

Garden River First Nation HOUSING DEPARTMENT Newsletter

SUMMER 2017



What's inside:

- Why do we collect rent
- Housing Inspections
- New rental collection procedures
- Why is Housing important
- What are the programs and services available

Who We Are... We are committed to creating a vibrant and effective housing system which will contribute to the health and well-being of all our Community members. Housing is an essential component of the Garden River First Nation and encourages homeowners/tenants to assume greater responsibility and pride in their homes. As well, our objective is to ensure all housing related matters are in place, including but not limited to, rent collection, which will safeguard the long-term sustainability of housing programs and services.



Elderly & Disabled Units

The GRFN Housing Department welcomes our new Elderly & Disabled tenants to their new units on Syrette Lake Road. Congratulations on your successful tenancy and we look forward to assisting you to achieve a successful management/tenant relationship!

Three Bedroom Units – Wolf Street

The GRFN Housing Department is pleased to announce that these three bedroom units are near completion and the successful tenants have been chosen. We are anticipating a move-in date in mid-August to early-September. Congratulations to the families that have been chosen and we look forward to building a successful management/tenant relationship.



What is the Tenant Selection Process?

In August 2015, Chief and Council approved the Housing Policy and Procedures. The current tenant selection process is based on a "rental scoring guide". The applicant with the highest score from the rental scoring guide is awarded the unit. The current process selects applicants based on relative merit and need. It is aimed at allocating units in an unbiased and transparent manner.

The GRFN Housing Department reviews all applications for eligibility and completeness using the "rental housing application review form" and will reject ineligible and incomplete applications.

Tenant selection is governed by the following criteria:

- a) need;
- b) source and level of income and stability;
- c) number of times the prospective Tenant has applied;
- d) whether the applicant is a Tenant under an existing Tenancy Agreement;
- e) references;
- f) Household composition and compliance with National Occupancy Standard;
- g) credit history; no outstanding debts owed to the First Nation
- h) past rental and financial history with Garden River; and
- i) other special considerations (e.g. disability requiring barrier free living, need for emergency housing as a result of fire, etc.)

Tips:

- An application is only valid for 1 year from the date it was received, if you and your family were not selected for a unit in that year, please ensure your application is updated on a yearly basis. The easiest way to do this is to keep in regular contact with the Tenant Relations Officer, Carrie Zeppa, either with a phone call or email.
- Check posting and the GRFN website and throughout the community on a regular basis. Any units that become available will be posted here. Please ensure that you have indicated which kind of unit you are interested in, also just because you have put in an application, doesn't mean it will automatically be put toward the next available unit – as the applicant you must formally notify us that you wish your application be considered for the unit.



Rental Arrears

How does it Affect our First Nation?

The First Nation aims to help our citizens secure homes for their families. Through rental collection, we are able to build, purchase, rehabilitate and administer suitable and affordable housing and provide quality services. The First Nation is required to make mortgage payments to Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC) through the collection of rent. Non-payment of rent negatively impacts the First Nation in terms of limited housing program and/or options that can be offered. Rental collection is important for the increase in housing stock and increases the First Nation's ability to obtain future funding. The First Nation is committed to creating a vibrant and healthy housing system for our citizens!

Rental arrears effects our First Nation in many ways:

- Existing housing stock could begin to deteriorate
- Less dollars for maintenance budget
- New construction of much needed homes are at risk
- Families will face eviction
- Lack of funding to repair existing homes

Prevention of rental arrears is our focus and we strive to do our best such as; implementing cost effective ways to reduce arrears, divert resources to other services and eliminate the disruption a tenant experiences with arrears. Tenant counselling is provided to each tenant. Our Housing Team strives to ensure our tenants are provided with advice and support and we will ensure you receive the support such as referrals to outside financial agencies and social support network.

Eviction is ALWAYS the last resort!



