

# **A Participative Narrative Inquiry (PNI) Approach to the Evaluation of Empower Me: a community led energy awareness and education program designed and delivered for and by underserved communities.**

*Yasmin Abraham, Kambo Energy Group*  
*Emma Gammans, Kambo Energy Group*

## **ABSTRACT**

Empower Me is a community led and run program designed and delivered by Kambo Energy Group that seeks to bridge the gap of awareness, understanding, and participation of traditionally underprioritized communities in energy and climate programming. Since 2012, Empower Me has utilized a community-led approach that hires members of the communities we serve (known as Energy Mentors) to design and deliver culturally appropriate climate and energy education and support to members of immigrant and newcomer communities. The program is designed to address the systemic inequities these households face in accessing and taking advantage of government and utility energy and retrofit programs. The program works closely with community organizations such as immigrant-serving organizations, settlement agencies, religious groups, and community agencies to support their clients with energy literacy information.

To deepen understanding and to share Empower Me's impact on participants, Kambo Energy Group engaged a third-party consulting group with a specialty in underserved audiences to conduct a program evaluation. Through engagement with Champions<sup>1</sup>, Mentors<sup>2</sup>, and Community Partners<sup>3</sup>, a number of themes highlighted Empower Me's continued impact on the communities it serves.

The stories and reflections shared during this process demonstrate how Empower Me is addressing a gap in educational energy efficiency programming by delivering a community-based approach that meets participants where they're at.

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1 Champions are community members who have been engaged by Empower Me and have come to champion energy saving measures in their own lives.

2 Mentors are community members who are trained by Empower Me to deliver multilingual and informational workshops to program participants.

3 Empower Me partners with community organizations that serve the same groups of people. Collaboration between community-minded organizations amplifies networks and ultimately benefits more diverse, multilingual, and multicultural communities.

## Why a Participatory Narrative Inquiry approach to evaluation?

We chose to work with a qualitative research approach called Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI). PNI involves collaborating with participants to explore their personal experiences and perspectives on a particular topic or phenomenon.

Empower Me selected this method to address the challenges typically encountered by traditional efficiency and education program evaluation:

### **1. Limited scope of evaluation:**

Traditional evaluation methods often focus on quantifiable outcomes, such as energy savings, and may not capture the full range of experiences and outcomes that are important to Empower Me participants. PNI allowed for a more holistic approach to evaluation, which uncovered a broader range of outcomes and perspectives.

### **2. Cultural and linguistic barriers:**

Typically, traditional evaluation methods don't fully account for cultural and linguistic differences among participants, which can lead to misinterpretations or inaccuracies in the data. For Empower Me, whose audience is exclusively immigrants and newcomers, this has been a longstanding evaluation challenge. PNI addressed these barriers by allowing participants to share their experiences in their own language and within their cultural context.

### **3. Power dynamics:**

Traditional evaluation methods typically reinforce power imbalances between evaluators and participants, with researchers often seen as the experts and participants as passive subjects. This dynamic creates a challenge for Empower Me given participants would be 'evaluating' Empower Me's Energy Mentors who are trusted and respected members of the participant's community. Asking participants to evaluate their peers created an uncomfortable situation that was not likely to offer a true sense of impact. PNI helped address these power dynamics by creating a more collaborative and equitable relationship between researchers and participants. The PNI approach recommended by Roots and Rivers Consulting<sup>4</sup> addressed these challenges and offered an opportunity to capture the program's multi-faceted impact.

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<sup>4</sup> Strategic planning: Roots & Rivers Consulting. Roots & Rivers. (n.d.). <https://www.rootsandrivers.ca/>

## ABOUT EMPOWER ME

Over the next 18 years, it is estimated that up to 30% of both the US and Canada's total population will be comprised of immigrants<sup>5</sup>. The newcomer experience is multi-faceted and complex, with many immigrants learning to navigate new ways of life, including how to speak a new language, engage in new culture, and how to live in a new home.

Since homes don't come with owners' manuals, many residents are unaware of how the energy systems inside their homes impact their comfort or health. Immigrants and newcomers have unique needs when it comes to understanding how home energy systems work, how to read utility bills, and why and how to take advantage of home retrofit programming. According to Statistics Canada, seven in ten immigrants in Canada report a language other than English or French as their mother tongue<sup>6</sup>. In the US, 22% of the population speak a language other than English at home<sup>7</sup>. In addition to unique language and literacy needs, Empower Me has worked with many immigrants and newcomers who maintain lower levels of trust in governments, have lower awareness of programs and supports available, and lack experience with North American homes and utilities.

