

Managing Bear Attractants
Focus Group Study – Report 2007, Get Bear Smart Society



Managing Bear Attractants

FOCUS GROUP STUDY Report



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0.0 Executive Summary

Guidelines Research was commissioned to conduct two focus groups among residents in Whistler BC, with the goal of gathering information on the barriers and benefits associated with bear attractant management. The groups were held in Whistler on August 22, 2007 and consisted of nine participants each. The difference between the groups was behavioural, with participants in group A not always managing all bear attractants properly, and those in group B, managing all the attractants mentioned on the screener questionnaire in a “bear smart” manner.

The first area explored was the participants top of mind emotional response to a simplified picture portraying a black bear in a residential neighbourhood. The response varied by group. Members in group A focused on the bear and its physical state - hunger as well as the bears activities in seeking food in the neighbourhood. Many in this group also perceived the picture to represent a mother bear with cubs, even though a cub was not present in the picture. Group B was more inclined to perceive danger both for humans and also for the bear. They also listed many, top of mind words such as bear population management or attractant management, relating to actionable solutions.

In the second part, three selected bear smart activities were discussed in depth; household garbage, bird feeding and open doors and windows to the residence.

Participants in both groups had the most to say with regard to the household garbage management issue in Whistler. Over all, there are two main external barriers to proper management of household garbage: (1) – the lack of municipal garbage collection; and (2) - the long distance to garbage depots from some residential areas. In conjunction with these, the fact that some residents lack access to a vehicle to transport the garbage to the depots was also an issue. Of the internal barriers noted, the three most commonly mentioned were; lack of motivation, particularly by younger residents; conscious risk taking, especially by long time residents; and lack of knowledge among newcomers to the area.

Participants noted many benefits with respect to proper household garbage management. A cleaner community and healthier bears living more natural lives topped the list.

The second management issue discussed was open doors and windows. There was a fair amount of resistance to keeping doors and windows closed during the summer season as the warm season in Whistler is short, making air-conditioning not a feasible option, and that most want to enjoy the fresh mountain air and air out their homes.



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Again, conscious risk taking played a part, as everyone was aware that bears may enter through open doors, yet still admitted to taking the risk. Whistler is viewed as a safe community with no crime, and thus many participants tend to leave doors unlocked most of the time for people and pets to enter and exit freely.

Bird feeding was the third attractant management subject under discussion. Participants in group A were passionate about this topic, where those in group B had less to say. Group A, instead of considering giving up bird feeding, felt confident that they can manage the bird feeders so that they don't pose a problem. Group B in turn was against feeding birds, feeling that any type of interference with nature is not desirable and will disrupt the delicate balance of nature.

In the third part, a personification of a “bear smart” residents was created to explore the roles that this concept represents to the participants. Overall, a bear smart person was seen as someone who is responsible, smart, community oriented and environmentally conscious. Demographically, they were described to be in their 40's with a family, and an active, outdoorsy life style. They were pictured as happy and involved. Participants in both groups also described them as physically attractive and looking younger than their years. Being bear smart certainly represents a positive role model in the community, someone that many would like to identify with. However, a segment of society may see the image as not attainable and end up rejecting it.

In the last part, participants created two visions of the future. First, how they see the situation as evolving if nothing is changed, and secondly, how they would like to ideally see Whistler in 3-5 years.

The groups agreed that if nothing changes, the situation is going to get worse with more bears killed and humans being harmed. These events will cause a lot of negative publicity and become a source of public embarrassment, affecting the tourism industry and showing Whistler in a negative light in comparison with other BC communities who able to co-existence with bears successfully. Ideally, participants would like to see Whistler evolve to become a clean community with a fully educated population. Things that would help in this regard would be reminder signs for attractant management; warning signs on highways; an effective municipal garbage collection and/or more garbage depots and compactors; an education system that reaches the new and seasonal resident; and enforcement with which long-term residents comply. Ultimately the vision is a safe community where healthy bears live in harmony with the residents and more and more in their natural habitat in the mountains, with all the attractants effectively managed.



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1.0 Introduction

The Get Bear Smart Society (GBS) is based in Whistler B.C., and champions progressive bear management policies that reduce both the number of human-bear conflicts and the number of bears destroyed. These objectives are accomplished through education on dealing with bears in the communities and by promoting innovative non-lethal bear management practices. The main goal of the Society is to ultimately create a paradigm shift in people's attitudes toward bears and other wildlife, by replacing fear and ignorance with understanding and respect. Guidelines Research was commissioned by the Get Bear Smart Society to conduct two focus groups of Whistler area residents, exploring barriers and benefits associated with management of bear attractants in Whistler.

1.1 Research Problem and Objectives

The Get Bear Smart Society has noted that educational programs are effective in creating awareness, but are less effective in creating behavioural change. In order to be able to efficiently promote sustainable bear smart behaviour, it is important to have a good understanding of both the barriers and benefits that are presently either promoting or hindering desired change in the residents' behaviour.

The specific objectives of this research project were to answer the following questions;

- What are the benefits and barriers that residents experience leading towards more sustainable behaviour, specifically relating to three issues that attract bears: household garbage, feeding birds and leaving windows and doors open to the residence.
- Are there differences in what the benefits and barriers between those residents who are presently managing all or most bear attractants in a “bear smart” manner, and those residents who do not always manage all potential bear attractants effectively.



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1.2 Methodology

This focus group research is the first part of a two part research project that first explores in-depth the benefits and barriers associated with attractant management with two focus groups. The second part of the research process is to conduct a phone survey among Whistler residents, to determine which of these barriers and benefits are the most important ones influencing behavior and, to determine if the relative importance of barriers or benefits differ by attitudinal or demographic subgroup.

To explore the benefits and barriers, two focus groups were conducted in Whistler on the evening of Wednesday, August 22nd, 2007. Nine residents were present in both groups. The focus groups were audio-taped for reporting purposes and all participants received an honorarium fee or \$50 for their time.

1.3 Focus Group Participants

The participants of the focus groups were recruited by the Get Bear Smart Society, and represented a cross section of Whistler area permanent residents. They were screened for different bear attractant management behaviors, as well as their comfort levels with bears in the neighborhood and on their property. (Appendix 1. Screening Questionnaire).