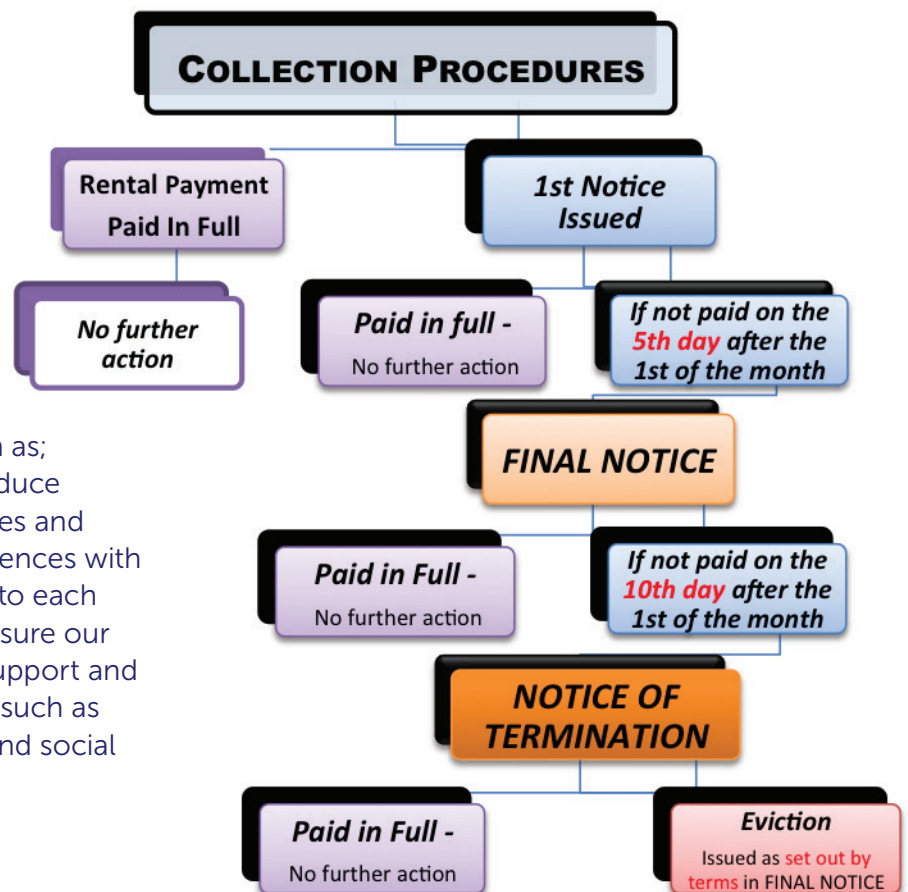
*97% rental
collection rate
achieved for
2016-2017*

Through the dedication and increased support with tenants, the Housing Department has achieved a 97% rental collection rate and has reduced arrears dramatically.

*Housing is
a community
asset that affects
everyone!*

COLLECTION PROCEDURES

In August 2015, Chief and Council approved the Housing Policy and Procedures with the changes to the Collection Procedures for non-payment of rent as follows:



Programs and Services Available

The GRFN Housing Department offers a wide range of programs and services for our citizens; from renovations to construction of your own home! We have funding available under the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation for renovations and upgrades to existing units and homes that are in dire need.

Financial assistance is available through the ***Garden River First Nation Emergency Loan Renovation Program***, up to a maximum of \$5,000.00. This Loan Program is available to eligible tenants to assist with emergency repairs/renovations and is fully funded and payable to the First Nation with a one-time interest of 3% and must be paid within 5 years.

ELIGIBILITY:

- Provide proof of income
- Not to be in arrears or owe any other money to the First Nation
- Funds must be used for emergency renovations; major structural, electrical, plumbing, heating, fire safety, unfinished work, renovations

Capacity Development – Housing Team

Training is provided to First Nations to help improve housing quality and housing management. Throughout the year, the Housing Team will attend such conferences and workshops to better serve our First Nation.

New Staff Welcome

The GRFN Housing Department is pleased to welcome Jessica Roach as our Administrative Assistant until March 2018. Jessica brings to the GRFN Housing Department over 10+ years office experience and is a graduate from the Toronto School of Business in the "Executive Secretary and Computer Applications" program. She can be reached in the ERCD office at ext. 286.

Tenant Responsibilities

Each tenant has entered into a tenancy agreement with the Housing Department of the First Nation and is required to pay rent and in return for the right to use and occupy a rental unit; with this comes responsibilities. Tenants are required to maintain reasonable health, safety, cleanliness and sanitary standards throughout the unit. As a tenant you are responsible for the general maintenance, cleaning and minor repairs and replacements of the rental unit as outlined in the Tenancy Agreement. The following are a few tenant responsibilities that must be adhered to during your tenure (for a more detailed list, please contact the Tenant Relations Officer).

