

# Action Plan *for* Disaster Risk Reduction

BY FIRST NATIONS IN BC  
2023-2030

## DEVELOPED BY

First Nations Leadership Council  
British Columbia Assembly of First Nations  
First Nations Summit  
Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs  
First Nations Emergency Services Society  
Four Directions Management Services Ltd.



The *Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction* by First Nations in BC provides a roadmap for building community resilience and preparedness, strengthening infrastructure and building standards, and enhancing emergency response and recovery capacities. By implementing this plan, First Nations in BC can reduce disaster risk and build a safer and more sustainable future for their communities.

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# Foreword

In the face of escalating disasters, impacting our communities with increasing frequency and intensity, we present this Disaster Risk Reduction Action Plan for all First Nations in British Columbia, which has been reviewed and approved by leadership at the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs. Now, more than ever, this comprehensive framework is urgently needed to address the disproportionate impacts that disasters have on our communities.

As First Nations, we have witnessed the devastating consequences of disasters on our lands, livelihoods, and cultural heritage. The climate emergency exacerbates these challenges, leaving no room for delay in taking action. Our communities are on the front lines, facing the brunt of these calamities, and we must be equipped with the tools and strategies to build resilience and protect our people.

This Action Plan represents a unified effort to implement the United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, tailored to the unique context and vulnerabilities faced by First Nations in British Columbia. This Action Plan also represents a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to advance recognition of First Nations self-determination, inherent title and rights, treaty rights, and jurisdiction, and to strengthen our communities' resilience against the challenges posed by disasters.

The development of this Action Plan has been a collaborative and inclusive process, engaging First Nations communities, leaders, and experts in disaster risk reduction and emergency management. We have considered context-specific issues, recognizing the diversity of our regions, whether coastal, northern, urban, or rural, and have emphasized the importance of solutions that are locally driven. This Plan emphasizes community engagement, capacity building, and strategic partnerships as key drivers in enhancing our readiness to face the challenges that lie ahead.

With the principles of self-determination, upholding our inherent title and rights, and our inherent jurisdictions guiding us, we are committed to realizing a safer and more sustainable future for all First Nations in British Columbia. This Action Plan is our shared vision, and its timely implementation is critical in ensuring the well-being and prosperity of our communities amidst the mounting challenges of disasters.

Now is the time to act decisively and collaboratively. As we move forward, we call upon all levels of government, our partners, and our communities to stand together, supporting the implementation of this plan with unwavering dedication.

*Sincerely,*  
*The First Nations Leadership Council*



*As First Nations, we have witnessed the devastating consequences of disasters on our lands, livelihoods, and cultural heritage. The climate emergency exacerbates these challenges, leaving no room for delay in taking action. Our communities are on the front lines, facing the brunt of these calamities, and we must be equipped with the tools and strategies to build resilience and protect our people.*

# Executive Summary

This *Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction* by First Nations in BC (the Action Plan) is a foundational document that identifies practices and processes to advance implementation of the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* for First Nations in British Columbia. It is also a step further in the implementation of the *Tripartite Emergency Services Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*<sup>1</sup> signed in 2019 between the First Nations Leadership Council and the governments of BC and Canada wherein the purpose was to increase emergency management capacity of First Nations in BC.

The Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction by First Nations in BC is a comprehensive framework for reducing disaster risk, enhancing community resilience, and building a safer and more sustainable future for First Nations communities in British Columbia. The Action Plan is guided by the principles of the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction* and reflects the unique needs and priorities of First Nations in BC.

The Action Plan identifies high-level approaches to enhance relationships between all levels of governments to build climate resilience, reduce disaster risk and impacts, and contribute to the negotiation process of a Trilateral Emergency Services Agreement between BC First Nations, BC, and Canada.

The Action Plan was developed through a participatory process that engaged First Nations communities, leaders, and experts in disaster risk reduction and emergency management. The plan includes prioritized actions that can be taken to reduce risk and build resilience and makes key recommendations including community engagement and participation, inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge, taking a holistic approach, utilizing local solutions, enhancing capacity building, building partnerships, and enhanced monitoring and evaluation.

The Action Plan recognizes the importance of involving First Nations communities in all aspects of the planning and implementation processes and emphasizes the need for solutions to be context-specific (e.g., coastal, northern, urban, rural specific issues) and locally driven. The plan also acknowledges the interconnections between social, economic, environmental, and cultural factors that contribute to disaster risk, and promotes the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge to inform disaster risk reduction efforts.

The Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction by First Nations in BC provides a roadmap for building community resilience and preparedness, strengthening infrastructure and building standards, and enhancing emergency response and recovery capacities. By implementing this plan, First Nations in BC can reduce disaster risk and build a safer and more sustainable future for their communities.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.bcafn.ca/sites/default/files/2019-11/EM\\_MOU\\_Ecopy.pdf](https://www.bcafn.ca/sites/default/files/2019-11/EM_MOU_Ecopy.pdf)



# Introduction

An Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction by First Nations in BC provides the opportunity to better understand disaster risk, strengthen disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, invest in disaster risk reduction for resilience, and enhance disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction, including the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge, inherent rights, jurisdiction, and the right to self-determination.

First Nations must be full and equal partners in all aspects of emergency management decision making, and all phases of emergency management implementation in their territories, as recommended in “Trial by Fire: Nadleh Whut’ en and the Shovel Lake Fire Report”, the Tsilhqot’in report “The Fires Awakened Us (Nagwedizk’an Gwaneš Gangu Chinidzed Ganexwilagh)” and the Abbott-Chapman report “Addressing the New Normal: 21st Century Disaster Management in British Columbia”.

The development of this Action Plan has been guided by the principles of the United Nations’ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which emphasizes the importance of engaging communities in disaster risk reduction efforts, building disaster resilience across all sectors, and strengthening preparedness and response capacities at all levels of governance.

The [2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction](#) states that natural disasters are exacerbated by climate change and are increasing in frequency and intensity. The Sendai Framework also outlines a set of practical recommendations to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels of government and across society.

It calls for a people-centered, preventative approach to disaster through multi-hazard and multi-sectoral practices that are inclusive and accessible. Through programming and education, the Sendai Framework supports empowerment through non-discriminatory participation, paying special attention to historically marginalized people who are often disproportionately affected by disasters.

The 2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction further states that Indigenous peoples, through their experience and traditional knowledge, provide an important contribution to the development and implementation of plans and mechanisms, including for early warning.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction calls for the creation of Regional Action Plans which is meant to serve as a foundational document, of a non-legally binding nature, that identifies practices and processes to advance implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

As supported by BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) resolutions adopted in 2021 ([Appendix A](#)), the following Action Plan has been developed based in the Sendai Framework and serves as a foundational document for all First Nations in BC to better prepare for and respond to disasters and build a more resilient future for their communities.



## Why an Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction by First Nations in BC?

At the conclusion of the 2021 BC wildfire season, the Chiefs in Assembly meetings of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs recognised the need for a Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (*Sendai*) Action Plan to address the unique needs that BC First Nations face in disaster.

Disasters affect Indigenous people disproportionately around the world. These effects can be unique and far greater than larger society due to the generally rural locations, the long-term effects of chronic underfunding for capital investments, and for emergency management personnel, to name only a few. The biggest cause of disaster is the climate crisis, an issue all living beings are affected by and one that will only become worse.

BC region is overly represented in direct and increasing effects of this climate crisis. In response, it is critical that First Nations in BC find solutions and implement them in their communities. This Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction is specifically tailored to the needs and priorities of First Nations communities in BC. The Action Plan has been informed by extensive community engagements and collaboration, drawing on the perspectives and experiences of community members, leaders, and experts in disaster risk reduction and emergency management and analysis of past reports that all support the insights provided through these processes.

The plan prioritizes actions that can be taken to reduce risk and build resilience in the face of disasters. These actions include the creation of a centralized First Nations emergency management authority, alignment of the Climate Change and Emergency Management portfolios, infrastructure improvements, implementation of early warning systems, emergency preparedness training, and the development of community-led disaster response plans.

The development of the Action Plan emphasizes the importance of engaging communities in disaster risk reduction efforts, building disaster resilience across all sectors, and strengthening preparedness and response capacities at all levels of governance.

## THE SENDAI FRAMEWORK

The Sendai Framework was adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, on March 18, 2015. The Sendai Framework is a call to action to make the world a safer place and to reduce the risk of man-made and natural hazards. The Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia have adopted the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction as the guiding approach for disaster risk reduction.

The Sendai Framework aims to achieve the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods, and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural, and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities, and countries.

The Sendai Framework outlines a set of practical recommendations to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels of government and across society. It states that natural disasters are exacerbated by climate change and are increasing in frequency and intensity and that Indigenous peoples, through their experience and traditional knowledge, provide an important contribution to the development and implementation of plans and mechanisms, including for early warning.

