

**EMERGENCY SERVICES****OVERVIEW**

Provision of Emergency Services to First Nations continues to be an ongoing issue. First Nations are affected by emergency events to a greater extent due to their remoteness, lack of critical security infrastructure, resources and capacity. There is a substantial disparity between First Nations and Canadian communities of similar size and circumstance under the four pillars of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. This disparity is further enhanced by the lack of inclusion and engagement of First Nations in the development and signing of the Emergency Service Agreements currently being negotiated between Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and the provinces.

Severe weather events from climate change will compound these issues and they will continue to impact First Nations in the future. ISC's Emergency Management Assistance Program works with provincial and territorial governments and non-government organizations to support First Nations and ensure they have access to comparable emergency assistance services available to other residents in their respective jurisdiction. First Nations and organizations are able to access this funding for non-structural mitigation projects through this program.

Resolution 03/2015, *First Nations Involvement in Emergency Preparedness*, called on the Government to include First Nations in the development of agreements related to mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery planning as well as continue to ensure ISC and provincial partners work collaboratively with First Nations leaders. First Nations organizations are more

involved, which has been a change in how the Government is now negotiating these Service Agreements.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) continues to be involved in Public Safety Canada (PS) discussions with Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) Ministers Responsible for Emergencies. A dedicated meeting with the AFN, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), Métis National Council (MNC), Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), and Congress of Aboriginal People (CAP), was convened in St. John's, Newfoundland, on May 25, 2017. The purpose of the meeting was to identify priorities, gaps and challenges.

On October 29, 2018, PS, on behalf of the Government of Canada, welcomed First Nations representatives for the Sixth National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Vancouver, British Columbia. The theme for this year's platform was Advancing and Empowering Disaster Risk Reduction in Canada. A key element of the National Platform was an Indigenous Workshop led by the AFN, which gathered concerns around Disaster Risk Reduction from the participating First Nations. These concerns were then reported back in a plenary session, leading to a comprehensive discussion.

PS has been mandated by the Prime Minister to: "work with provinces and territories, Indigenous Peoples, and municipalities to develop a comprehensive action plan that allows Canada to better predict, prepare for, and respond to weather-related emergencies and natural disasters".

ISSUE UPDATE

March 2019

In response, PS and Senior Officials Responsible for Emergency Management (SOREM) are developing an emergency management strategy for Canada to advance a whole-of-society approach to strengthen emergency management in Canada.

The emergency management strategy will be framed around the following strategic objectives:

- Enhance whole-of-society collaboration and governance to strengthen resilience.
- Improve the understanding of disaster risks in all sectors of society.
- Increase focus on whole-of-society disaster prevention and mitigation activities.
- Enhance disaster response capacity and coordination and foster the development of new capabilities.

- Strengthen recovery efforts by building back better to minimize the impacts of future disasters.

AFN staff attended the FPT Ministers meeting in Edmonton, Alberta on January 24, 2019. At the meeting, Ministers and the AFN, ITK, MNC, NWAC, and CAP, discussed cooperative and collaborative efforts on two major agenda items: moving the National Emergency Management Strategy forward, while recognizing the priorities of their organizations and representative populations; and the update and review of the Inventory of Emergency Management Capabilities in Indigenous Communities. The final version of the data Collection Instrument will be shared with Inventory participants, and will be used for engagements with new contributors during the national roll out.

UPDATE

PS is planning national engagements with First Nations to seek input and provide information on three key emergency management initiatives—the emergency management strategy for Canada, the Public Safety Broadband Network, and Search and Rescue governance. The AFN is awaiting final authorities from PS to begin facilitating these engagements. The first workshop is tentatively planned for March 2019, with the subsequent workshops to be organized over the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

PS and the AFN have completed the Inventory of Indigenous Emergency Management Capabilities Project, as well as the piloting phase, and will be engaging potential First Nations participants in additional data collection in the coming months.

On January 21, 2019, AFN officials met with Minister Marc Garneau of Transport Canada, and the Ministers Responsible for Transport and Highway Safety.

At this meeting, AFN officials discussed with Minister Garneau, and the other Ministers, their concerns for the health, safety, and security of its

representative First Nations in the area of modal transportation, the transportation of dangerous commodities in, on, or near First Nations territories, and issues surrounding funding, capacity, and training.

An exchange of letters further outlining these concerns will be drafted for the Transport Canada Minister, with a follow up meeting to be confirmed for 2019-20.

In a follow up to the November 2017 National Roundtable on Flood Risk, the advisory committee on flood risk, of which the AFN is a sitting member, will again be meeting in the coming months as the flood season approaches. There will be discussions on moving forward on flood risk, access and distribution of flood maps, public awareness of risk, and the financial management of flood risk.

As of Friday, January 18, 2019, there is currently a total of 2,513 flooding evacuees, 74 wildfire evacuees, 17 essential service malfunction evacuees, 23 landslide evacuees, , and 2,627 total long term evacuees.

NEXT STEPS

- As directed by 2015 AGA Resolution 3/2015, *First Nations Involvement in Emergency Preparedness*, and 2017 AGA Resolutions 06/2017, *Support for British Columbia First Nations Affected by Wildfire Crisis*, and 46/2017, *Support for First Nations Emergency Services Society of British Columbia*, the AFN will support First Nations organizations and communities in the development of their emergency management regimes and for First Nations managed and driven mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities.
- The AFN will continue to follow up on direction from Resolution 03/2015, *First Nations Involvement in Emergency Preparedness*.
- The AFN will continue to work with PS to lead the national engagement with First Nations on Canada's National Emergency Strategy, Broad Band Initiative, and Search and Rescue.
- The initial First Nations pilot projects to test the methodology and data collection have been completed. Initially, four First Nations were proposed for community piloting, and in the completion of the Inventory and piloting phase of the project, this number has increased to 63 First Nations.
- The Data Collection Tool is now finalized and will be distributed to the inventory project participants.
- The AFN is also collaborating with PS to organize and plan the second annual AFN National Emergency Management Forum scheduled for May 2019 pending approval for funding support.