- routine cleaning– windows
- Ensure indoor air quality is maintained by ensuring vents are cleaned
- Garbage removal
- Yard clean up, weeding, maintenance, including old vehicle removal and keeping septic area free of debris and organics
- Report any damage

First Nation Responsibility

Major repairs and replacements:

- cracks in walls and ceiling due to construction
- water leaks (plumbing, roof, walls)
- dripping taps
- broken or rusted out pipes and drains
- sticking doors only when reported immediately and no other damage occurs
- sagging or shifting door frames
- veneer coming off doors when reported immediately
- burnt out light switches or plugs
- maintain furnace, water tank, heater and HRV
- re-lighting of furnaces and water tanks
- infinite heat switches on stove
- hot water tank elements and pressure valve

What is a Breach?

Tenants may be issued a "Breach" of your rental agreement if you break one or more rules of the Agreement. A breach may be issued as follows:

- Failed to pay the rent payment in full on the day it is due; and/or
- Failed to keep the premises in a state of good repair (failure to maintain/repair the rental unit as required; and/or
- Failed to pay the cost of heating and hydro for the unit; and/or
- Interfered in any significant manner with another lawful right, privilege or interest of Garden River First Nation or another tenant or a neighboring household; and/or
- Performed illegal acts or carried on illegal trade, business or occupation in the premises; and/or
- Endangered persons or property in the unit; and/or
- Uncontrolled pets at or around the rental unit
- Damaged the unit either willfully or negligently (including damage caused by other occupants, their guests or their pets); and/or
- Sublet, leased or assigned the premises without prior written consent by Garden River First Nation; and/or used the premises for other than residential purposes.
- Modifications to subsidiaries or structure.

Q What are you required to do if you are issued a Breach?

A You have 30 days to correct the Breach and provide a report to the Housing Department. Should the Breach be issued based on tenant neglect/damage, you are fully responsible to repair the damage at your cost.

Q Can I be evicted if I do not correct the Breach?

A If you fail to correct the Breach within the specified time period, you may be evicted without further notice.

WORKSHOPS

YOUR PASSPORT TO PRIZES

The GRFN Housing Department has developed a series of workshops that will be delivered on a monthly basis, until March 2018. The workshops will be information sessions related to Housing, which will include general home maintenance, budgeting and tenant/landlord responsibilities.

Each workshop will have light snacks, coffee and water as well as a door prize. All workshops will be held at the Community Centre, unless otherwise noted. As an incentive to attend as many workshops as you can, we have included a "grand prize".

Rules for Grand Prize

- Attend three or more workshops for your chance to win the "grand" prize!
- Each workshop attended after the 3rd workshop the tenant/citizen will receive an extra ballot for the "grand" prize!
- Open to all GRFN citizens and homeowners only (proof of residence may be required)
- Must be 18 years of age or older

All tenants/citizens are asked to pre-register for the workshops. For each tenant/citizen who pre-registers and attends the workshops, you will receive two entry ballots for the door prizes for each session. You can pre-register with Carrie Zeppa, Tenant Relations Officer.

Wednesday, August 16th

Basic Budgeting

- Personalized budgeting session will be available

Thursday, September 14th

Family Literacy/Financial Planning

You must pre-register with the Tenant Relations Officer

Other topics include:

- Basic Home Maintenance
- Energy Savings Tips with Union Gas and Algoma Power
- On-Reserve Mortgage Program
- GRFN Housing Programs
- Rental Collection – Why do you pay rent?

Tenant Communication

REGULAR OFFICE HOURS:

Monday to Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (noon)

1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Closed during lunch

SUMMER HOURS

(effective June 1st to September 1st):

Monday to Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (noon)

12:30 pm. To 4:15 p.m.

Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Closed during lunch

HOUSING TEAM CONTACT:

Anne Headrick, Housing Supervisor
ext. 248 aheadrick@gardenriver.org

Carrie Zeppa, Tenant Relations Officer
ext. 240 czeppa@gardenriver.org

Charlotte Boissoneau, Housing Assistant
ext. 249 cboissoneau@gardenriver.org

Greg Solomon, Construction Maintenance Coordinator,
ext. 289 gsolomon@gardenriver.org



2016 Recipients Housing Recognition Award

HOUSING DEPARTMENT

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River, ON P6A 6Z8
Tel: 705-946-6300

BAND OFFICE

Tel: 705-946-6300
Toll Free: 1-800-665-0987
Email: info@gardenriver.org

FIRE DEPARTMENT

705-253-1870

WELLNESS CENTRE

705-946-5710



**Emergency
Services**

Should you experience any
emergency after hours,
please contact the Housing
Department After Hours
Emergency Cell at:

705-254-9492