While information and services exist to help families improve the health, safety, and performance of their homes, local governments, businesses, and utilities haven't found a way to effectively engage diverse and multicultural communities. As a result, Empower Me has witnessed immigrants and newcomers show lower levels of participation in energy, efficiency, and climate programming. Empower Me is one of the only energy literacy and efficiency programs that guides and mentors participants long term, increasing awareness and understanding so that participants can ultimately implement energy-saving measures and take advantage of available programming. This approach is made possible through a peer-to-peer learning model that leverages relationships with trusted community members.

Empower Me is one of the only programs that addresses this issue by delivering low-barrier, tailored programming to underserved, immigrant, and newcomer households.

### **Empower Me:**

For 12, Empower Me has not only worked in communities, but also with communities, co-developing solutions that respond to communities' unique needs, challenges, and lived experiences. In fact, it's this collaborative approach to working alongside communities that not only led to the creation of Empower Me but has also ensured its lasting success.

In 2012 Empower Me's co-founders, Areef and Yasmin Abraham, identified a glaring gap in the market; they realized that the demographic of participants who were benefiting from government and utility programs didn't mirror the broader demographics shaping the regions in which these programs were offered. This lack of diverse program participation sparked a simple

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<sup>5</sup> [Statistics Canada: 2022](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Statistics Canada: Census in Brief](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Language Use in the United States: 2019](#)

yet unconventional idea.

Areef and Yasmin approached the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia and acquired permission from the Gurdwara's leadership to hire and train members of the Sikh community to deliver energy efficiency education in Punjabi. These individuals held unique insights into their communities' needs and challenges and were able to deliver culturally sensitive and accessible education to members of their community. The Gurdwara pilot was incredibly successful and inspired what is now one of the longest running programs of its kind.

Empower Me utilizes a community-led approach that hires members of the communities we serve (known as Energy Mentors) to design and deliver culturally appropriate climate and energy education and support to members of immigrant and newcomer communities. The program is designed to address the systemic inequities these households face in accessing and taking advantage of government and utility energy and retrofit programs. The program works closely with community organizations such as immigrant-serving organizations, settlement agencies, religious groups, and community agencies to support their clients with energy literacy information.

## **What makes a successful energy efficiency program?**

The Empower Me program has proven successful in part because it addresses each household's unique needs. Its accessible, culturally appropriate, and effective energy efficiency program can be broken into two categories. The first category are structural factors that address energy efficiency goals from a program design and accessibility standpoint. Structural factors lay the groundwork for culturally-appropriate program delivery. The second category are relational factors that consider program delivery and how participants' unique experiences in life might be impacting their energy consumption.

### **Structural Factors:**

#### **1. Availability of program**

Empower Me offers ongoing and consistent programming in the community. The team is well known in the community and available when needed.

#### **2. Technical expertise within the program**

The program's home experts can effectively answer questions, pinpoint opportunities to improve energy efficiency, and support participants in taking advantage of programs.

#### **3. Appropriate resourcing of program**

The program is well staffed with trusted community members who are uniquely positioned to support the population they are serving.

## **Relational Factors**

### **1. Individualized programming**

Empower Me distributes information and materials that are tailored to participants' specific, situational needs. The program and team members are experts in a wide range of topics and resources to support participants.

### **2. Culturally appropriate delivery of programming**

- Empower Me Mentors deliver programming in participants' mother tongues.
- The program considers how the settlement process impacts newcomers' sense of community.
- Curriculum is designed based on the lived experience and needs of the participants using cultural references.

### **3. Trust building**

Empower me demonstrates genuine care for the participants' outcomes.

The Participative Narrative Inquiry (PNI) Approach:

The following evaluation methodology was used to conduct an evaluation assessment for Empower Me.

## **TRAUMA-INFORMED**

Empower Me understands that every individual may have experienced serious trauma in their life. We also recognize that Champions may have a distrust in many systems. The project integrated knowledge about trauma into theory, design, and practice.

There are 3 components to taking a trauma-informed approach:

1. Awareness of the prevalence of trauma, and how common it is for all people.
2. Recognition of the signs of traumatic impact and how the survival stances of fight, flight, or freeze may show up in the people they serve, support, or work with.
3. Engagement in taking steps to avoid re-traumatizing people while supporting healing from past traumatic experiences.