Group A: Participants who do not manage all bear attractants listed in the screener questionnaire in a “Bear Smart” manner.

Group B: Participants who manage most or all bear attractants listed in the screener questionnaire in a “Bear Smart” manner.



2.0 Exploring the Top of Mind Emotional Response

Mind-mapping - Black Bear in Neighbourhood

The first task given to the groups was a mind mapping exercise, with three benefits. This exercise acts as an ice breaker for the groups, and leads the participants to thinking about situations with black bears in neighbourhoods. Secondly, it helps us to explore the participant's emotional response to the situation. As emotions form a base for attitudes, and attitudes drive behaviour, an understanding of emotions helps us understand behaviour and learn how to change behaviour. Thirdly, this exercise gives us an opportunity to generate a list of words and concepts that the target group associates with the situation, which is useful when designing further research, or when planning communications materials on the subject.

The participants were asked to spend five minutes writing down any words, sentences, feelings, ideas etc. that came to mind when they looked at the picture on the handout. After five minutes, the participants were invited to share the results with others. The time allowed is purposefully short, so that the participants do not have time to analyse or edit their responses analytically and therefore the most immediate reactions are recorded. Further, the lines on the handout are purposefully placed in a ray-like, non linear fashion to engage the more intuitive and emotional side of thinking and to counteract the tendency to "listing" or prioritizing responses.

(See Appendix 3: Handout 1.)



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Figure 1: MindMap-Group A

Mind Mapping – Results, Group A



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Figure 2: Mindmap-Group B

Mind Mapping – Results, Group B



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In group A, for many the words that came to mind were related to food, hunger, looking for food and smells or scents of food. Many also mentioned cubs, or a mother bear with cubs, even though no cubs were present in the picture. Some listed words relating to co-existence and co-habitation with bears, and words describing the house, a home or a neighbourhood. Furthermore, some associated the picture with nature, trees, bushes and berries. Also words such as danger or dangerous, having the bear at an unsafe distance to the house, a misunderstanding, unacceptable or a problem, were used referring mainly to a danger posed to humans. It seems that compared with group B, this group tended to more often see the situation “as is” i.e. a fact of life that humans need to learn to live with.

In group B the participants had a more pragmatic reaction to the image, listing words or sentences that had to do either with bear attractants or bear attractant or bear population management. This group was more about taking action. They also listed almost twice as many words associated with negative emotions such as fear, concern, danger, destroyed and sadness – but instead of referring to themselves, many were thinking about a danger for the bears. Participants in this group also associated the picture with a concept that was only mentioned once by a member in group A, the idea that humans in Whistler live in the bear’s habitat, encroaching on the bears, rather than bears entering the area of humans. Over all, they spoke less about the bear’s hunger, and more about improperly managed attractants that bring the bears into the area. Also, only one participant mentioned the word “cub”.

In summary, perhaps the participants in group B see the situation more as something that can be managed, and that they do have some power with regard to changing things through their own actions, while participants in group A, perhaps, feel more that the issue is about them adjusting, and learning to live with the given situation.



3.0 Bear Attractant Management – Barriers and Benefits

Three different bear attractants were chosen for closer examination. The participants in each group were asked to talk about both internal and external barriers and benefits associated with the tasks related to managing these attractants. The three chosen behaviours were: management of household garbage, keeping doors and windows to the residence closed during active bear season, and feeding birds.

The definition of an internal barrier or benefit is something that an individual experiences internally, for example gratification, discomfort or motivation. External barriers have to do with circumstances unrelated to the individuals inner state, and are dictated by external physical circumstances such as lack of transportation, or lack of storage space, financial benefits etc.

3.1 Garbage Management

The participants in both groups had a wealth of opinions relating to the issue of managing household garbage in Whistler. Below is a table summarizing the main barriers to effective garbage management.

Table 1: Garbage management - Barriers

Internal Barriers	External Barriers
Laziness/Lack of motivation	No municipal garbage collection
No ownership/responsibility	Garbage depot far away from residence
Lack of caring for bears/the environment	No access to vehicle for transportation
Immaturity (teenagers)	Poorly managed strata garbage bins
Lack of knowledge on how to live in bear country	
No understanding of the consequences (for bears)	
Busy life style → procrastination, order of prioritisation, poor organization skills	
Conscious risk taking	
Desensitizing	
Fatalistic thinking	
Lack of incentive	

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Of the internal barriers, the most important ones are lack of knowledge and lack of motivation. Some attributed poor garbage management to pure laziness or immaturity, especially when it comes to teenagers leaving garbage outside. Lack of concern or caring for the bears and the environment in general, and lack of ownership or responsibility were mentioned as well. Furthermore, there was an opinion that permanent, long term residents in Whistler are prone to fatalistic thinking and desensitising with the issue, holding attitudes such as “Bear break-in’s are a fact of life here”, and “Eventually everyone will experience one, it’s just a matter of time” or “Bears eating garbage are part of life in Whistler”. Some also assign blame to busy life-styles, procrastination and different priorities, other than managing garbage correctly, as well as poor organization skills. And finally, many agreed that residents take calculated risks, hoping to get away with their behaviour “one more time, as nothing has happened so far”. Lack of knowledge about how to live among bears is seen as a problem mainly affecting new and part-time residents, and the education is seen as a never ending task with a growing part-time population and a constant influx of new seasonal workers to the area.

Of the external barriers, the main ones are the lack of municipal garbage collection, together with too few garbage and recycling depots in the area. Many of the subdivisions have no facilities for recycling or garbage collection, making the distance from some neighbourhoods to the depot, a true barrier for effective garbage management, particularly for residents who don’t have a car. This makes the logistics of transporting garbage to the depot challenging to say the least, as buses or taxis do not transport garbage and transportation by foot or bicycle is seen as a fairly unrealistic option, particularly in the winter time. Some also find fault in poorly designed or poorly managed strata garbage collection facilities, that may be bear proof, but still emit garbage smells attracting bears into the area. In this case, the residents feel that they are at the mercy of the strata management team regarding the issue. Finally, lack of suitable storage space between trips to the depot is an issue for many, as it is still more economical to make the trip to the depot once or twice a week, rather than on daily basis.