The Sendai Framework outlines seven clear targets and four priorities for action to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks:

### SEVEN TARGETS:

#### TO SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCE:

1. Global disaster mortality
2. Number of affected people
3. Economic loss in relation to GDP
4. Damage to critical infrastructure and service disruption

#### TO SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE:

5. Number of countries with national and local DRR strategies by 2020
6. International cooperation by developing countries
7. Availability and access to early warning systems and DRR information

### FOUR PRIORITIES:

#### PRIORITY 1:

**Understanding Disaster Risk** – Ensuring that policies and practices for disaster risk management are based on a clear understanding of vulnerability and exposure to hazards.

#### PRIORITY 2:

**Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance to Manage Disaster Risk** – Having a clear strategy, strong institutions, laws, and budget to ensure the efficient management of disaster risk.

#### PRIORITY 3:

**Investing in Disaster Reduction for Resilience** – Securing public and private investment in measures which will prevent and reduce losses.

#### PRIORITY 4:

**Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction** – Building back better after a disaster strikes.

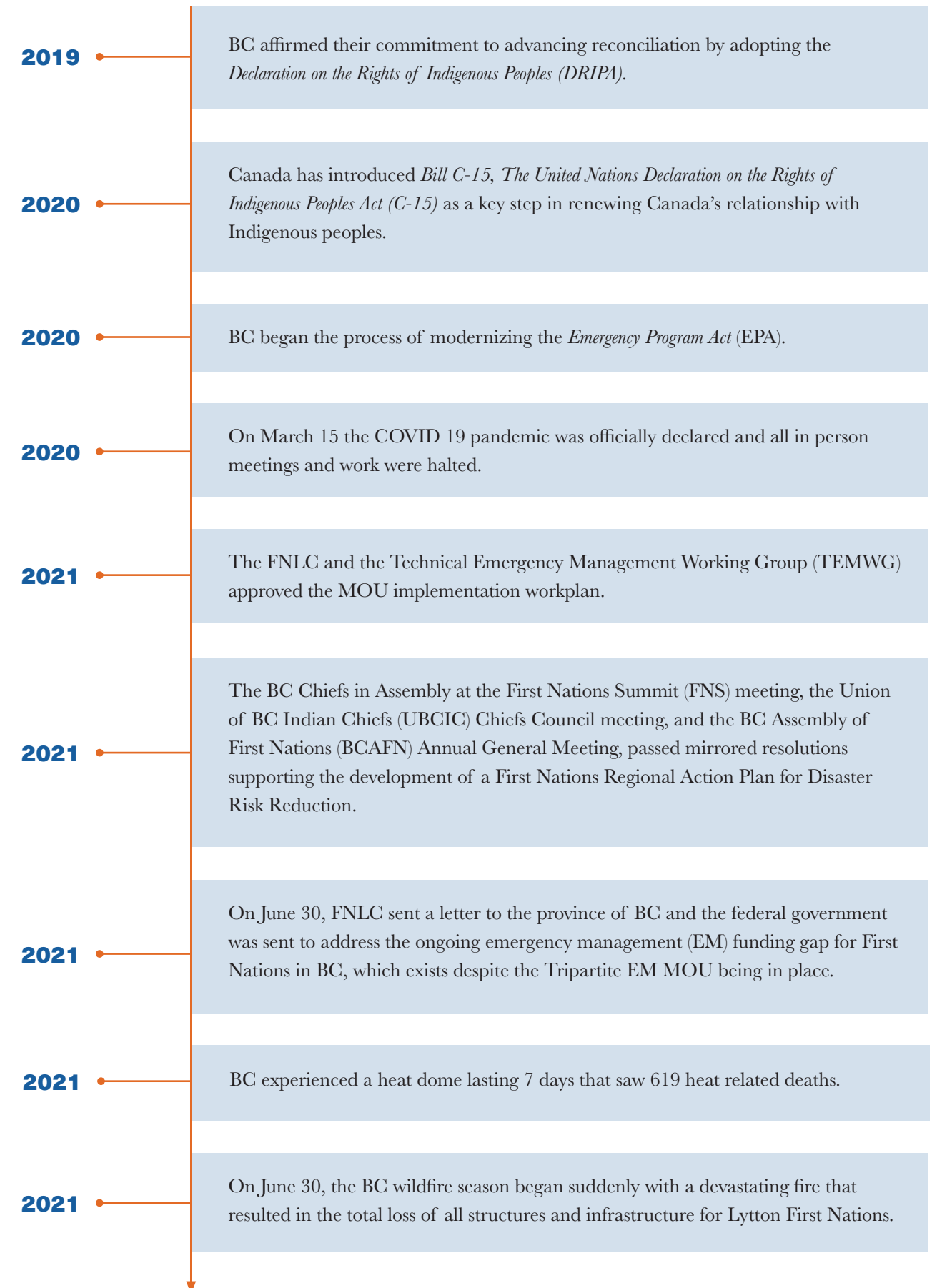
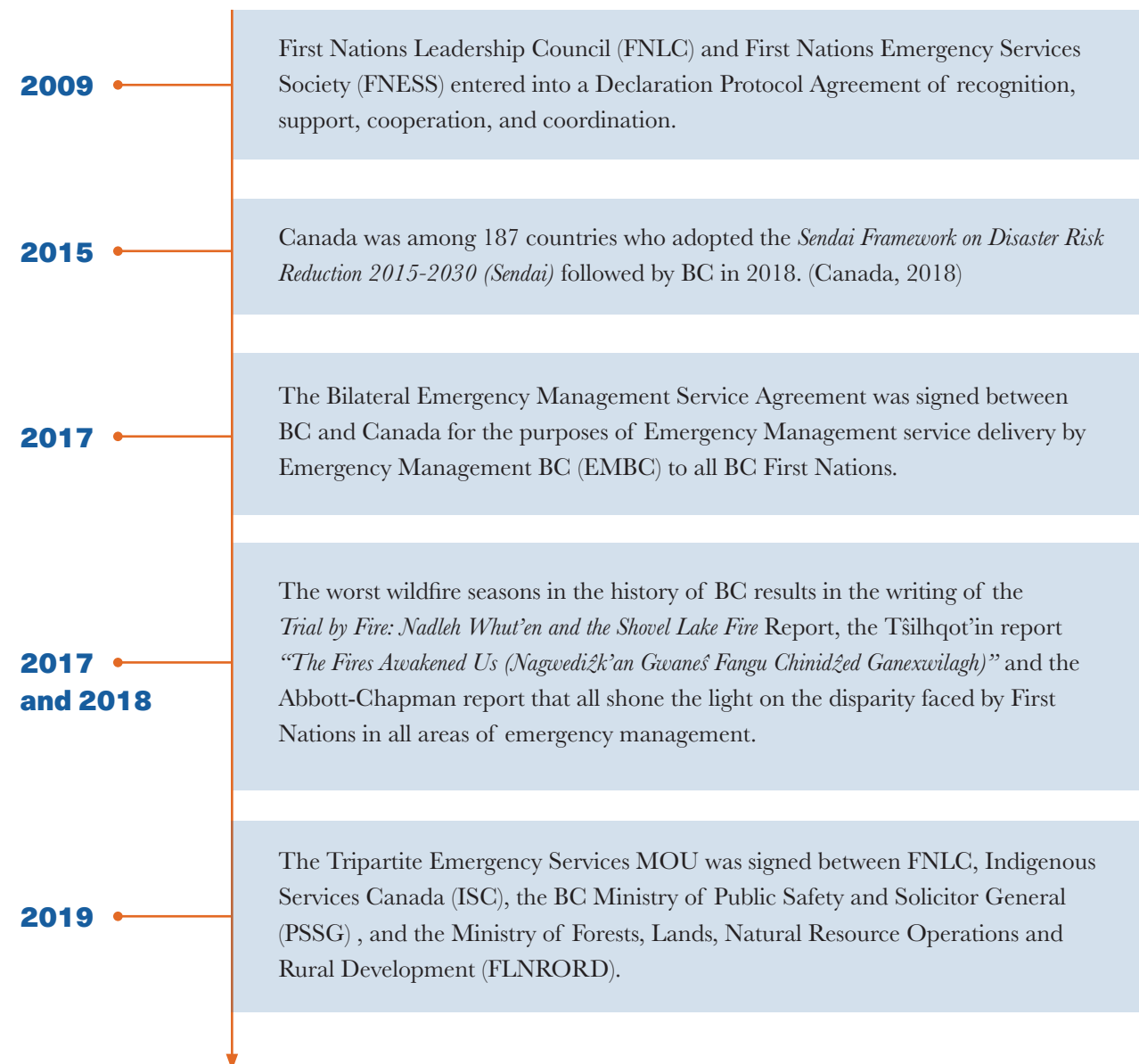
The Sendai Framework calls for the creation of Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies (Target #5). This Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction will serve as a foundational document for First Nations in BC, in a non-legally binding nature, by identifying recommendations to advance implementation of the Sendai Framework at large.

