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Presentation Title: The Journey to Equitable Access: Equipping Underserved Communities with Energy Efficiency Education

Abstract: Empower Me is Canada's only energy conservation and behaviour change program designed for and delivered by members of diverse, multilingual, and hard-to-reach communities. Partnering with utilities, municipalities, and the private sector, Empower Me works with underserved individuals to deliver free programming and education in a culturally appropriate way. Bridging the gap left by other programs, the Empower Me program ensures participants understand their energy bills and choices so they can save energy, save money, protect the environment, and increase the comfort and safety of their homes. Empower Me hires and trains members of the communities it serves to deliver programming. These individuals, known as Mentors, go on to cascade this knowledge to others within their communities using the appropriate language, and framing the information within the appropriate cultural context. Empower Me provides energy efficiency education in sixteen languages via home visits, informational workshops and the provision of free Energy Saving Kits. Since inception in 2012, Empower Me has been collecting demographic data from participants: around language, home archetype, fuel burden, heating system familiarity and status in Canada. This quantitative information has provided a deeper understanding of the populations requiring translated and contextualized energy education in Western Canada. It has provided an insight into the realities of energy poverty and identified a real gap in programming for new immigrants to Canada. Having confirmed the need for such programming, in 2019 Empower Me decided to answer the question: are we filling the void? With the support of BC Hydro and Fortis BC, Empower Me sought out new information from participants, information that would answer the question, "is our beneficiary community adopting energy efficiency best practices as a result of Empower Me inputs?" This presentation will detail the results of a yearlong study into behaviour change with participants of Empower programming. It will not only detail best practices, but identify important lessons learnt.