



EMERGENCY SERVICES

OVERVIEW

The provision of Emergency Services to First Nations continues to be an ongoing issue. First Nations are affected by emergency events at 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 for the provision of emergency services.

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 (PSC) 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 Peoples (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, PSC, 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 the 2018 platform was Advancing and Empowering Disaster Risk Reduction in Canada. The key element for the National

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Platform was the Indigenous Workshop led by the AFN, that gathered concerns around Disaster Risk Reduction from the participating First Nations. These concerns were then reported back in a plenary session and lead to a comprehensive discussion.

PSC 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”.

In response, PSC 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.

UPDATE

PSC 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.

PSC and the AFN have completed the Inventory of Indigenous Emergency Management Capabilities Project piloting phase, and have been engaging First Nations participants not involved in the piloting phase for additional data collection since June 2019

- 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 this 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.

and will wrap up the national engagements in December 2019.

A severe and early winter storm hit Manitoba on Thursday October 10, 2019 and lasted till Saturday October 12, 2019. The winter storm brought up to 50cms of snow and knocked out power lines throughout the province and affected a total of 6,181 evacuees from 20 First Nations. Manitoba Regional Chief Kevin Hart and the Interlake Reserves Tribal Council are cooperating and collaborating in daily update calls with the Canadian Red Cross and

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the Indigenous Services Canada Regional Office.

The Interlake Reserves Tribal Council is cooperating with the Canadian Red Cross in administering emergency social services to the evacuees.

The AFN attended the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island's Health Emergency and Emergency Management Gathering in Moncton, New Brunswick from October 8-10, 2019. This gathering featured a look at healthy built environments, environmental impacts, emergency management and mitigation, housing issues, Canadian Red Cross services before, during, and after an emergency event, Search and Rescue with the Canadian Coast Guard, health emergency planning, hurricane impacts and the Inventory of Emergency Management Capabilities in Indigenous Communities with Public Safety Canada and the AFN.

The AFN has filled the roster for the Chiefs Committee on Emergency Management to eight out of ten regions and is awaiting the last two regions to submit their selections and appointments and held its inaugural committee meeting at the Le Germain Hotel in Ottawa on October 16-17, 2019.

The Chiefs Committee meeting was very successful and representation from Chiefs or technicians from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Yukon Territory.

Manitoba Regional Chief Kevin Hart called and provided an update on the imminent winter storm affecting the region of Manitoba. Natural Resources Canada, First Nations Inuit Health, and the Canadian Red Cross also

attended and presented to the Chiefs Committee.

AFN is cooperating and collaborating with Public Safety Canada in the National Search and Rescue Advisory Council (NSARAC), and has participated in the SARscene C2C Search and Rescue Conference in Rock Mountain House, Alberta on September 12-15, 2019. This conference featured presentations for awareness and education in Search and Rescue/Recovery (SAR). The AFN attended this conference to assess potential First Nations involvement in Search and Rescue/Recovery: National SAR Plan and Catastrophic Response, Disaster and SAR Response, SAR for Autism, Reality for SAR in Disaster Response, Tracking, K9 Disaster Response, Decision for Command and Control, SAR Leadership, Operational Risk Management, Integrating First Nations Culture with SAR, Interoperability between Emergency Management and SAR, AdventureSmart, and After the Disaster.

The AFN has partnered with Natural Resources Canada's Dr. Amy Christianson to develop a list of First Nations participants at the 2019 Wildland Fire Canada's Ottawa Conference held on November 18-21, 2019. ISC has agreed to fund this initiative to bring First Nations to the conference to network, share and gather information, and raise their awareness and education in fighting wildland fire.

As of Friday October 18, 2019 there are 1,082 flooding evacuees with a total of 1,431 returned home; 67 wildfire evacuees with 7 returned home; 23 landslide evacuees, and 1,637 total long term evacuees with 990 returned home.

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 work with the Chiefs Committee on Emergency Management in continue its work mandated by Resolution 03/2015, *First Nations Involvement in Emergency Preparedness*.
 - The AFN will continue to work with PSC to lead the national engagement with First Nations on Canada's National Emergency Strategy, Broad Band Initiative, and Search and Rescue.
 - The Final Data Collection Tool/questionnaire will be distributed to the inventory project participants through national engagements and partnerships with tribal councils, technical groups, and communities, and nearing its completion in December 2019, Public Safety will initiate the creation of a final report to present to the senior ministers responsible for emergency management in March 2020.
 - The AFN is also collaborating with PSC to potentially host the second annual AFN National Emergency Management Forum in February 2020.
- Note:** This forum is scheduled but is awaiting funding support confirmation from several potential participating federal departments which may result in an annual forum if successful.