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The participants find many benefits with proper management of household garbage.

Table 2: Garbage management - Benefits

Benefits - Internal	Benefits - External
Living in harmony with nature	Healthier bears
Community pride	Clean, trash free community
Sense of safety	Savings of money with recycling
Living in a special place co-existing with wild animals	Less bears in community
Feels good to do the right thing	More sustainable community
Wanting to do one's part in saving the planet	

The key internal benefits of proper garbage management are perceived to be the safety of the animals and humans, community pride, and doing one's part in protecting the environment. Of the external benefits, the main one is a clean community. Participants in group A see the benefit of a clean community, but participants in group B expand their thinking beyond, and also think about safety, and the feel-good aspect of doing one's part for the bears as well as the environment or the planet on a larger scale. Further, participants in group B believe that managing attractants (mainly garbage) correctly, will send the bears back onto the mountains in search of food, thus making the community both cleaner and safer, and the bears healthier with more of a natural diet and life in the wilderness.



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Group A:

“Laziness”

“Just being a slob, too lazy to clean up.”

“People dump the garbage and leave the door open.”

“I don’t think internal barriers apply, as anybody with common sense ...[would manage their garbage].”

“I have witnessed a lot of laziness in my neighbourhood, for example my neighbour will throw about 4 cubic yards of garbage under his back porch and the smell is an attractant, coming from the neighbours porch that is high up where bears can’t reach.”

“Selfishness and lack of knowledge”

“People just not knowing how the bears think. Bears are governed by their nose, their sense of smell, and people don’t know that.”

“Teenagers standing outside the 7/11 with nachos and cheese, throwing the garbage on the ground [instead of putting it in the garbage container] not giving a darn, just selfishness, and lack of knowledge.”

“That would be laziness in that case.”

“Every time a bear needs to be put down, publish a picture!”

“Lack of caring for humanity, and the environment.”

“Lack of knowledge.”

“Municipal mismanagement of the garbage issue.”

“Municipal responsibility, municipality doesn’t do anything there.”

“The inability of taking the garbage [to the depot].”

“Lack of consequences.”

“There should be signs, things in the paper that make people aware of what’s happening to the bears.”

“I work in the high-school and the teenagers drop the garbage all the time, just not taking the energy to walk to the garbage bin.”

“These kids have the information, they know it all, we have had them [presentations about bears] in here year after year, they know.”

“Your never done educating – due to transitory work force.”

“Our strata garbage – the bear can’t get in but they can smell it and it’s still attracting bears. As a strata dweller I wished I would not have to put my garbage there but I still have to, as I don’t have a choice.”



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“Lack of care”.

“Some people are not motivated.”

“There are no consequences.”

“If nobody is making you pick it up, why would you”.

“Some are immature.”

“Information has to be given to the people as soon as they walk “across the border” to Whistler”.

“There should be a truck driving around Whistler looking for trash.”

“Community pride”

“A cleaner community”.

“Bears would eat naturally, eating natural food and staying healthier”.

“We would have a trash free environment.”

“If everything is kept clean, bears just pass buy.”

“We would have this special place to live where we can live among these animals peacefully, sort of a magical place that is unique”.

“We would have less garbage with effective recycling – and the money saved could be used to educate people about bears”/

“Whistler needs more garbage bins - and more recycling centres.”

“We should be building houses with proper storage for garbage.”

“People can’t take garbage on the bus nor on a taxi, they are supposed to walk with it or bike – that’s not going to happen”.

“If they would show on channel 6 what they are actually doing to the bears in this town by not caring about your garbage, show the people what’s happening to the bear so that they realize what the consequences are”.

“I don’t think people realize what happens, oh – look at that nice bear walking trough the village, well that bear is going to be dead in two days”.

“If anything, if they hear bad news about Whistler they [tourists] might just bug off”.

“Also, there has been no control from day one, and they have allowed the landscape architects to plant berry bushes around every complex in Whistler, now the responsibility is pushed on all the owners of those properties, rip of all the berry bushes from around your property.”

“They should ban berry bearing bushes altogether.”



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Group B:

“Accessibility”

“We don’t have garbage pick up”

“Transportation issues”.

“They [residents] have to be the initiator of managing their garbage.”

“It is not feasible, especially in winter time, to take garbage walking or by bike”.

“House owners often store garbage in garages, it’s not just part time residents or seasonal workers, and they have a car and a home.”

“Laziness”.

“Poor organization.”

“Procrastination”

“No ownership”.

“People are not used to living in bear country – they are not making the connection that they contribute [to the problem] by leaving their garbage out.”

“We have to change people, like drinking and driving, or wearing seatbelts – you can change certain things.”

“New people are a problem, but lot’s of people who also live here with the attitude of “We have lived here for twenty years, I can leave the garbage in the garage, the bears just happened to jimmy my garage today”.

“People talking about incidents where the bear gets into the garbage and the tone is that all the bears eat garbage it’s not a big deal, it’s becoming an accepted fact – they don’t realize that a fed bear is a dead bear.”

“Some bears have even learned to open the bear smart garbage containers”.

“People are busy, with work, family, want to go biking, it’s not necessarily laziness but you think the garbage can wait another day.”

“It’s more efficient to take one big load of garbage once in a week than small loads once every two to three days.”

“It’s not just residents, business are effected too they might have bins and you can’t have garbage lying around there either.”

“Educate them when they first come in as they come in and they get super busy and the guys from Kitchener say just throw the garbage in the bag – leave it buy the bin we don’t have time.”

“If everyone took responsibility it would be different.”

“Educate already in the high school that we live in bear country, and every building we put up is encroaching on them. We came and they were already here. “



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“The bears have to gain weight, to give birth, that is why they need a lot of nutrition and calories.”

“[If garbage was properly managed] bears would leave the Whistler corridor and eat healthier food up on the mountains.”

“Take care of the garbage first, and then the fruit trees – bears would leave.”