## A 'BC First Nations Disaster Risk Reduction' Lens

Between 2008 and 2018, the Canadian Disaster Database (Canada, 2018b) identified more than 195 major disasters that struck Canada. In 2021, BC alone had more than 1600 wildfires burn nearly 8700 sq. kilometres of land, a heat dome that saw the deaths of 619 people (BC Wildfire Service, 2023) and \$1 billion dollars in government aid (The Canadian Press, 2023). All these events were compounded by the COVID pandemic, the opioid and homelessness crisis, and the confirmation of the many children who died in Canada's residential schools with the discovery of unmarked graves whose total numbers are not yet known.

The disasters of 2021 highlight the urgent need to increase investment in all pillars of emergency management to address the increase in disaster occurrence and impacts leading to BC and Canada recognizing the need for a collaborative approach to addressing these issues.

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS:



2021

On July 7, BC pulled together an initial call of a First Nations-Canada-BC Leadership Table on EM and Wildfires, co-chaired by Tyrone McNeil, Chair of the Tripartite Emergency Management Working Group (TEMWG) and Wayne Schnitzler, Interim Executive Director of FNESS. Minister Farnworth of PSSG was in attendance along with representatives from EMBC, Canadian Pacific Railway (CP) and Canadian National Railway (CN).

2021

On July 8, Canada pulled together an initial call with the FNLC, BC, and FNESS on the immediate needs to address gaps identified by First Nations and FNESS that have become apparent in the 2021 wildfire season. Deputy Minister Michael Keenan of Transport Canada (TC) and Deputy Minister Christiane Fox of ISC were in attendance, along with EMBC and BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) to address immediate needs for First Nations, FNLC, and FNESS and to identify the gaps in current inter-agency processes.

2021

On October 20&21 the first annual BC First Nations Emergency Management Forum take place virtually and is planned by FNLC, FNESS, EMBC and ISC.

2021

The second year of the COVID 19 global pandemic.

2021

Unprecedented floods in BC saw over thirty directly impacted First Nations that included loss of reserve proper lands and many homes. These floods impacted major infrastructure such as roadways and power to most of the interior of BC and the island including the washing out of sections of the Coquihalla.

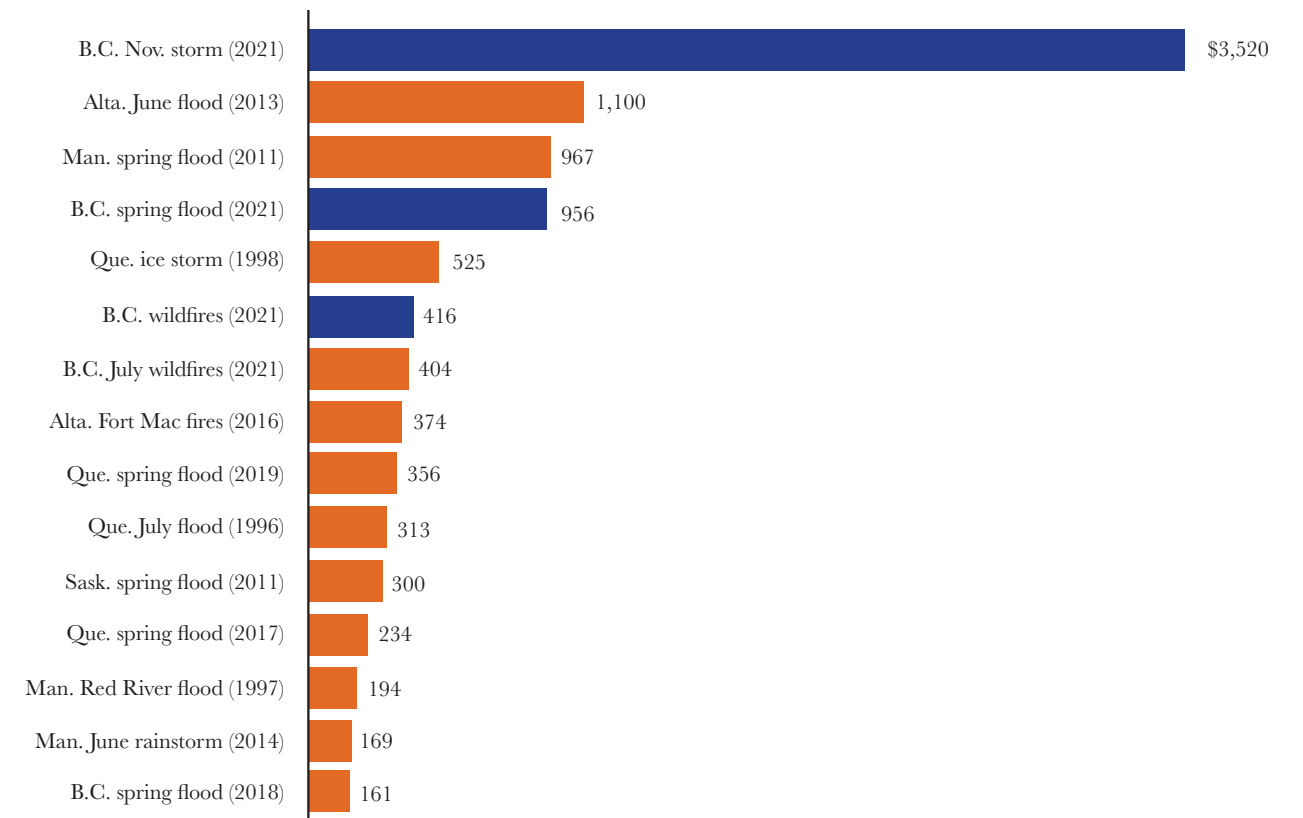
## Canada's Disaster Aid System is Overwhelmed

Disaster relief is an expensive business and largely paid for by programs including (but not limited to): (1) the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA) and (2) Indigenous Services Canada Emergency Management Assistance Program (EMAP).

The DFAA employs a cost-sharing formula where the province pays the entire balance if recovery costs are below \$3.38 per provincial resident, and Ottawa assumes a greater share of the cost above that amount. When costs exceed \$17 per capita, the Federal Government covers 90% of the cost. Meanwhile, the EMAP supports emergency assistance services for First Nations communities living on reserves. In 2021, three mega claims were filed with the DFAA for:

- » The extensive flooding that occurred in the Fraser Valley in November 2021 with an estimated recovery cost of \$3.9 billion.
- » A separate claim for \$956 million for floods that occurred earlier in 2021.
- » A \$416 million claim for devastating summer wildfires.

THREE MEGA-CLAIMS FROM B.C. IN A SINGLE YEAR  
Largest DFAA claims since 1970 (federal portion only), in millions of dollars



THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: PUBLIC SAFETY CANADA, AMOUNTS ARE NOT ADJUSTED FOR INFLATION





## Disaster Risk for First Nations

A report from Canada’s Auditor General (November 2022) found that Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) did not provide First Nations communities with the support they need to prevent, prepare for, and respond to emergencies such as floods and wildfires, which are increasing in both frequency and intensity.

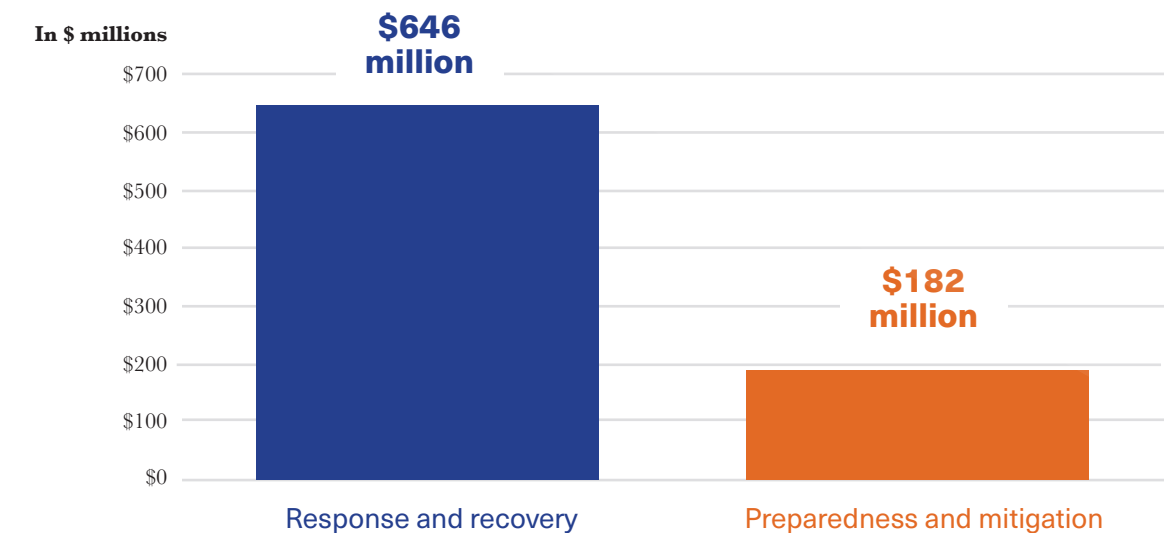
The report confirmed that Canada spends more on responding to climate emergencies in First Nations than in preventing them. Climate emergencies are increasing for remote Indigenous communities, yet the federal government is still more reactive than preventative when responding to them, despite First Nations communities identifying many infrastructure projects to mitigate the impact of emergencies.

