

**EMERGENCY SERVICES****OVERVIEW**

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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 (PSC) discussions with Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) Ministers Responsible for Emergencies. A dedicated meeting with the five National Indigenous Organizations (NIOs) was convened in St. John's, Newfoundland, on May 25, 2017. The purpose of the meeting was to identify priorities, gaps and challenges.

In March 2017, PSC, on behalf of the Government of Canada, welcomed representatives for the Fifth Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas in Montreal, Québec. A key element of the Regional Platform was the Second Meeting of Ministers and High Level Authorities, during which a Regional Action Plan (RAP) was approved. The guidelines for the RAP were endorsed at the First Meeting of Ministers and High Level Authorities in Paraguay in June 2016. The Government of Canada has been working with regional and national partners to assist with drafting the RAP. The AFN ensured First Nations interests were included in the RAP.

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".

# ISSUE UPDATE

## October 2018

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.
- 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.

The AFN was invited to attend the SOREM meeting in Regina, Saskatchewan, on November 15, 2017. At the meeting, participants discussed; updated and reviewed the Inventory of Emergency Management Capabilities in Indigenous Communities; Disaster Mitigation; Response and Recovery in Indigenous Communities; and, Supporting the Involvement of Indigenous Communities in Emergency Management.

## UPDATE

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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. The AFN will receive funding from PSC to facilitate these engagements. The first workshop is tentatively planned for November 2018, with the subsequent workshops to be organized over the 2018-19 fiscal year.

PSC and the AFN are working together on the Inventory of Indigenous Emergency Management Capabilities Project Description as well as a Project Charter for the Inventory project, and they have provided comments and revisions to the Emergency Management Strategy for Canada. Work is now completed on the methodology for data collection, and the data collection tool for the Indigenous Inventory of Capabilities. The Data Collection Tool will be used during the Phase II engagement sessions with the selected First Nations.

A meeting of Ministers Responsible for Emergency Management and NIOs was held on May 24, 2018, where the NIOs met with the Minister and FPT organizations to discuss the current initiatives and NIO involvement. AFN Regional Chief Marlene Poitras and David Diabo, Special Advisor – Emergency Management, attended this meeting and participated in the discussion and update on the Indigenous Emergency Management Inventory Project. Background was given to the attendees on the rationale, overall intent, need for the National Emergency Management Strategy, and a description of the various components of the Indigenous Inventory. The benefits to the First Nations participating in the inventory project were described to Minister Ralph Goodale, and what the approach is for advancing the project. It was also pointed out that eleven First Nations will be contacted in the near future for participation in a pilot project to test the methodology developed to date, as well as where and how collected data will be stored and accessed in the future.

In November 2017, the AFN was also invited to a National Roundtable on Flood Risk called by

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Minister Goodale, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, to discuss understanding risk, access and distribution of flood maps, public awareness of risk, and the financial management of flood risk. An advisory committee on flood risk has been established and the AFN sits on this committee.

As of Friday, August 31, 2018, there is currently a total of 2,749 flooding evacuees, 46 wildfire evacuees, 28 essential service malfunction evacuees, 4 tornado evacuees, and 2,827 total long term evacuees.

### NEXT STEPS

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- 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 Nation Involvement in Emergency Preparedness*.
- The AFN has contracted Melissa Hotain as Emergency Services Project Coordinator to help with the PSC projects currently underway.
- The AFN is working with PSC to plan, organize, and facilitate the Community Piloting engagement with selected First Nations to inform the development of the Data Collection Tool for the Inventory of Emergency Management Capabilities.
- 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.
- First Nations pilot projects have been developed to test the methodology and data collection instrument using advice, guidance, and recommendations from the selected First Nations communities. Initially, four First Nations were proposed for community piloting: the Mohawks of Kahnawake, QC; Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, QC; the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, ON; and Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, ON. The list grew to include a number of communities in Saskatchewan: Ahtahkakoop First Nation, Moosomin First Nation, Mosquito Grizzly Bear's Head First Nation, Red Pheasant First Nation, Saulteaux First Nation, Sweetgrass First Nation, and Young Chippewyan First Nation (Stoney Knoll Band). The Community Piloting list has now grown to include the 6 First Nations of the Tsilhqot'in National Government.
- The Data Collection Tool has now been revised and coalesced into a more manageable iteration, and will be delivered to the initial four selected First Nations in the coming weeks.
- The AFN is also collaborating with PSC to organize and plan the second annual AFN National Emergency Management Forum scheduled for March 2019 pending approval for funding support.