“It feels good – as you know that you are managing the garbage properly.”

“I feel like doing my part of recycling to help the planet, not necessarily just for the bears.”

“Are the bears healthy, they look so sad; are they healthy with the food of garbage they get here?”

“The cost is a barrier to putting a garbage compactor to each subdivision.”

“Every subdivision should have a full on closed place for household garbage.”

“In Holland, they have garbage collection underground, and it’s completely sealed, and there is a whole system to get it out, it’s completely contained.”

“They also have the same infrastructure in Disney Land.”

“The first step would be to have it in the subdivisions. There are people who are willing to pay for garbage disposal.”



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3.2 Closing Doors and Windows

In this section, participants were asked to discuss why they leave the doors or windows to their residence open, potentially leaving the house accessible for a bear, and the barriers and benefits of keeping the doors and windows closed.

Table 3: Closing Doors and Windows - Barriers

Barriers - Internal	Barriers - External
Sense of safe community with no need to lock doors	Lack of ventilation in apartment
Belief that presence of humans in house deters bears from entering	No air-conditioning
Conscious risk taking-taking a chance	Smokers in residence-need ventilation
Want to enjoy fresh summer air as season to do so is short	Pets need to enter/exit freely
	Varying schedules of people who share accommodation – no keys used
	Depending on dog as “bear alarm”
	Lever door handles instead of round ones
	No spring on screen door

This topic did not bring about as many opinions as the issue of household garbage, but it was immediately clear that most prefer to be able to keep their windows and doors open, especially during the summer season. They also believe that while they are at home, their presence alone is enough of a deterrent to deter the bear from entering the home. Dog owners keep their door to the yard open, for their pet to exit and enter freely, and rely on their dog to alarm them if there is a bear in the vicinity of the house, or to chase the bear away from the yard. As the warm season in Whistler is only a few months long, houses in Whistler do not tend to have air-conditioning, and opening the doors and windows is the only means of ventilation. Whistler is also perceived as a safe, crime-free community, and many leave their doors unlocked. In fact, some living in shared accommodation mention that their door is never locked due to the varying schedules of roommates. Some offered as a solution to install round door knobs instead of lever door handles, especially in the ground floor suites, to make it more difficult for a bear to pry the door open. It was also mentioned that closing the screen door is perceived as being enough of a precautionary measure to keep the bear out of the house. As with the garbage issue, even residents with full knowledge and years of experience living in the area, choose at times knowingly to take a risk, and to leave the doors or windows open, to get some fresh air.

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Table 4: Closing Doors and Windows - Benefits

Benefits - Internal	Benefits - External
None	Bears not attracted by cooking smells

The participants could not come up with almost any benefits in keeping the doors and windows closed, especially during the warm season, except for the obvious of not attracting bears with smells of cooking. No-one in the groups mentioned this precaution as important in saving bears lives, but one story was told about someone who was trapped in their apartment with a bear and who sustained some injuries. The participants were quite adamant that it is not possible to keep the doors and windows closed at all times, especially during the short and precious summer season. After agreeing that the doors and windows cannot remain closed, participants embarked on looking for alternative solutions. Ideas ranged from changing the door handles, to stronger screen doors with springs, etc. Installing air conditioning was not seen as a viable (or attractive) option in Whistler as all enjoyed the fresh mountain air, an issue that is not typically seen as a barrier in the city, perhaps due to more polluted air.

Group A:

“I live with smokers – my doors are always open.”

“Half of my roommates have varying schedules and my door is never locked. My door has been locked perhaps three times in the past year because people are coming and going so much, and half of them probably don't know where the key is and the other half know it's always open.”

“If I want air I have to have to have a door open.”

“Also we have hot weather only two months of the year so there are no incentives to get air conditioners.”

“We have a dog and that is why the door is open (for the dog to go in and out) but that's not a problem as if the dog is outside it chases the bear away.”

“There are no benefits [for closing windows and doors].”

“Bear can't smell the dinner [if windows and doors closed].”

“What has brought the bears into that, that they are breaking into the houses now?”

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Group B:

“Hot weather”

“Yesterday, when the bear came to my house, was because I left my door open and I admit I left my door open intentionally, but because it’s a ground floor suite you leave it open so it gets some air, and it cools the house down. I have two cats so I had cat food at my entry way. I normally leave the door open when I’m at home and I don’t see it as a risk as I’m at home and I just assume that I’m there, and as long as I’m there nothing would happen, as yesterday when I was home – I didn’t realize until it [the bear] was in my kitchen.”

“I have two dogs, and one of them is always on the lookout, and my dog barks [if there is a bear] and I leave my doors open. I have my screen door open when I’m home, and when I leave I close the screen door.”

“As soon as we walk away we close everything, but when we are home we leave door open, we live in a condo.”

“We don’t live in a hot climate really, so when it’s warm we want to enjoy it.”

“We don’t have crime in the city either – so we have a false sense of security – yes, few people lock their doors here.”

“That is the level of comfort we all have.”

“Round door knobs, instead of the lever type – and springs on doors that close the outer doors would be a solution.”

“Perhaps something for the builders to consider.”

“I need more light and air [that is why I leave the door open].”

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3.3 Feeding Birds

The issue of bird feeding sparked a lively discussion, especially among participants in group A, who were pro feeding birds, where participants in group B were near unanimously of the opinion that bird feeding is not something we should do, and is no better than feeding any wildlife, and that the less humans interfere with nature, the better.

Table 5: Feeding Birds - Barriers

Barriers - Internal	Barriers - External
Love of birds	B&B said to want to attract bears as a commercial opportunity
Like to watch birds	
See feeding as helping birds	
Hummingbird feeders not seen as bear attractants	
Belief that bird feeders can be managed effectively – take away if bears in neighbourhood	
Part time residents don't see the bears attracted to bird feeders	
Lack of knowledge of bird feeding as bear attractant	

Relating to bird feeding, there are still opportunities for education and informing residents as many misconceptions still seem to prevail. Overall, many participants had not quite been aware that bird feeders alone can attract bears, and they said that they would not have believed this to be the case particularly in areas such as central Whistler. Of the feeders, hummingbird feeders were thought to be harmless by many, even by those who other wise were very “bear smart” in their behaviour. Seasoned residents and long-time bird feeders also held a belief that bird feeders per se do not necessarily attract bears, but if they are accessible, a bear passing by may take the opportunity and help themselves to a snack. Also, beyond the pure enjoyment of bird watching and love of birds, some believed that they truly help birds by feeding them, or else their migration may fail and or they may not “make it” through the season. A couple mentioned cultural differences from their background, where for example in England, bird feeding is seen as something “nice” to do.