First Nations communities experiencing extreme weather often require evacuation services because of remoteness, aging infrastructure, and “challenging socio-economic situations”. The infrastructure gap in First Nations communities has been well established with the existing infrastructure in place being made with low-quality materials, a lack of funding for proper maintenance, and little to no increases for necessary upgrades.

Between 2018 – 2022, ISC spent 3.5x more money on responding to emergencies and helping Indigenous Nations recover from them than it has on preventing and mitigating floods, fires, and other extreme weather events. However, for every dollar spent on preparedness and mitigation, six dollars can be saved in emergency response.<sup>2</sup>

### INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA HAS SPENT ABOUT \$828 MILLION OVER THE LAST 4 FISCAL YEARS ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Money spent on response and recovery vs. preparedness and mitigation, 2018-19 to 2021-22



The Auditor General’s November 2022 Report found gaps in emergency prevention and mitigation funding because: (1) some First Nations did not have the capacity to apply for support; and, (2): gaps in agreements dictating who is responsible for delivering emergency services in some provinces. It also found the ISC did not know how many more emergency management coordinators were needed to ensure First Nations had the capacity to manage emergencies.

Major investments in mitigation projects for First Nations communities are needed. There is an opportunity right now to “build back better” as the Government of Canada has pledged to close the infrastructure gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities by 2030.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ucusa.org/about/news/new-study-finds-society-now-saves-6-every-1-spent-preparing-natural-disasters>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1642087807510/1642087838500>

## Hazards and Vulnerabilities

Disasters have always happened and will continue to happen. Disaster risk management is the first line of defense against the uncertainty that is coming. While we know disasters can't be prevented entirely, especially as they amplify in intensity and frequency, there are actions that can be taken to limit levels of devastation.

This is where a "Disaster Risk Reduction" lens becomes critical to informing future actions and investments. Reducing disasters should be of paramount importance to ensure that funding, time, and resources are not expended solely on emergency responses but are also importantly invested in preparedness and resiliency strengthening initiatives.

A "disaster risk reduction lens" requires an understanding that vulnerability to hazards determines impact: Hazard x Vulnerability = Risk. Disasters expose societal inequalities because the more vulnerable a population, the worse a disaster's impact will be. When dealing with a natural or man-made disaster, the most vulnerable always suffer more.

First Nations communities in British Columbia face a wide range of natural and human-caused hazards and vulnerabilities that can impact their well-being, health, and livelihoods. The following is an assessment of some of the most significant hazards and vulnerabilities that First Nations communities face in British Columbia.



## Hazards

### NATURAL DISASTERS



**Drought:** Drought is a growing concern in British Columbia, particularly in the southern and interior regions of the province. First Nations communities that rely on the land for traditional practices, such as hunting and fishing, are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of drought.



**Floods:** Flooding is a common hazard in British Columbia, particularly in coastal areas and areas adjacent to rivers and lakes. First Nations communities in BC are disproportionately affected by flooding due to their location, inadequate infrastructure, the undervaluing of cultural and traditional knowledge, and the economic and social impacts of flooding.



**Landslides:** Landslides are a significant hazard in British Columbia, particularly in areas with steep slopes and unstable soil conditions. First Nations communities located in these areas are particularly vulnerable to landslides, which can result in loss of life, property damage, and displacement.



**Tsunamis:** Tsunamis are a potential hazard for First Nations communities located along the coast of British Columbia. These events can cause significant damage to infrastructure and have the potential to result in loss of life.



**Wildfires:** Wildfires are a significant hazard in British Columbia, particularly in the summer months when dry conditions prevail. First Nations communities located in grasslands and forested areas are particularly vulnerable to wildfires, which can result in loss of life, property damage, and displacement.

## HUMAN-CAUSED HAZARDS



**Cyber-Attacks:** Cyber-attacks and ransomware are a growing concern for First Nations of BC, particularly as more organizations move towards digital systems and data storage. Cyber-attacks can disrupt critical systems and infrastructure, resulting in the loss of sensitive data and financial losses. In addition, cyber-attacks can have significant impacts on community members, including the disruption of essential services, loss of income, and potential exposure of personal information.



**Industrial Accidents:** First Nations of BC are located near industrial sites such as railways, pipelines, oil and gas production facilities, and others. Accidents related to these industries can cause wildfires, toxic exposure to hazardous materials, environmental contamination, health impacts, and economic losses for First Nations communities.



**Marine Spills:** First Nations communities located along the coast of BC are vulnerable to marine spills, which can have significant impacts on marine ecosystems, as well as traditional food sources and cultural practices.



**Pandemics:** Pandemics, such as COVID-19, can have significant impacts on First Nations communities, particularly those in remote areas. These impacts can include loss of life, disruption of essential services, and economic losses.

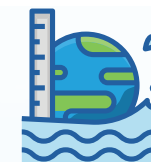
## CLIMATE CHANGE



**Changing Ecological Conditions:** Climate change is affecting the ecological conditions of British Columbia, including changes in temperature, precipitation, and water availability. This can impact traditional food sources, as well as the ability of First Nations communities to engage in traditional practices and cultural activities.



**Extreme Weather Events:** Climate change is leading to an increase in extreme weather events, such as heat waves, floods, and storms. These events can have significant impacts on the health and well-being of First Nations communities, particularly those living in remote and isolated areas.



**Sea Level Rise:** Sea level rise is a growing concern for First Nations communities located along the coast of British Columbia. This can result in flooding and damage to infrastructure, as well as loss of traditional lands and cultural heritage sites.



## Vulnerabilities

First Nations communities in British Columbia face a wide range of hazards and vulnerabilities that require comprehensive and culturally appropriate planning and preparedness measures. Effective risk assessments, emergency planning, and community engagement are critical to reducing the impacts of natural and human-caused hazards on First Nations communities in British Columbia. Addressing the underlying factors that contribute to health and social vulnerabilities will also be important in building resilience and ensuring the well-being of community members.

First Nations communities in British Columbia are disproportionately affected by all hazards and climate-born disasters for several reasons:

- 1. Access to Healthcare:** Many First Nations communities in British Columbia have limited access to healthcare services, particularly those living in remote and isolated areas. This can impact the ability of community members to receive adequate care during emergencies and disasters.
- 2. Climate Change:** First Nations communities in British Columbia are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to their reliance on the land and traditional ways of life. Rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and sea level rise are increasing the frequency and severity of natural disasters such as wildfires, landslides, and floods. These impacts are often compounded by the location and vulnerability of First Nations communities.
- 3. Cultural and Spiritual Impacts:** Emergencies and disasters can have significant impacts on the cultural and spiritual well-being of First Nations communities, including the loss of cultural heritage sites and traditional practices.
- 4. Historical and Ongoing Colonialism:** The impacts of historical and ongoing colonialism have contributed to systemic inequalities and injustices that can impact the ability of First Nations communities to prepare for and respond to hazards and vulnerabilities. This includes limited access to resources and decision-making power, as well as a lack of recognition and respect for traditional knowledge and cultural practices that can be important for disaster preparedness.
- 5. Housing Conditions:** Housing conditions in many First Nations communities in British Columbia are inadequate, with overcrowding and poor sanitation being common issues. This can increase the risk of disease transmission and other health issues, particularly during emergencies and disasters.
- 6. Limited Resources:** Many First Nations communities in British Columbia have limited access to resources such as funding, equipment, and trained personnel for disaster preparedness and response. This can make it more difficult for these communities to implement effective preparedness measures and respond to disasters when they occur.
- 7. Location:** Many First Nations communities are in remote and often isolated areas, which can make them more vulnerable to natural disasters and human-caused hazards. These areas may have limited access to infrastructure and emergency services, making it more difficult to respond to and recover from disasters.
- 8. Socio-Economic Conditions:** Many First Nations communities in British Columbia face socio-economic challenges, including poverty, unemployment, and limited access to education and training. These challenges can make it difficult for communities to prepare for and respond to emergencies and disasters.
- 9. Connectivity and Response:** There are many First Nations in BC who lack reliable cellular and internet connectivity, as well as, many who do not have access to 911 services including first responder services such as fire and ambulance.

## Methods

In 2021, the BCAFN, FNS, and UBCIC each passed resolutions endorsing the need to develop this Action Plan (See Appendix A).

A Tripartite Emergency Management Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in April 2019 between the UBCIC, BCAFN and FNS (working together as the First Nations Leadership Council), Canada (represented by ISC), and the Province (represented by then Emergency Management BC and BC Wildfire Service) outlining a relationship as full and equal partners to establish a collaborative and constructive working relationship through a joint high-level dialogue process that focuses on a mutually developed agenda and Tripartite Emergency Management Working Group.

The development and implementation of this Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction will strengthen and facilitate First Nation led implementation of the Tripartite Emergency Management MOU.

The First Nations Leadership Council, Tripartite Emergency Management Working Group, and First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS) were directed to prepare a draft “BC First Nations Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction for review by First Nations in BC that upholds the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, implements the recommendations expressed in other related reports (e.g., Abbott-Chapman) and is in alignment with the 2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction”.