### **What does this mean?**

Here are some practical ways the project embedded a trauma-informed approach to our data gathering and evaluation plan:

1. Hesitation means NO. We were mindful of non-verbal cues to indicate someone's hesitation to answer a question, and always veer on the side of caution.
2. Consent is ongoing. We made sure that interview participants provided clear on-going consent throughout the engagement process. This also meant providing clear and direct points for participants to consent/not consent.
3. Compensation. We valued participants' time, and offered appropriate compensation. We also recognized over-compensation can lead to power imbalances (i.e.. if someone needs money, they will feel forced to engage). As each community is different, we deferred to the Kambo Energy team and Mentors to recommend a safe, culturally appropriate form of compensation.
4. Transparency. Before beginning any engagement, we believe it is important to be as transparent as possible to frame the process and intentions. This meant explaining how long the engagement would last, the intention and objectives of this evaluation, and how participants could de-engage with the study.
5. Relationship and well-being is top priority. Let participants engage as they see fit. This meant allowing participants to only participate where and when they felt comfortable.
6. Presence of Elder/significant other. We welcomed the presence of any support the participants required to feel safe as part of this engagement.

## **NARRATIVE AND RELATIONAL-FOCUSED**

- Open-ended questions. Open-ended questions allowed the participant to share what they felt comfortable sharing, and nothing more.
- Use plain language. We used plain language in our engagement, and used a conversational approach. This meant adapting to the conversation, and going with the flow as participants shared answers.
- Approach curiously, not analytically. We strove to avoid making assumptions based on our implicit bias, and approach conversations with openness and curiosity. Insights and analysis came later.
- Stories are owned by storytellers. We wanted to ensure our insights and analysis reflected the communities respectfully and accurately.

## **PARTICIPATORY NARRATIVE INQUIRY**

We used elements from a process known as Participatory Narrative Inquiry to collect stories and have storytellers ascribe meaning to their stories. Participatory Narrative Inquiry (PNI) is a mixed-methods research and evaluation approach in which people share stories of personal experience and interpret them in order to make sense of complex situations.

Having storytellers tell us what their stories meant allowed them to be the ultimate knowledge holders and ensured that meaning was not lost through third-party analysis.

Here is how the PNI methodology was used in the impact measurement of the Empower Me program:

1. Participants selected a story prompt from a list shared by an R&R team member to respond to
  2. Participants told a short story relevant to the prompt. This was recorded on an audio device for transcription to ensure exact working is captured
  3. The R&R team member asked the participant a series of standardized questions designed to interpret their story
- \*Potential to send follow-up questions via online form

Once the stories were collected, the team summarized initial findings and shared them with the Kambo team in sensemaking sessions where we reflected and checked our understanding of the themes that emerged.

## IMPACT AREAS

Storytelling played a critical role in evaluating Empower Me’s impact. Through story-driven interviews with Champions, Mentors, and Community Partners, three key impact areas emerged: understanding energy efficiency and energy conservation, integration, and accessibility.

### 1. Understanding Energy Efficiency and Energy Conservation.

*“So far we organized three sessions from Empower Me. We do especially in wintertime-our clients come up with complaints that their energy bill rises a lot and they’re not sure how to reduce those bills. We organize Empower Me during those times because it helps clients know what instruments are available in the market.”*

– Empower Me Community Partner

One of the leading reasons newcomers struggle with high energy bills is a lack of understanding pertaining to how their home uses energy. Many newcomers are unfamiliar with the technologies inside their new homes, the energy systems and utilities they’re connected to, or how their behaviors impact energy consumption.

Examples are far-reaching. One family feared touching the thermostat because they thought they were ‘not allowed’ and were worried they would be in trouble with their landlord. Another habitually didn’t open their energy bills, not realizing they could reference past bills to track their energy usage. One Mentor reported that some Champions left windows open to cook during the winter not realizing their fan hood could offer a more efficient form of ventilation, while another relied on portable electric heating thinking it was a cheaper alternative.

Empower Me also recognizes that while Champions strive to save money, they are often interested in reducing their environmental footprints. Empower Me’s personalized advice helps Champions understand how improving their home’s energy efficiency results not only in lower energy bills, but also in safer homes and a healthier environment. After engaging with Empower

Me, Champions report feeling relieved, equipped, and confident to make changes in their homes and adopting behaviors that will improve energy efficiency.