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In group A, several participants were of the opinion that proper management of bird feeding will be enough to make this activity safe and not attractive to bears. With precautions such as timing the feeding to when bears are not present, not providing too much food in one feeding so that the birds can finish it, and watching the feeder while feeding, were mentioned as precautionary actions. However, these feeding management suggestions led to further debate about how part-time residents could manage these tasks. Some suggested that bird feeders should only be allowed to permanent residents, but this was not seen as a very realistic option by the rest of the group. In all, this group insisted on their right to enjoy watching birds and feeding them, and they were more interested in finding solutions to how to proceed in a more bear smart manner than giving up their hobby. Inventing new types of bird feeders was mentioned, and one participant suggested instructions or an information pamphlet to be distributed with every bird feeder sold, or even a permit for bird feeding with a duty to attend a short information session. The permit idea was generally voted as not feasible, as it would be hard to draw the line at bird feeders, without bringing up further issues of permits for barbeques etc. It also seemed that bird feeding drew more comments from the female participants, and some males did not have a lot to comment on this topic. As a final note, among participants in group A, it was also suggested that some B&B owners may leave bird feeders out intentionally, attracting bears for their guests to see.

Table 6: Feeding Birds - Benefits

Benefits - Internal	Benefits - External
	Bird population remains natural Birds are healthier eating their natural foods Birds (larger, such a black birds) don't get habituated with humans and do not attack for food

Group B was more vocal about the benefit of not feeding the birds, helping to maintain a natural bird population by not interfering. Having healthier birds that eat natural foods and not conditioning large black birds to associate humans with food. Some participants mentioned incidences where large birds had attacked children who were carrying crackers or other food in their hands. Overall, the stance in this group was a hands-off approach to nature.

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Group A:

“I’m not going to quit feeding my squirrels and my birds, I had one squirrel living near my place for 8 years, she had her babies there and so on, I mean if you see a bear, you don’t put your bird feeder out, until you don’t see a bear again”.

“I like birds – I love birds”

“Knowledge barrier, I had no idea that bird feeders attract bears, it’s not common knowledge.”

“I don’t think they attract bears, what I think personally from watching it, bear goes by, is regulated by it’s nose, if there is food there, he eats it, if there is no food there, he’s not going to come by (looking for food from the feeder).”

“This is an unusual year up in the mountains, bears don’t have enough food up on the mountains this year, so they come down to the village to look for food instead.”

“Many birds migrate through here, so if they don’t get food here they can’t keep going, you don’t want them to fail.”

“If it’s a b& b they may want the bear to come by so that the visitors can see the bears.”

“Sometimes at the winter time you have to be watching as the bears come in the middle of the winter too – due to the distractions in the seasons lately.”

“Maybe you need to have a one day training course and a permit to have a bird feeder?”

“Or perhaps just information with the feeder would be enough, when you buy it”

“Yes, proper instructions.”

“A bear proof design and include instructions [with the feeder].”

“But where do you stop – if you have to have a permit to have a bird feeder, next thing you need a permit to have a barbeque – where do you stop.”

“Certainly you need education - there is got to be away.”



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Group B:

“Why should you feed the birds if not the bears?”

“People don’t understand that what you are giving them is not that healthy, they find their own food – it’s the same thing as feeding any animal, a bird in the park or anything...”

“Humming birds are cool to feed, they are very cool but I don’t know if bears are interested in them...I was going to put out a humming bird feeder.”

“If people say they are going to put up a bird feeder in their back yard, people don’t think much about it, but if they say – we are putting up a small bag of garbage in the back yard to feed the bear, the reaction around here is “you did what!?” . With the birds, nobody would say that but essentially, it is the same thing.”

“In London, it’s seen as a nice thing to do to feed the birds.”

“Feeding birds is even dangerous. When you get big black birds come down and get your child’s crackers, so it’s not funny. There are different things... they just dive on you.”

“I agree, those big black birds will kill some one some day, when they come down at you.”

“We have never had any issue what ever with the humming bird feeders.”

“Seeds are probably the worst, as the birds pick at them and they fall down and that is what attracts the bears.”



4.0 Personality of Bear Smart People – Roles and Norms

Here the participants were provided with a handout containing a picture of a stick figure, and were asked to draw a “Bear Smart” person, complete with a description of demographics, life-style, etc. The goal of the exercise was to see how participants personify being “Bear Smart”, and if they perceive “Bear Smart” to be a role they can or would like to identify with.
(See Appendix 4. Handout 2).

Roles can be defined as patterns of behaviour expected of individuals within a given social context. Norms are the guidelines a society share regarding appropriate behaviour. (Source: Consumer Behaviour- Hanna & Wozniak)

It is useful to establish how participants see a “bear smart” person, when attempting to understand and ultimately influence behaviour as people typically model their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours by groups they affiliate with. These social reference groups play an important role in shaping decisions and behaviour. Also people typically conform to group norms that provide them with believable information and offer a set of values to identify with.

When planning communications and education materials, it is of value to understand if the role of a “bear smart “ person is one that people would readily identify with and accept. In our case, it appears that the personality that emerged is ideal, in fact, perhaps even slightly unattainable in some participant’s minds.