Four Directions Management Services was then contracted to aid in the development of the Action Plan which was drafted based on the feedback received through multiple engagement methods including virtual engagement sessions, surveys, and interviews.

## Engagement Methodology

A BC First Nations Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction has been specifically tailored to the needs and priorities of First Nations communities in British Columbia. The plan has been informed by extensive community engagement and collaboration, drawing on the perspectives and experiences of community members, leaders, and experts in disaster risk reduction and emergency management.



## Virtual Engagement

The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS), and Four Directions Management Services (FDMS) hosted 8 virtual engagement sessions in January of 2023. The purpose of these engagements was to gather critical, value-added feedback that has been used to inform the development of this Sendai-based Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The focus of these sessions related to the following questions:

1. What do BC First Nations need to be better informed on and more comprehensive in our understanding of, as it relates to disaster risk?
2. In what ways can BC First Nations strengthen our governance to better manage disaster risk?
3. Where are investments most needed to increase resiliency in First Nations communities and across ancestral territories?
4. In what ways could better preparations be made that would lead to more effective responses, recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction for BC First Nations?

Emergency management and disaster risk reduction is very regionally dependent and as such, it was deemed necessary to have regionally focused discussions. We also understood that not everyone would be able to attend the session dedicated specifically to their region and as such, an additional open session was organized for anyone to attend.

The following 8 sessions were held:

- » **January 11th – Interior Salish Region**
  - The southern interior: Lil'wat-Osoyoos-Xat'sull (North of Williams Lake)
- » **January 12th – Fraser Valley, Lower Mainland, and East Vancouver Island Region**
  - From Stó:lō to East Vancouver Island up to Cowichan Lake, South Sunshine Coast
- » **January 13th – West Vancouver Island & Sunshine Coast Region**
  - Covering West Vancouver Island to Kitsoo, including Nuxalk, North Sunshine Coast
- » **January 25th – Haida-Tsimshian region**
  - Gitksan Treaty Society to Nisga'a Lisims extending to Haida Gwaii, also including Haisla
- » **January 26th – Kootenay Region**
  - The Ktunaxa region, and nations in the southeast from Shuswap to Tobacco Plains
- » **January 27th – Tsilhqot'in Carrier Sekani Region**
  - All of the Tsilhqot'in and Carrier Sekani Regions
- » **January 30th – Northern Dene/Tlingit/Cree Region**
  - Covering north and northeast BC including Treaty 8 territory, Kaska Dena Council, and Taku River
- » **January 31st – General Engagement Session**

A total of 84 participants took part in the virtual engagement sessions across all sessions.

## Surveys

Two surveys were developed to gather value-added feedback:

### SURVEY 1: GENERAL

The first survey mirrored the virtual engagement questions and was offered as an opportunity for those unable to attend a virtual session to share their insights and ideas, as well as, served as a secondary method of engagement for those who did participate in the virtual sessions but wanted an opportunity to offer written feedback.

A total of 7 participants utilized the option of participating via the online survey. The survey can be found in *Appendix B: General Survey*.

### SURVEY 2: YOUTH

A second survey was specifically developed to targeted First Nations youth (defined as 30 years old or younger). Engaging youth directly in this process was critically important as youth are the ones who will benefit the most from reducing disaster risks and impacts. The 21-question survey was created to hear First Nations' youth concerns, learn about their experiences with disasters and levels of preparedness, and further understand their desired supports and areas for future involvement.

The survey was designed to not only gather the critical information needed to inform the BC First Nations Disaster Risk Reduction Action Plan but to also plant seeds of ideas where youth can become more informed and involved. To incentivize youth to complete the 21-question survey, 3 cash prizes were offered (1st place prize - \$700; 2nd place prize - \$200; 3rd place prize - \$100). The survey was open to respondents for over a month and promoted through the respective communications channels of each FNLC organization. At the end of the survey period (February 28th, 2022), all respondents were entered at random to win one of the 3 cash prizes.

A total of 83 youth respondents completed the survey. The survey can be found in *Appendix C: Youth Survey*.

## Literature Review

A literature review was conducted to supplement the findings gathered through the virtual engagement and surveys. There are several significant reports that have been released in recent years identifying known problems in emergency management and which propose much needed solutions that will serve to increase disaster risk reduction through enhanced resiliency, preparedness, responsiveness, and recovery.

The findings and recommendations included in the following reports are absolutely critical to addressing the emergency management crises experienced by many BC First Nations:



1. The Report of The Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada on Emergency Management in First Nations Communities—Indigenous Report 8 Services Canada
2. Trial By Fire: Nadleh Whut'en and the Shovel Lake Fire Report
3. The Tšilhqot'in Report: “The Fires Awakened Us (Nagwedižk'an Gwaneš Fangu Chinidzed Ganexwilagh)”
4. Addressing the New Normal: 21st Century Disaster Management in British Columbia (“Abbott Chapman Report”)
5. From the Ashes: Reimagining Fire Safety and Emergency Management in Indigenous Communities

The intention of this Action Plan is to supplement what has already been completed in the field of First Nations emergency management and disaster risk reduction by bringing these recommendations together with the insights and recommendations of those who engaged in this process to improve upon the current ways in which disasters are planned for, responded to, and recovered from.

The summary of this literature review can be found in *Appendix D: Key Themes and Recommendations in Past Emergency Management Reports*.

## Interviews

Based on the findings that emerged from the virtual engagements, surveys, and literature review, a first draft of this Action Plan was developed. Based on recommendations made by representatives from FNESS, BCAFN, FNS, UBCIC, and FDMS, a list of First Nations emergency management and disaster risk reduction experts were identified.

Based off that list of experts, 8 experts were engaged. Engaging these experts at this stage in the process for developing the Action Plan served as an opportunity to validate the recommendations being put forward and was used to further refine and enrich the contents of this Action Plan. *See Appendix E: Contributors* for a list of the experts engaged.

## Finalizing the DRR Action Plan

Once the interview phase was complete, the feedback received was integrated into a final version of the Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction by First Nations in BC. The complete draft was shared by Four Directions Management Services to the First Nations Emergency Services Society and the three FNLC organizations. The DRR Action Plan was then presented and endorsed by the BC Assembly of First Nations in September 2023, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs in October 2023, and the First Nations Summit in October 2023.



# “30 BY 2030”

## 30 CALLS TO ACTION TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2030

The Sendai Framework outlines seven global targets and four priorities to be achieved by 2030. Based on the best thinking that western science offers and the received wisdom that comes from Indigenous experts, knowledge holders, and the watchful observation over ancestral territories since time immemorial, 30 Calls to Action have been identified and are recommended to be achieved by 2030 in accordance with the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The following Calls to Action for disaster risk reduction (listed alphabetically under each priority) focus on building community resilience and preparedness, strengthening infrastructure and building standards, and enhancing emergency response and recovery capacities. These recommendations also support First Nations’ inherent right to self-determination and jurisdictional authority.

## PRIORITY 1: Understanding Disaster Risk

*“Disaster risk management should be based on an understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazard characteristics and the environment. Such knowledge can be used for risk assessment, prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and response.”*

1. **Community Engagement and Participation:** The entire subject of disaster risk management needs to be analyzed, and a clear communication and integration strategy between First Nations governments and other agencies must be developed. First Nations governments are usually the last to know and first to be held accountable for outcomes.
  - a. Additionally, community resiliency is enhanced when community members are engaged in discussions about the disaster risks their community or territory is vulnerable to. Community members should be encouraged to get involved in disaster risk reduction, from preparedness to planning to response. Opportunities that seek community input and involvement should be created when possible and appropriate, and communities should regularly practice what they plan. Members living away from their home communities also need to be involved and educated on their rights to service while living in a municipality.
2. **Elected and Hereditary Leaders:** It is crucial to recognize that disasters affecting First Nations communities do not just occur on-reserve but also span ancestral territories. Communication and inclusion of community leadership, including elected and hereditary leaders, are essential to ensure they are aware of disaster risks in their territories and their unique roles in responding to emergencies. Hereditary and elected leaders must receive extensive policy training to fully understand their roles during emergencies. It is also important to pre-determine response efforts’ limits in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), such as whether they will assist members living off-reserve.
3. **Empowering Youth Leadership:** Increasing resilience in communities will be supported when the next generations are informed about disaster risk reduction and educated about the opportunities for them to become involved.
  - a. This requires including youth in planning and preparedness activities and each community having an Emergency Management Coordinator in place where youth can receive support and mentorship.
  - b. It is recommended that a youth-led Emergency Management Youth Forum be hosted annually where First Nations youth across BC can participate in the planning of and attend an event tailor-made to engage them in emergency management and disaster risk reduction. It is suggested that through this Forum, youth can be empowered to get involved by working together to design disaster risk reduction projects. If available, seed funding/grants can be provided to youth who successfully design a disaster risk reduction project where they can then have the funding, resources, and autonomy to go back into their communities and implement their idea (e.g., creating preparedness kits, etc.). At the following year’s gathering, they can present on their activities and help encourage more youth to get involved.
  - c. Additionally, there also needs to be smaller initiatives throughout the year to keep youth engaged which can be supported with post-secondary programs that seek to educate and involve youth in emergency management.