*“After going to Empower Me my home is more comfortable and helped me save electricity in winter, and water.”*

– Empower Me Champion

## **UNDERSTANDING IMPACT MOMENTS**

Javier<sup>8</sup> and his family immigrated in 2014. As a Columbian family residing in a colder climate, the Sanchez’s are familiar with many of the common barriers faced by marginalized communities. To help Javier and his family navigate these barriers, an Empower Me Mentor spoke with Javier after a workshop. They learned about some of the challenges Javier faced in his home: some rooms were colder than others, he wasn’t sure how to program his thermostat, and hadn’t realized his utility offered programming to help him reduce his energy usage. The Mentor worked with Javier over the next few months to help him get an Energuide audit, program his thermostat, and access programming. Javier and his family were also provided with an Energy-Savings Kit, which improved the efficiency of their home’s doors, windows, insulation, and lighting. Javier expressed gratitude to the Mentor for not only introducing him to measures that resulted in cost-savings, but for helping him better understand how he could reduce his environmental footprint.

### **2. Accessibility**

*“It’s particularly helpful because the workshop was in my language, in Chinese, and it’s therefore very easy to follow to learn.”*

– Empower Me Champion

To offer more accessible programming, Empower Me trains members of diverse communities to deliver energy education as Mentors. Empower Me Mentors speak a total of 13 languages, allowing them to deliver education and informational workshops to non-English speakers, while respecting communities’ unique cultures. Hosting workshops in a Champion’s mother tongue provides participants with a sense of ease and comfort and makes complex information more accessible.

Financial accessibility is another key impact demonstrated by Empower Me. Empower Me workshops and services are free and often result in cost-savings on utility bills for participants adopting behavior changes or home upgrades. These cost-savings can help ease the burden of starting out in a new country.

Finally, making a program known to participants is integral to its accessibility. Through partnerships with settlement agencies, utilities, and its growing Mentor network, Empower Me engages communities requiring targeted support and energy education.

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<sup>8</sup> This participant’s name has been changed to protect their personal privacy.



*“My clients told me that all the info they provided was very new to them and they had no other way to get it. They even ask me for the contact number of the person that facilitated the workshops, and they can talk to the person who speaks the first language.”*

*– Empower Me Mentor*

## **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACT MOMENTS**

Mindy<sup>9</sup>, an elderly, lower income, Chinese participant with limited English, struggled to navigate the application processes required to participate in programming. Despite qualifying for low-income efficiency programming that could reduce her energy consumption and bills, Mindy’s experience as a second-language English speaker meant that everything from filling in forms to emailing different departments became a barrier. When Empower Me stepped in, Mindy was quickly paired with a Mandarin-speaking Mentor who was able to help her apply to programming provided by her utility. As a result, she was able to benefit from a new bathroom fan, furnace, and insulation, as well as new LED lightbulbs.

### **3. Integration**

*“In the three levels of government, there is always some support for citizens or residents here. But we feel isolated, especially culturally and language wise, not really able to get those supports that much.”* – Empower Me Champion

When newcomers arrive in a new country, they often encounter new barriers that range from linguistic hurdles to unfamiliar systems or ways of life. One of Empower Me’s impact areas is its ability to support newcomers as they build community and discover what services are available to them.

From providing information on how to benefit from programs and rebates to helping participants become familiar with their energy providers, Empower Me helps participants integrate into their new communities, while developing an increased sense of autonomy. For instance, as their time with Empower Me increased, Champions continually demonstrate increased awareness of the resources available to them, such as energy saving kits offered by their energy providers.

Empower Me hires well-known and trusted members of the community to ensure culturally appropriate contextualization and outreach to the community, these team members are known as Mentors. Mentors are members of the community and serve as approachable contacts who can offer guidance on energy and settlement-related needs. As a result, the program provides meaningful and lasting relationship-building opportunities, leaving newcomers with an increased sense of belonging. Finally, through a collaborative experience, Empower Me supports

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<sup>9</sup> This participant’s name has been changed to protect their personal privacy.

settlement agencies by providing educational opportunities for their clients. These partnerships result in additional, indirect impact by creating a positive ripple effect in the community.