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Figure 3: Psycho drawing- Mr. BearSmart
“Barry”

Demographics:

In his 40's
Has a child or children
Owns a pet (dog)
Income \$60,000+

Activities:

Mountain biking
Fishing
Hiking
Skiing

Values:

Respects nature
Environmentally conscious
Involved in the community

Appearance/Clothing/Accessories:

Young/youthful
Happy
Hiking boots
Shorts
T-shirt (with text I Love Bears)
Cotton grocery bag
Drives a Honda
Mountain bike
Bike Helmet

Personality, Life –style:

Smart
Community oriented
“Good person”
“Knowledgeable person”
Composts and recycles
Does not litter
Bikes to work



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**Figure 4: Psycho drawing – Ms. BearSmart
“Lucy”**

Demographics:

Mother
1.5 children
In her 40's

Or

Single
In her 20's

Activities:

Educates her children
Picnics in the mountains
Hiking

Values:

Active in the community

Appearance/Clothing/Accessories

Looks young
Happy
Fabulous looking
Hiking boots
A cotton dress
Cotton shopping bag
Pepper spray
Bear bell

Personality & Life-style:

Recycles
Takes garbage to the depot
Sings while hiking (to deter bears)
Is aware and alert “looks and listens”



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The role projected in the drawings is a very positive one, and extends beyond the issue of protecting bears to a person who is very involved in the community and concerned about the environment in general. This person seems like a model citizen when it comes to the environment. He or she is seen educating his/her children about the environment (and bears) and being an active achiever, doing everything he/she can to behave responsibly in every aspect, while maintaining an active life style full of outdoor and back-country activities. The physical qualities are seen as outstanding as well, with an image portrayed of a fit and youthful, yet mature person.

This person is most definitely a positive role model in the community, confirming beyond expectations with norms relating to environmental responsibility, and perhaps taking the role of an opinion leader in the community. They are perceived as educated and smart, and as “good people” in general, having a lot of energy and youthfulness as well. This person is easy to identify or aspire to or identify with, modeling desirable behaviour, yet for a sub-segment of the society, this image may seem a bit challenging to measure up against, and therefore could be, at least partially rejected.

5.0 Imagine – Future Outlook

As a closing exercise, the participants were asked to picture two scenarios of the future in Whistler, within the next 3 to 5 years. The first scenario was to imagine how things will be if we continue on without any changes to the whole situation with bears in Whistler. The second scenario is a picture of the ideal, best possible outcome within 3 to 5 years, if anything could be possible.

Due to time constraints, group B discussed both the first scenario of continuing as is, and the ideal future while group A focused only on imagining an ideal future.

Scenario 1 – Where do we end up if we continue as we are now?

Group B was of the opinion, that if some changes are not made, the results are going to be somewhat disastrous, with many bears eventually ending up being killed, and ultimately some people getting hurt. They also perceive Whistler becoming an embarrassment among BC communities, who manage the bear situations more successfully.

Group B:

“If nothing changes, one day somebody is going to get hurt.”

“Community shame”

“More bears are going to be killed, and it will lead to a public outrage.”

“Lot’s of news stories.”

“Things get worse before they get better.”

“Unfavourable comparison to other BC communities [who have succeeded better in solving these issues].”

“More bears are going to die.”

“Bear are becoming increasingly ill (due to an unhealthy diet).”

“The problem with signs – people either stay in the area of the sign to try to see the bear, or they get scare and want to leave the town.”

“Whistler becomes and embarrassment among communities, as other communities in BC are managing these issues very well in comparison”.

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Scenario 2 – What would be the ideal outcome if changes are made?

Ideally the participants would like to see a lot of signage in the community reminding people about recycling, garbage management, traffic issues with bears etc. They also would like to have more information available from a variety of sources including hostels, realtors, landlords and even public transit, in addition to the existing info available from information centres and employers. Some suggested “bear classes” in the community and many, especially in group A, suggested profiling bears, and bear killings on the new local TV station and in local papers. Group A members also were pro stricter consequences for not managing garbage and other attractants properly. Group B in turn envisions a safer community overall, with bears living in the mountains where they would live more happily, safely and have more healthy lives. Meanwhile, humans could hike and live in their communities without a concern for bears entering their houses or bear encounters on the trails etc.

Once again, the groups differed in that group A views the situation as given, and looks for solutions to adapt their behaviour and the physical environment to a co-existence with bears. Whereas participants in group B picture opportunities for change, where attractants are fully managed and bears inhabited wild areas instead of descending into the neighbourhoods in search of food.

Group A:

“There would be more recycling, and bins in more places, with an easy access to bins – at close proximity to each subdivision.”

“More bins, more bear safe bins.”

“Signage everywhere, making everyone aware that you are in bear country.”

“Clear markings of bear routes.”

“Information available in information centres.”

“Bear classes given in the community.”

“Information would be communicated to new comers.”

“Information in local papers.”

“Information on the new Shaw community channel, as lots of people watch it”

“There would be consequences of misconduct – starting with a warning, perhaps something similar to the “Garbage Nazi’s” like in Japan, who check on proper garbage management and recycling and call on residents in person who do not manage their household garbage properly.”

“Consequences like in London, where if you did not clean your jars etc. they wouldn’t take it and you had all the garbage for another full week.”

“More awareness of bear altitudes, where they naturally move about”.

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Group B:

“No need for bear bells when hiking”

“There would be a trash compactor in each community.”

“Lot’s of signs, reminders, symbols, perhaps also messages on buses.”

“Social citizenship.”

“Ideally, bears would be in the back country – and we would only see them in the mountains.”

“You wouldn’t have to worry about them here, or when hiking, not having to bring bear bells etc.”

“We would have a fully educated population in Whistler.”

“Tickets don’t change behaviour, sometimes they can worsen it.”

“No conflict, feel better, allowing the bears to co-exist”

“Less dead bears”

“Healthy bears”

“Less bears in whistler”

“Solution – they (the bears) leave on their own”

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6.0 Other findings

The participants in both groups also brainstormed on possible solutions, with a focus on three main areas: Education, enforcement and garbage management. Participants in group A were mainly generating ideas on how to get the information through to residents and especially to newcomers. Participants in group B were talking about several issues, including enforcement and potentially using incentives for garbage handling and recycling to get the residents to comply. There was also talk about a possible existence of a media filter on Whistler where negative news (bear incidences, killing of bears) are perhaps purposefully not publicised as they are seen as harmful for the reputation of the area, and therefore the tourism business. The challenge of continuous education of a transitory workforce/seasonal residence base was also an issue discussed. Furthermore, builders and especially landscape architects were criticised on not understanding the requirements of the area, and having berry bushes and fruit trees planned around new development, leaving the problems for the owners to solve. Some thoughts were aired around possible amendments into the building code regarding requirements for garbage compactors and secure storage areas

Group A:

“I’m from Banff and we have black bears and grizzly bears and we don’t have a quarter of the problems you guys have, and one of the problems I noticed right off the bat was that people couldn’t dispose of their garbage. We in Banff have bear proof bins and the recycle truck pulls up once a week and takes care of all that and there is no problem with the garbage – it’s very rare that there’s a problem. One thing is that it’s a national park.”