4. **Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Assessments:** Each First Nations community in BC needs to be provided ongoing funding and resources to conduct comprehensive hazard risk and vulnerability assessments (HRVA) that are considerate of territorial lands, neighboring authorities, regional entities, and industrial activities. The Sendai framework calls for understanding of drivers of risk such as colonialism (e.g., forced relocation under the Indian Act) and unsustainable land and resource use. These drivers of risk need to be acknowledged in local, regional, and provincial scale risk assessments.
  - a. These HRVAs should also include critical information from knowledge keepers and those with historical knowledge and emergency response experiences and be reviewed frequently to ensure relevance and accuracy.
5. **Land Stewards and Guardians:** There are land stewards/users in each community who know the land intimately, are on the land consistently, and understand its patterns, landscape, and terrain. Engaging with those who have the expert knowledge of the territory is invaluable. For those communities and/or Nations that have Fire Keepers<sup>4</sup> and/or Guardians<sup>5</sup>, it is critical that they be recognized, supported, and included in emergency management/disaster risk reduction efforts as their expert knowledge on protecting and conserving the land base needs to be understood by those responsible for emergency management. This critical knowledge needs to be valued and compensated equally compared with the colonial emergency management credentials.
6. **Training and Expertise:** Training, and the funding necessary to keep training up-to-date, needs to be ongoing, meaningful, and accessible within communities across BC. Importantly, training needs to be relevant for each community/region to be effective. Increasing capacity building opportunities available to all communities, emergency responders, and other stakeholders to enhance the knowledge and skills related to disaster risk reduction in community is critical. It is recognized that for Emergency Response teams to enhance their capacity, training needs to be tailored to their specific hazards, continuously offered, and cumulative so that staff can grow from having skills into being trained experts.
  - a. Training also needs to include traditional ways of knowing, local knowledge, and documentation of historical events.
  - b. More governance training is needed for leadership (elected and hereditary) to understand disaster risks and the roles they will need to play when a disaster strikes.
  - c. Ongoing and accessible training for staff to grow is also important as there can be high turnover in community, so training that specifically targets the next generations is helpful to ensure there is always someone to fill key roles.

<sup>4</sup> Example: Interior Salish Fire Keepers Society: <https://vimeo.com/670037499>

<sup>5</sup> The term ‘Guardians’ is an umbrella term used being used to describe First Nations-led initiatives that undertake a spectrum of stewardship and/or public safety activities on the land base. It is recognized that there are a variety of names for these programs, such as Watchmen, Rangers, Wardens, etc. These activities have been undertaken by Nations since time immemorial.



## PRIORITY 2: Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance to Manage Disaster Risk

*“Disaster risk governance at the national, regional and global levels is very important for prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery, and rehabilitation. It fosters collaboration and partnership”*

7. **Alignment of Initiatives and Authorities:** Better jurisdictional coordination and alignment will improve how emergency management is led and responded to. Regional tables inclusive of all parties need to be established to ensure seamless response, mitigation, preparedness, and recovery. Timeliness is key to minimizing long-term effects of disasters. This may also include but is not limited to: the alignment of regional district boundaries with traditional territories of First Nations; mutual aid agreements and municipal type service arrangements for Emergency Response with other jurisdictions; portfolio integration at an organizational/government level where Emergency Management, Climate Change, and Environment are integrated and not managed in different silos/departments. Regional scale governance and action is critical for disaster risk reduction. BC’s Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) regions, health regions, watersheds, and Indigenous language regions should all be considered for disaster risk reduction coordination.
8. **First Nations Governance:** First Nations need to be involved in all aspects of disaster risk reduction and participate in all discussions related to disasters, from the beginning to end (as also stated in the Abbott/Chapman Report). First Nations must be recognized as leaders in local responses. Provincial agencies and regional districts must coordinate with First Nations as governments and not as stakeholders or service recipients.
  - a. This sharing of authorities will require training in the Incident Command System, immediate access to funding and resources when a disaster strikes (without waiting for approval from other governments), and that the authority of a First Nation’s declaration of a state of emergency be recognized by all levels of government. Joint Emergency Operations Centres (EOC) and/or unified command at the Incident Command Post (ICP) or Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centre (PREOC) level with First Nations governments and First Nations Liaisons at each Section Chief Level in the PREOC are recommended.
  - b. Additionally, further consideration within the Tripartite process is required to account for the fact that Treaty Nations go through EMCR, and non-Treaty Nations go through ISC.
9. **First Nations Institutional Development/Enhancement:** First Nations governments must have adequate training, capacity, and resources to lead in emergency management. All too often, First Nations governments are expected to manage without comparable resources to Provincial or Regional Governments. Strengthening overall governance to better manage risk will require First Nations in BC to improve upon First Nations emergency management governance institutions (e.g., the development of a BC First Nations Emergency Management Authority with a focus on First Nations emergency management training that is relevant to First Nations lands and governance). The inclusion of all First Nations in BC in an enhanced governance model will also support First Nations Chiefs in leading their own negotiations without needing to be represented by other organizations where all communities are not represented or whose representation of them is not embraced.
10. **Industry Support:** Industry has a significant presence on First Nations territories and a responsibility to the territorial rights and title holders when a disaster strikes. Effective collaboration for disaster risk reduction offers space for meaningful reconciliation and can be supported through the building of strong relationships prior to an emergency, with support provided by First Nations’ economic development corporations (if appropriate/applicable). Disaster risk reduction considerations need to be included in the formal relationships Nations have with companies to identify opportunities where prevention measures can be supported, assistance in response could be offered in the event of a disaster, and pre-agreed commitments for recovery support if applicable. Crucially, this stands as a powerful asset for small, remote, or isolated communities. As such, a well-defined process should be established to ensure that industry, which holds responsibility to the Nations on whose territories they operate, plays a significant role in partnership tables overseeing emergency planning.
11. **Local Government Collaboration:** Year-round planning is essential and resourced collaboration is key to ensuring that critical personnel meet regularly, not just annually or during a crisis. There is a need for increased partnership between First Nations communities and local governments (municipal and regional) which can be formalized through agreements that when in place prior to a disaster, lead to more effective responses and collaborative recovery efforts. To help support the effectiveness of municipal-type service agreements, good examples should be more widely shared to help establish consistency across relationships and set a consistent standard of service delivery.
12. **Neighbouring First Nations:** First Nations working together and sharing information, personnel, and equipment when possible is invaluable when a disaster strikes. If possible, reaching out to neighbouring Nations to discuss what level of assistance communities could offer each other in the event of a disaster and knowing who could be relied upon in an emergency strengthens communities’ governance to manage risks.
  - a. It is recommended that: (1) communities develop and share DRR/EM inventories (such as equipment, sheltering/hosting capacity, etc.) of the resources that could be deployed; and, (2) host regularized Indigenous-led sessions that bring together emergency management staff in different First Nations communities at a regional level to bring like-minded people together to share experiences, successes, and challenges and enable them to develop professional networks and relationships amongst each other (e.g., Mutual Aid Agreements).
13. **Multi-Agency Support Teams:** Effective relationships are key to emergency response, preparation, and recovery. This involves working closely with various agencies, such as municipalities, regional districts, Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, BC Wildfire Service, Indigenous Services Canada, First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS), Union of BC Municipalities, BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centre, St. John’s Ambulance, the United Way, and First Nations Health Authority. However, there is often a lack of clear information sharing between these agencies, which can make it challenging to manage all the different relationships and to understand the roles and responsibilities of each. To strengthen governance for better risk management, it is recommended that Multi-Agency Support Teams (MAST) be proactively established and supported by FNESS. These teams should be formalized at the request of local First Nations, involve all relevant agencies in the region, and focus on response, recovery, preparedness, and mitigation to serve as a “one-stop shop” for discussions relating to funding, roles, and responsibilities.

