about EPP, contact fiona.hernandez@creeculture.ca and harold.bosum@creeculture.ca

References

Acknowledgements
EPP Team: Rob White, Laura Phillips, Paula Maruladsid Tapeesha Staff at CCI, Irene Kandie, Evelyn Ajiie

FIRE
In January 2016, there was a major fire at the central heating facility in Ouje-Bougoumou, resulting in major damage, but nobody was hurt. ACCI was unaffected.

POWER OUTAGE
In October and December 2015 there were 2 – 10 hr power outages at ACCI. One during work hours, the other over holidays. No objects were damaged, but unsecured electronic data was lost.

ALARM MALFUNCTION
In December, days before Christmas holidays, the fire alarm system broke down. ACCI staff was evacuated and could not enter building until the issue was resolved. Constant building monitoring and communication with staff was needed.

SITE END