“When we moved here (from Australia) we had no knowledge, we had no idea, only getting information from the people we live with, including information on where we get buss passes etc. No information from the landlord. Landlords and realtors should give out information to newcomers.”

“Lot’s of these things are not common knowledge, if you are not from bear country you have no idea, some think that because I put the garbage in the car it’s all right – it’s not an option.”

“Information should be available at employment centres, and through employers, I never got a survival guide when I showed up – it would have been useful.”

“It would be an idea to have a place for the short term residents here where you can go and learn, somewhere specific where you can go and learn more – register as a short term resident and be required to go over this information.”

“The information centre is a good first point of contact, there should be a specific section where newcomers are pointed towards.”

“They know you are new as you are wondering about – then have a section of information on bears and garbage.”

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“The hostels are a good first point of contact – let the tourists know and the new people know there, as they enter, as nearly everyone who comes to work in Whistler, first stays a few nights at least at the hostels.”

“Part time residents and seasonal workers should be made aware of their impact, their size of the population”

“Impact of temporary residents should be made known to the temporary residents”

Group B:

“If you had a built in compactor in the house – and then you wouldn’t have to take it out so often – it really works it and it just compacts it to a small block – it would reduce the need to take out garbage in a huge way.”

“There should be recycle fees, and enforcement – to turn garbage management into a habit where you don’t think about it anymore, it’s just habit now like seat belts.”

“We are all kids and we all need guidance.”

“Fines are not necessarily the solution as they don’t pay them, and then they no longer do it there... say someone got fined \$200 for improper garbage disposal at a bus stop, as they don’t have the storage and the means of transporting it to the depot – now they are not going to necessarily take it to the depot now, nor to the bus stop, now they are going to toss it to a bush somewhere so it’s not going to solve the initial issue.”

“Educate the individual and try to find a solution that works for everybody.”

“We need information on
Bear paths
Altitudes
Crossings”

“More signage everywhere”

“Start on the little children and educate them.”

“In most cases, if you issue an individual a fine or write them a ticket you create more of a conflict and they are not willing to work with you anymore, they are more thinking of ways, how can I work around these issues rather than work with them, and they will not pay the fine anyway.”

“Why don’t we recycle and get paid – maybe something similar here for garbage, maybe when you contribute – maybe for the hundredth time you may get a \$1000.”

“Yes, people would be stealing your garbage (laughter).”

“One thing is that teens don’t see the consequences, people getting attacked by bears, bears being killed.”

“Enforcement still seems lacking; you still see household garbage at bus stops.”

7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research

Below is a collection of ideas that could be further researched among part- and full-time residents in Whistler.

According to the participants in the focus groups, the main external barrier to garbage management and an issue they expect the municipality to step in helping to solve, is either arranging for garbage collection for household garbage or creating more garbage and recycling depots, perhaps one in each subdivision. Since one of the obstacles is lack of access to a vehicle, it would be of interest to narrow down how large a segment of the population is a) lacking access to a vehicle and b) living far from the garbage depots. It could also be explored, how much of a factor lack of motivation is, to see the size of the problem more clearly.

The special situation in Whistler, with such a large proportion of part-time residents and seasonal workers, creates a need for a continuous education approach that reaches every newcomer effectively. How aware are these residents; how large of a proportion of the population they are; and how big is the impact of their behaviour, could be further explored in order to set a bench mark and to raise this awareness. Also, what are the most effective educational methods that reach these target groups?

Thirdly, the attitudes of some long-term and permanent residents need to be explored. Why some tend to engage in behaviour of conscious risk taking, posing a danger not only to themselves but also to other residents, bears and property. What are the underlying reasons for such behaviour and how it can be effectively addressed through education, enforcement etc. A desk top study to other risk taking behaviour and successful approaches in changing this behaviour may be of comparable interest. (Seatbelts, speeding, smoking, wearing life vests etc.)

The image of a “bear smart” person can function as a role model to a proportion of residents, but it could also be further expanded to also include segments such as the elderly residents, young people/teenagers, and those with less outdoorsy , active life styles.

Furthermore, there are other solutions that would have to be addressed by the municipal and provincial governments, such as amendments to building codes, rules for landscaping, more reminder and warning signs and even perhaps rules regarding take-out food (for example not allowed after 11pm due to littering). As well, the media could be engaged with more coverage of bear fatalities, and by creating adopt-a-bear programs for high schools to involve teenagers.

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Appendix 1
GBS Focus Group - Screener Questions

Here are the screening questions. Please answer them as honestly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. We're hoping to learn from you.

- Do you live in Whistler? If so, in what area?
- Where do you keep your garbage prior to disposal?
- Where do you dispose of your garbage?
- How often do you dispose of it?
- Do you have a bird feeder in your yard?
- If not, was it removed (or not put up) because of bears? Or are you not interested in feeding birds?
- Do you compost outdoors?
- Do you store a bbq outdoors? Is it accessible to bears?
- Do you feed pets outdoors?
- Do you have fruit trees or berry bushes on your property? If so, do you remove the fruit? When?
- When do you start to get concerned: (mark an 'X' beside the answer)
 - If a bear has been sighted in your neighbourhood?
 - If a bear is at your neighbour's property?
 - If a bear is on your property?
 - If a bear is on your porch?
 - If a bear is looking in your window?
 - If a bear a bear is inside your house?
- Is your concern for: (mark an 'X' beside the answer)
 - Your safety?
 - Your children's safety?
 - Your pet's safety?
 - Property damage?
 - Bear?
- Do you have open windows at times?
- Are your doors always closed? Locked?