*“After the workshop I learned many energy saving tips and noticed there’s a program called ECAP (Energy Conservation Assistance Program). Empower Me helped me do the application form and I got a lot done in my home.” – Empower Me Champion*

## **INTEGRATION IMPACT MOMENTS**

Amal<sup>10</sup> and her daughter recently received permanent residency in Canada after emigrating from Pakistan in 2019. As a single mother and female immigrant, Amal sought out the Immigrant Women’s Association (IWA) to help her transition more confidently into her new life. While struggling with high energy bills, Amal was invited to join an Empower Me workshop hosted in partnership with the IWA. During this workshop, she learned about services she’d previously been unaware of. Instead of waiting for struggling households to seek out its services, Empower Me works with existing settlement agencies to ensure newcomers are aware of its programming. After the workshop, Amal walked away with a deeper understanding of her utility, energy bills, and energy savings opportunities. She was able to implement her new knowledge immediately, resulting in beneficial cost-savings for her and her daughter.

## **Conclusion**

This impact assessment helped further illuminate the direct and indirect benefits Empower Me’s programs and services has to newcomers and marginalized communities. These benefits include integration for newcomers, more accessible programming, and educational opportunities that support participants in reducing their energy consumption.

Empower Me’s commitment to helping immigrant and newcomer communities better understand energy efficiency and conservation has resulted in participants gaining practical and transferable knowledge that, when applied, reduce energy consumption and bills. Based on interviews, there is clear evidence that participants are not only developing higher levels of confidence, but that their new knowledge encourages changes in behavior and uptake of home retrofit programming that lead to reduced energy bills, energy consumption, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Cultural and language accessibility was also repeatedly identified by Champions as one of Empower Me’s primary benefits. By tailoring program delivery to align with Champions’ languages and cultures, Empower Me helps foster a stronger sense of community, while simultaneously empowering Champions as they navigate common barriers.

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<sup>10</sup> This participant’s name has been changed to protect their personal privacy.

## **Appendix A: Participant Stories**

### **Champions**

#### **Champion 1 | “Easier than I thought”**

I got to know about this Empower Me program from another workshop or like an email group from an organization called SWIS - Settlement workers in school. They give information and advice and help too and you, any great parents to help their kids? And I was out there now, at least so. I learned about this in power mapper, one of the Empower Me Workshops. Uhm, so I signed myself up. And I think the motivation really is to see what I can do to save money as well as to save energy. 'cause I thought that I knew very little about energy saving and especially as in clinic. So it's just good to have a place to learn. And it turned out, yeah, that workshop was very informative and helpful. And also it's particularly helpful because it's the workshop was in my language, in Chinese and it's therefore it's very easy to follow to learn. (asked) Is there anything else behind, behind you wanting to save money on your bills? It's like if your bills are very high right now or it's much different from your home country of how energy is used? Yeah, that is pretty high. I come here to my home country and it doesn't matter if it's high or low, it's always good enough to save extra money to save more energy.

#### **Champion 2 | “Save more make more.”**

Helping the environment these days and saving energy and money is important to me. I wanted to increase my general knowledge. I learned a lot of new and relevant information.

#### **Champion 3 | “Give [Champion] back a warm and cozy home.”**

This program was referred to me by my friend. After the workshop I learned many energy saving tips and noticed there's a program called ECAP (Energy Conservation Assistance Program), Empower Me helped me do the application form and I got a lot done in my home. People who came to do my doors and windows - before there was cold air coming in, and I needed to use portable heating, which used lots of electricity. ECAP program helped me replace the bathroom fan because it wasn't working. I got a new one, which helped me have dry air. They helped me replace LED lights and bathroom shower head, and kitchen faucet and bathroom faucet to reduce water usage. They helped me upgrade insulation in the attic. After going to Empower Me my home is more comfortable and helped me save electricity in winter and water. My home is more cozy, comfortable and safe after joining Empower Me.

#### **Champion 4 | “Informative word talk”**

I did the program for a Mentor who was a long-time friend. I was influenced when she shared her initial thoughts and her point of view and what it was all about. I found it influential and I learned a lot throughout the process. We live in a society where we all use energy so it was really good to learn about this information.

#### **Champion 5 | “Sharing an experience.”**

I was just curious what Empower Me is because I haven't heard it before. So I was just trying to see what I could learn and then share it with my co-seniors. We have a seniors group.

Nicole has been to our meeting and demonstrated this Empower Me, they were a part of the Empower Me workshop.