## PRIORITY 3: Investing in Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience

*“Public and private investment in disaster risk prevention and reduction through structural and non-structural measures are essential to enhance the economic, social, health and cultural resilience of persons, communities, countries and their assets, as well as the environment.”*

- 14. Communication:** Greater investments are needed to support communities in having access to fast response communication which will require the upgrading of current connectivity systems across BC and funding for communities to acquire back-up communication systems (e.g., satellite internet, radio/satellite phones, radio repeater access, etc.). Access to internet is a human right<sup>6</sup> and lifesaving in the event of emergencies.
- Communications strategies that include all partners and First Nations governments also need to be developed and enacted when disaster occurs. Without communication, the four pillars of emergency management cannot be executed and implemented.
- 15. Disaster Risk Management in Building Codes:** Ensure that on-reserve buildings, infrastructure, and critical facilities are renovated, designed, and constructed to withstand potential disasters and climate change. The current ISC practice of building back to what was before and not actually “building back better” or to code is unacceptable and in the lens of disaster risk reduction, potentially lethal.
- Climate change and disaster construction must be enforced in all construction projects. This may require policies to be tailored based on the regional climate and vulnerabilities each region faces (e.g., fire resistant, flood resistant, tsunami resistant, earthquake resistant, etc.). Additionally, all housing must be equipped to meet extreme heat demands. Enhanced alignment and collaboration for land use planning at a community level, especially those with land codes, to bring together emergency management staff and land use planning staff is also recommended.
  - Treaty and non-Treaty considerations are required for the implementation of this action. For example, Treaty Nations use BC Building Code and non-Treaty Nations use federal codes which aren’t unique or detailed to the subregional considerations. Non-Treaty Nations need to look at developing local requirements to enhance the minimum federal building codes such as fire smart principles and seismic capacities.
- 16. Early Warning and Mass Alert Systems:** Multiple platforms of communication need to be overlapped to reach the maximum audience in an emergency. The establishment of early warning and mass alert systems to alert communities to impending disasters, and which is informed by Indigenous Knowledge/Natural Law, is needed. It is important that communities aren’t solely reliant on cellular transmission for sharing critical information with their members in the event of power outages and cellphone towers being either overloaded or offline completely. Youth, as a highly mobile and connected group, also need to be engaged in early warning and alert systems. First Nations might also have to work with funding partners to build redundancy capacities using radio networks.
- 17. Equipment:** Investments are needed for communities to have their own emergency response vehicles (e.g., fire trucks, marine vessels, and equipment such as generators). They also require the resources to ensure they have the qualified personnel to operate them, ongoing funding for maintenance of equipment, and the funding to construct/acquire storage facilities to ensure proper asset maintenance. It was shared during engagement sessions on multiple occasions that the current funding from ISC does not permit the acquisition of emergency response vehicles or trailers (“anything with wheels basically”). Therefore, policy updates are

immediately required to allow these types of purchases and increases in operations and maintenance budgets to maintain equipment is needed. Acquiring the necessary equipment may be able to be started at a regional scope, depending on location and communities’ location to one another, and then be expanded into individual communities.

- 18. Infrastructure Upgrades:** The federal government needs to fund all First Nations communities that apply for resources to develop, maintain, or enhance necessary disaster risk reduction upgrades, such as dikes, culverts, water systems, power sources, and nature-based solutions. As noted by the Auditor General of Canada in their November 2022 report, there is a significant backlog of projects waiting to be funded, the majority of which are in BC<sup>7</sup>. Not only is it unsafe to leave these projects unfunded, but it also creates contradictory messaging in terms of urgency.
- Each community needs at least one large facility that can serve as a warming/cooling centre equipped with necessities for emergency shelter. Additionally, another building for emergency operations with backup power and communication systems is required so that it can be self-sustainable during long-term power outages.
- 19. Long-Term Funding:** The current core funding model needs to be enhanced and include support for hiring fulltime emergency management coordinators/managers in each community. It is critical that funding be long-term, and not dependent on annual proposal writing, so that emergency management programs/departments can be developed, maintained, and grown over time. Nations cannot be forced to compete against each other for funding.
- When long-term funding is in place for communities/region to hire a full time First Nations Emergency Manager, they will be able to coordinate training, planning, and community support for emergency management. This will enable the creation of working groups of First Nations in the region to come together and plan together as a unit and enable the development focus on building community resilience and preparedness, strengthening infrastructure and building standards, and enhancing emergency response and recovery capacities. This important work cannot begin when a disaster strikes, this position is needed to oversee regional/provincial relationships with different agencies to the benefit of local First Nations government before a disaster.
- 20. Rural/Isolated and Disproportionately Impacted Communities:** There is significant variation in First Nations capacities for disaster risk reduction and emergency management. There are distinct realities for urban, rural, and remote Nations. Some have been relatively safe, while others have faced recurring evacuations and losses year after year through compounding events. Opportunities need to be aligned with the needs of the most at-risk communities and prioritized to support increasing their capacity to close the gaps across communities. As such, urgent prioritized funding is needed for rural/isolated communities that currently have access to fewer resources, putting them at higher risk and increasing their vulnerability to impending disasters. Prioritized funding and simplified processes are also urgently needed for disproportionately impacted communities that have experienced multiple compounding disasters one after another. Conducting needs assessments for each specific region can aid in determining needs and risk.
- 21. Socioeconomic Inequities:** Socioeconomic inequities such as in health, housing, and child welfare create additional vulnerabilities so that when disasters occur, the impacts are exacerbated. Enhanced investments from the federal and provincial governments are needed to address the root causes of these vulnerabilities and lessen their impacts. First Nations governments also need to work together to develop a strategy that can be implemented in each community to mitigate these effects.

<sup>6</sup> UN General Assembly Human Rights Council (July 7 2021): *The promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet*: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/G21/173/56/PDF/G2117356.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>7</sup> Office of the Auditor General of Canada (November 2022): *Report 8 – Emergency Management in First Nations Communities – Indigenous Services Canada*.

## PRIORITY 4: Enhancing Disaster Risk Preparedness For Response

*“The growth of disaster risk means there is a need to strengthen disaster preparedness for response, take action in anticipation of events, and ensure capacities are in place for effective response and recovery at all levels. The recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase is a critical opportunity to build back better, including through integrating disaster risk reduction into development measures.”*

- 22. After Action Reviews:** More funding and support are needed for First Nations communities to hire qualified professionals to develop and conduct robust “After Action Reviews” (including a budget component for implementing findings and recommendations). There are important lessons that can be learned from these reviews, and when completed, the identification of best practices can be lifesaving for others when shared. Conducting a Gap Analysis and the updating of Emergency Plans will also be required within this action. Promoting After Action Reviews as a formalized standard practice for any disaster will be aided through the development of a template that can be readily shared with communities.
- 23. Food Security and Essential Supplies:** Food security is integral to preparedness, as many communities rely upon traditional food sources that need to be protected. Ensuring that communities have access to essential supplies, such as food, water, and medical equipment, is a critical consideration in preparedness. This can be a regional project to ensure a fresh supply and minimize waste.
- Additionally, the development of Emergency Management Preparedness Kits should include essential supplies which pay special consideration to the most vulnerable in their communities, including Elders, infants, pregnant mothers, and those with special needs or medical vulnerabilities.
- 24. Healing and Mental Health:** Trauma from disaster events is not being treated as part of an emergency, and this is having severe impacts on communities’ ability to fully recover from disasters. Promoting the recovery and rehabilitation of affected communities following disasters and building long-term resilience to future events requires a holistic approach.
- Enhanced programs for health emergency management, healing, mental health, and trauma counseling should be developed in partnership with the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) and Workers Compensation Board and be inclusive to the participation of front-line workers and community members who can share experiences and insights based on their lived experiences, such as those during the COVID-19 pandemic, opioid crises, and the continued impacts of colonization on top of disasters caused by natural hazards.
  - Specifically, FNHA and BC need jointly to develop and resource a “Mental Health Response Team” that can parachute into disaster areas and immediately begin providing Crisis Intervention and Mental Health and Trauma Support for as long as it takes.
- 25. Preferential Procurement/Contracting:** There needs to be more opportunities for First Nations-owned businesses to participate in response and recovery (e.g., Indigenous Wildfire Crews and Heavy Equipment Operators). It is recommended that a separate procurement process be created well in advance of any emergency to prioritize First Nations-owned businesses in emergency management. This supports reconciliation efforts by recognizing First Nations as stewards of the land who wish to be active in the response and recovery efforts.
- 26. Promote Personal and Family Preparedness:** Promote and provide education on personal preparedness for community members, which can include, but not be limited to: cutting grass and home maintenance; clearing pileups in front of homes; having family preparedness kits; assembling roof-top sprinklers; promoting drivers’ licenses<sup>8</sup>; ensuring knowledge of evacuation plans; promoting awareness of proper communication channels;

increasing awareness of key contacts; and other needs specific to each community. Additionally, promoting more “Community Spring Cleanups” and seeking the support of FNESS to assist in this every winter/spring as available would be beneficial for enhanced preparedness.