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Appendix 2

Bears07 – Discussion Guide – August 22, 2007 – Guidelines

Introduction (5 minutes)

Greeting

Purpose

To identify barriers and benefits of behaviour regarding managing attractants with bears in mind

Definition – bear smart

- As a verb – “they did bear smart the yard”
- As an adverb “bear smart behaviour”
- A state of being “are you bear smart?”

To minimize conflict between humans and bears relating to human safety, property damage and to protect bears lives.

Ground Rules

- Role of moderator
- Recording equipment
- Confidentiality of comments/responses
- Individual opinions (no right or wrong)
- Speak one at a time, and (due to recording) as clearly as possible

Short Introductions (10 minutes)

- Icebreaker
- In pairs

Mindmapping (15 minutes) - Emotions

- To engage top of mind emotions
- Listing Words and sentences expressing
- thoughts, emotions, feelings and impressions
- 4 minutes (timing)
- Handout – participants speak briefly to their results

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Activities (40 minutes) – Barriers and Benefits

To explore in depth benefits and barriers for 3 bear smart behaviours

- 1- Garbage management
 - What would stop you from managing the garbage so that the bears are not attracted to it?
 - What benefits do you perceive in managing the garbage?

- 2- Closing and locking doors and windows?
 - What would stop you from keeping accessible doors and windows closed and locked to prevent an unwanted visit from a bear?
 - What benefits do you perceive in keeping accessible doors and windows closed and locked to prevent an unwanted visit from a bear?

- 3- Feeding birds
 - What would stop you from managing...?
 - What benefits do you perceive in managing...?

Psycho-drawing (10 minutes) – Roles for Norms

- To express the connection between the emotions and behaviours
- Draw in pairs
- Facilitation of results

Conclusions - Imagine (10 minutes) – 3 year Outlook

How do you see the situation developing in the future if we keep going as we are now?

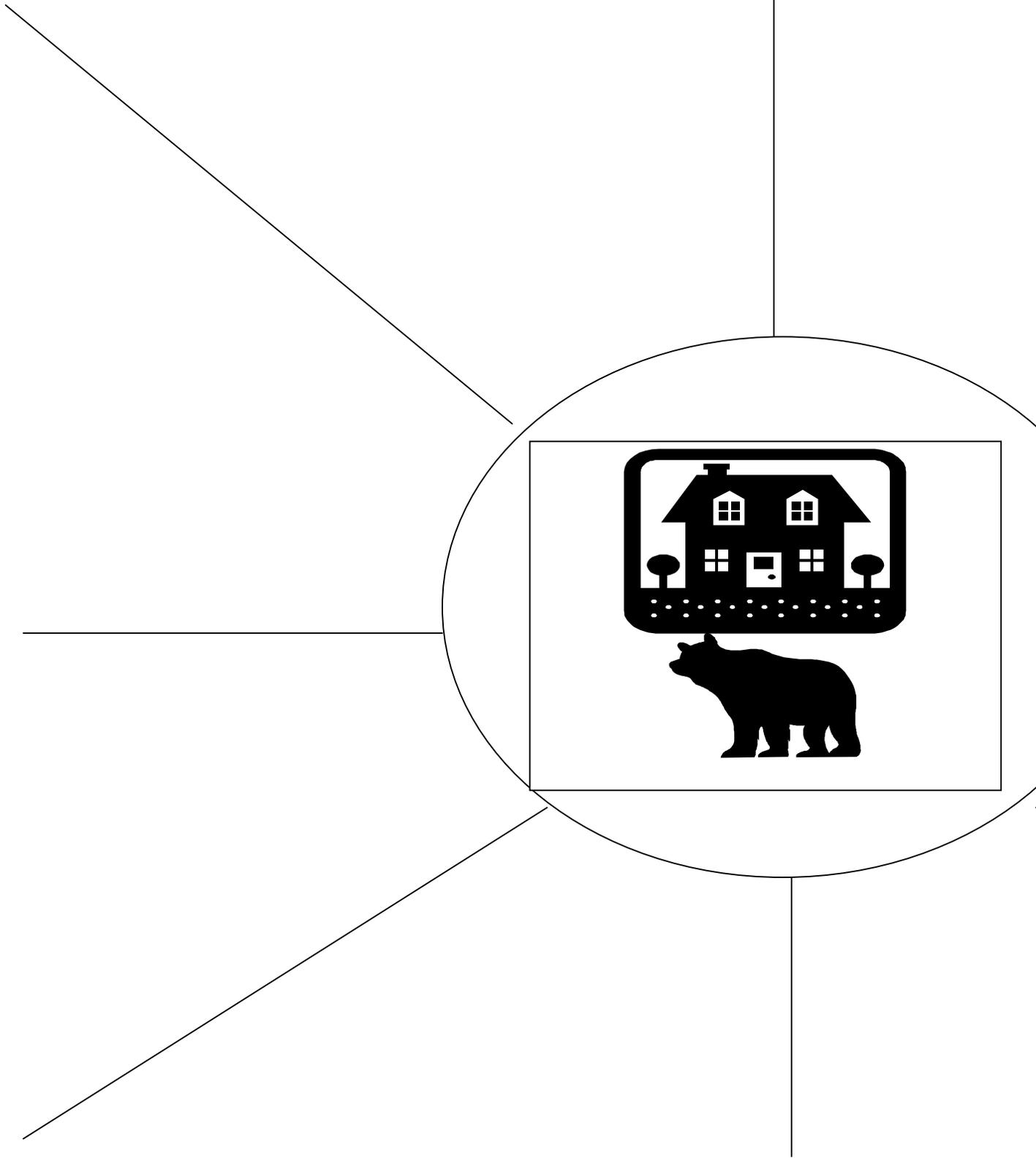
What could be done to make it better?

- Appreciative inquiry
- Discussion with moderator facilitating

(Note: keep eye on time spent)

Thank you
Incentives

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Appendix 4

MR/MS BEAR SMART