## **Mentors**

### **Mentor 1 | “Building energy Champions”**

My first encounter with Empower Me was after I graduated I was looking for energy jobs in the community. I found it through a LinkedIn post and I was positively surprised to see that they were looking for Punjabi speaking person in my field. I have a master's in energy efficiency and management. I reached out and expressed my interest in the position and to learn more about the work they were doing. I looked in the internet and saw the excellent work they were doing with the community. I liked how the community gathered around this project. It was interesting to me to join this project to use my knowledge to serve the community in my mother tongue to show people how they can be more environmentally friendly by saving energy. I wanted to help people know the difference between here and their home country the climate differences and how the heating system and other things work here and how they can implement things that benefit them.

### **Mentor 2 | “A Huge Success”**

I can safely say that my work as an energy Mentor has an impact on my community, the [Champion’s cultural community]. I follow up to my participants, I follow up with my participants with a call and share open-ended questions such as: tell me, how else can I help? Or explain to me the things you have picked up during the presentations. So in that case the open-ended questions give lots of feedback, for example: When they cook they don't open the windows anymore, they turn on the fan in the kitchen instead. I have heard this from friends and associates from all over the lower mainland including Kelowna as well. I think the impact is right there that I can see that the good word is spread around and word of mouth is very effective.

Some success stories, of course, are all interwoven in this. For example, lowering the temperature at night, while before they were afraid to touch the thermostat because they think if they do the energy cost will go higher. After that series of presentations, they realize that going to bed of course is usually warmer because of the blanket, they can lower it down to 17 degrees Celsius,

And also when going out to school. Just listening to these things gives me real satisfaction that my work as an energy Mentor is giving an impact. And coming from a warm country really is different here, there are so many things to learn about.

Another thing that really stands out for me is really when they take a shower. In the Philippines they usually take showers for half an hour, because is such a warm country, even twice a day, so when they came to Canada after all these Empower Me presentations we really helped do something about it because here some Filipinos have to work harder with 2 jobs to stretch the budget so saving energy is so important to them. Also the bill the energy bills when they come they would usually pay the amount and throw away the bill after that, but when I reminded them that there is an opportunity for them to compare the past and the current bills they are now doing it and they are happy about the results.

I see changes in my Champions, they are making more changes. Speaking for them is easier because I give the workshops in [their language] so they can better understand everything.

Another change is about Installing the carbon monoxide detector in the alarm system. They are really afraid of Carbon Monoxide but I told them it is odorless, tasteless, and hard to detect. I told them It is a must to install it in strategic places in their homes to protect themselves. When I go to visit especially my relatives I can see physically they have these gadgets installed in their homes.

This is one funny thing because we have catastrophes and fires and earthquakes. My relatives and friends, now have a big bag close to the exit main door so during a catastrophe they are ready, they just grab the bag and go out. Inside there is a flashlight, a small transistor radio and the first aid kit. And this is fun because some kids also add small bags of potato chips just in case. I can tell they are ready, for any catastrophe.

This gives me more energy and makes me want to help even more the community, sharing all these things that can help them save energy and have a more comfortable life.

Why I chose to join Empower Me as a Mentor?

I am very particular about words. I liked the word empower so I decided to join because of that word because it means giving official authority or legal power to do something for the community. Also, teamwork, which means collaboration, combining efforts of individuals towards a certain goal so these 2 words made me join the program. It's like music to me, music with a variety of notes each of them has a role. That's how I think of Empower Me.

## **Community Partners**

### **Partner 1 | “Small things put together matters”**

Migrants who've just arrived need money to start off. With the Empower Me seminars they can save, it's really hard when you're an immigrant. I came from [my home country]. With those newly arrived, we can help them find jobs, saving money, to find any savings they can because they're new. For those old members living here, they take for granted the small things in the house. They didn't know by changing LED lights will save you money, or like putting in a thermostat, or changing your windows to avoid condensation. One thing that people learn is by doing the laundry in cold water, saves you energy. And also drying clothes outside during the summer, it will help you a lot. Small things when it put together, have an impact on your savings, especially now since gasoline is expensive. It really helps us, one of our program to include Empower Me especially those new members. It helps us doing things for our members through our Mentor.

### **Partner 2 | “My guideline to reduce my energy bill”**

So far we organized 3 sessions from Empower Me, we do especially in winter time, our clients come up with complaints that their energy bill rises a lot and they're not sure how to reduce those bills. We organize empower me during those times because it helps clients know what instruments are available in the market

### **Partner 3 | “Empower me program makes newcomers life better”**

Our church has been in Vancouver for over 25 years, we have immigrants from China, Asia, South Asia, also scholars who study in universities and research institutions, experience working in Canada and North America. They're still considered first generation. I've been here

[X] years by October, even me, I didn't know about this information. In the 3 levels of government, there is always some support for citizens or residents here. But we feel isolated, especially culturally and language wise, not really able to get those supports that much. We have experience with SUCCESS but they are so broad not just service wide but the people working there, its too big. So it wasn't too successful for us. We found out about Empower Me, one of the fellows introduced us, this is what we need. The church really thinks this is enhanced, right on those people's needs, especially in terms of saving power. Save energy water, electricity. The church tries to let people know this is part of community. That's one thing we can have, the information through Empower Me. To let people know this is real, we can do something, not just saving for government and country and environment, it's also saving for your own. Most of us are new to the country and society, we continually having newcomers come, they purchase house or rent a house, but they need to know those information. Usually in the church, people living here long enough and pass information and experiences, but every case is different. Through Empower Me they make it systematically people can understand. Plus they have... language instructors so it's easy to explain and understand the equipment. That's really powerful for our church people, who came here.

#### **Partner 4 | “Empower Me makes my home warm and energy efficient”**

I work as a settlement worker and my work is about helping newcomers to settle in Canada. I am a front-line worker so I meet with them and help them with anything they need. Several years ago Kylie came to promote the program and I didn't know about it. I have to do some workshops for newcomers but the topics can be very variable. I can choose what to bring in and from the discussion with Kylie, I thought this program would be a good fit. I was a newcomer too [X] years ago and I didn't know anything about energy use. Is an important need. The Empower Me team did a very good job and the feedback was very good. My clients told me that all the info they provided was very new to them and they had no other way to get it. People appreciate all the how to and the whys behind proper energy use. Very unique knowledge and new valuable info for newcomers.

I introduced the Empower Me program to the LINC program (English classes) and the LINC teacher implemented it in the curriculum. Now empower me in a regular guest workshop. We now have a long-term partnership with the Empower Me program. I continuously receive positive feedback from the LINC teacher.

#### **Partner 5 | “Enhancing home energy saving”**

We are a non-profit so we have limited capacity so it was very kind of the (Empower Me) to run the workshops. We have had all these webinars with them almost 3 or 4 times in 2 different locations, one of them in Chinese. For me, they did it in Hindi, Urdu, and English language.

I have been discussing with my clients was has been the impact and what they are doing after the workshop and they have been able to reduce and save some money on their bills they also mentioned some technical things for example how during winter they can put these things on their ceilings and they even asked me where they can get all those materials the program introduced to them and I told them they can get it from Canadian Tire or Home Depot so they were interested in using all those things they were advised during the workshops.

We are funded by IRCC so we have to have some workshops to help out the new clients because every year there is an influx of new people and we want them to have that knowledge of what's happening in Canada and how especially when they are owning their house for the first time how they can save money on the utilities. Empower Me has been really helping. I have even referred/recommended the program to other organizations especially because they have it in different languages that's the asset that Empower Me has.

The follow-up questions with the clients make me realize how they want to make use of the knowledge they are getting from all these workshops.

They even ask me for the contact number of the person that facilitated the workshops, in Hindi especially, and they can talk to the person who speaks the first language.

### **Partner 6 | “The easiest way to save money is to waste less energy - When the sun is bright say no to the bulb light “**

There were 2 people that came from Empower Me, the purpose was to conduct a workshop for our students in that workshop they discussed a few things first why to save energy? As energy you know is key and important for economic growth so energy conservation is an effort to reduce the consumption of energy. They discussed a few small changes we as human beings can do to save energy. First, they discussed changing the light in the living room then they showed them that we should use LED lights, we should try to unplug the devices, have less water usage, and keep the thermostat at a low temperature. They also discussed that they should use smart automated devices. The best part was that they gave them practical applications on how to reduce energy, for example, they discussed about double glass doors so instead of one we can have double glass to trap the heat and prevent or reduce energy. So this was an example of the basic small things we can do to reduce energy. So main goal was to manage the energy that we need to live.