- 27. Preparedness Planning:** It’s important for communities to have the necessary resources to develop and test emergency plans and protocols regularly through hands-on, tabletop exercises to increase their preparedness. First Nations need to also be invited to participate in regional tabletop sessions held by municipalities.
- Additionally, it is recommended that First Nations in BC formally recognize and adopt the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction which was started in 1989, after a call by the United Nations General Assembly for a day to promote a global culture of risk-awareness and disaster reduction. Held every 13 October, the day celebrates how people and communities around the world are reducing their exposure to disasters and raising awareness about the importance of reigning in the risks that they face.<sup>9</sup> Recognition and promotion of this day on an annual basis can promote preparedness planning and encourage training drills/exercises to take place and increase community awareness.
- 28. Recovery Planning:** Recovery Plans can be seen as “companion pieces” to an Emergency Plan. However, this is a requirement under the four pillars of emergency management. Recovery planning must receive the same level of attention as emergency planning and should not be treated as an afterthought. There needs to be targeted funding for recovery planning, and it is strongly recommended that proactive recovery plans be done for each First Nation based upon their identified risks, hazards, and vulnerability assessments.
- As part of recovery planning, “after-care” needs to be more fully considered and resourced. For instance, when people are displaced, loneliness for home and uncertainty about returning has a negative effect on mental health. Follow-up support should be provided over a sustained period of years, rather than just a few months after an incident.
  - It is recommended that communities start the Recovery Plan and hire a Recovery Manager at the outset of an emergency so they can begin the process as soon as possible. For example, during the floods, many First Nations were unable to hire recovery personnel due to a lack of funding, resulting in delayed recovery efforts. By the time they were in place, there were no more contractors and no supplies to help with a community recovery program.
- 29. Reduce Fire Loads and Cultural Burning:** Proper land management needs to be taken into consideration with a holistic approach. More support and resources directly to communities are needed to enhance fire smarting to promote fuel reduction and for controlled cultural burning in territories as they are beneficial preparedness tactics that can be taken to reduce overall risk.
- 30. Strategic Long-Term Rebuilding Efforts:** More significant discussions with the federal government are necessary to discuss the locations of communities and these discussions should take place at a nation-to-nation, government-to-government level. Many First Nations communities across BC were imposed upon and situated in the least desirable areas that are inherently burdened with increased disaster risks which climate change undoubtedly amplifies.
- Strategic, long-term rebuilding efforts must be taken into consideration in light of these impacts and may require “additions to reserve” to be a key strategy.
  - Defined policies are needed to clearly outline what is meant by “build back better” as it is not enough to just fund the replacement of what was there prior to the event.
  - Also, access routes and emergency egresses need to be identified for communities prior to an emergency.

<sup>8</sup> UBCIC (March 24, 2021). *A Roadblock to Reconciliation: A Call to Dismantle the Barriers that Driver’s Licensing Presents to Indigenous Wellbeing and Safety*: [https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/ubcic/pages/1440/attachments/original/1616615564/3.3.1\\_2021Feb\\_RoadtoReconciliation\\_](https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/ubcic/pages/1440/attachments/original/1616615564/3.3.1_2021Feb_RoadtoReconciliation_)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/observances/disaster-reduction-day>

## Listen to the Youth

A survey conducted among First Nations youth in British Columbia revealed that a majority of them are concerned about the impacts of climate-change related disasters and expressed significant concern about future impacts.

A significant proportion of respondents have experienced disasters and were not well-prepared to face them, indicating a need for improved disaster preparedness measures and education. During disasters, the majority of First Nations youth reported feeling scared and anxious, highlighting the need for adequate support and resources to help communities cope with the impacts of disasters.

The top supports for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery were identified, including better understanding of risks, access to disaster preparedness equipment and materials, knowledge of how to assist vulnerable populations, understanding of evacuation procedures, coordinated disaster preparedness planning, financial recovery, mental health services, and ecosystem recovery.

The findings also suggest a need for accessible and affordable climate-friendly solutions and education and awareness campaigns to empower individuals to take action against climate change. Finally, there is a great interest among First Nations youth in learning about disaster risk reduction, highlighting the importance of providing relevant education and training opportunities to empower them to take an active role in disaster preparedness and response.

Overall, these findings highlight the need for increased support and resources to help individuals and communities take action against climate change and be better prepared for disasters.



# 56%

**The majority of First Nations youth in British Columbia**

are very concerned about the future impacts of climate-change related disasters.



**The majority of First Nations youth in British Columbia reported feeling **scared and anxious** to some degree during a disaster.**

**Only a minority of respondents (18% and 7%) reported being **well-prepared** or **very well-prepared** to face the disaster they experienced.**



**Before a disaster**, the most commonly mentioned support that would help First Nations youth be better prepared included having an **“Emergency 72-hour kit”** for their home, better understanding of the risks to their community, and resources to educate their family and friends about disaster risks.



**During a disaster**, the top three types of support that would help First Nations youth feel more prepared included having an **“Emergency 72-hour kit”** (70%), wanting more integration with disaster response services (57%), and volunteering within their communities to help and provide support (50%).

# 3

**Financial recovery (72%), mental health services (65%), and ecosystem recovery (63%) were identified as the top three types of support that would help First Nations youth and their communities recover from disasters.**

# 68%

**of First Nations youth in British Columbia have experienced wildfires**



# 50%

**of First Nations youth in British Columbia have experienced flooding**



# Financial Considerations

The fiduciary responsibility of the Crown towards First Nations communities in British Columbia extends to all aspects of disaster risk reduction, including preparedness, response, and recovery. Here are some ways in which the Crown can demonstrate its fiduciary responsibility in disaster risk reduction:

- 1. Capacity Building:** The Crown has a responsibility to support the capacity-building and skill development of First Nations communities in disaster risk reduction. This can include the provision of training programs and resources, as well as opportunities for community members to engage in disaster risk reduction planning and decision-making.
- 2. Collaborative Partnerships:** The Crown has a responsibility to collaborate with First Nations communities and other stakeholders in disaster risk reduction. This means working together to develop and implement strategies that are culturally appropriate, effective, and sustainable, and that promote the resilience and well-being of all community members.
- 3. Consultation and Engagement:** The Crown has a duty to consult and engage with First Nations communities in all aspects of disaster risk reduction, including the development of policies and plans, the allocation of resources, and the implementation of programs and initiatives. This means ensuring that community members are involved in decision-making processes and that their voices and concerns are heard and considered.
- 4. Resource Allocation:** The Crown has a responsibility to allocate resources and funding in a manner that supports the needs and priorities of First Nations communities in British Columbia. This includes ensuring that communities have access to the resources needed to prepare for and respond to disasters, such as emergency equipment and supplies, training programs, and funding for community-led initiatives, in a manner consistent with Jordan's Principle, where discussions of funding approvals take place after an emergency, rather than during its occurrence.

The fiduciary responsibility of the Crown towards First Nations communities in British Columbia is demonstrated through a commitment to consultation, resource allocation, capacity building, and collaborative partnerships in all aspects of disaster risk reduction. By working together to reduce the impact of disasters on First Nations communities, the Crown can uphold its fiduciary responsibility and ensure the safety and well-being of all community members.

# Financing Options

Below is a summary of financing options for emergency management in the context of British Columbia First Nations:

- 1. Indigenous Services Canada Emergency Management Assistance Program:** This program provides funding to First Nations communities in British Columbia for emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.
- 2. Provincial Emergency Program:** The Provincial Emergency Program provides funding to local governments and First Nations communities in British Columbia for emergency preparedness and response activities.
- 3. Natural Resources Canada Indigenous Community Resilience Program:** This program provides funding to Indigenous communities in Canada, including First Nations communities in British Columbia, to support community-led projects that build resilience to natural hazards and other emergencies.
- 4. Western Economic Diversification Canada:** This federal program provides funding to businesses, organizations, and communities in western Canada, including First Nations communities in British Columbia, for economic development and diversification projects, including those related to emergency management.
- 5. Public Safety Canada:** Public Safety Canada offers various funding programs to support emergency management activities, including the Emergency Management Public Awareness Contribution Program, which provides funding to organizations for emergency preparedness and public awareness initiatives.
- 6. Private Foundations and Charitable Organizations:** Private foundations and charitable organizations may provide funding for emergency management projects and initiatives. Some foundations and organizations may have specific programs or initiatives that are targeted towards Indigenous communities.
- 7. Corporate Social Responsibility:** Some corporations may provide funding for emergency management activities as part of their corporate social responsibility initiatives. First Nations communities in British Columbia may be able to partner with corporations to access funding and resources for emergency management.
- 8. Fundraising and Donations:** First Nations communities in British Columbia may also be able to raise funds and solicit donations from individuals, organizations, and businesses to support emergency management activities.
- 9. Emergency Management Service Delivery:** First Nations of BC can establish their own emergency management service delivery, which can generate revenue and help to support their emergency management activities. These services can include emergency response, disaster recovery, and risk assessment and planning.

10. **First Nations Taxation:** First Nations taxation is a potential source of income for First Nations of BC. Taxation could be levied on activities or services on reserves, such as commercial and industrial activities, to generate revenue that can be used to support emergency management activities.
11. **Insurance:** First Nations of BC can purchase insurance policies to cover losses from disasters and emergencies. This can help to reduce the financial impact of disasters and ensure that communities have the resources needed to recover.
12. **Partnerships:** First Nations of BC can form partnerships with other organizations, including government agencies, non-profit organizations, and private companies, to leverage resources and expertise for emergency management activities. These partnerships can include shared funding for emergency management initiatives.
13. **Fundraising:** First Nations of BC can engage in fundraising activities to generate additional revenue for emergency management activities. This can include community events, donation drives, and grant applications to charitable organizations.
14. **Resilience Funds:** First Nations of BC can establish resilience funds, which are funds established to support disaster risk reduction and resilience-building activities. These funds can be contributed to by various stakeholders, including the federal government, provincial government, private organizations, and individual donors.



## Implementations and Next Steps

It is evident that disasters disproportionately affect Indigenous peoples, and the impacts can be particularly severe due to various factors such as chronic underfunding, rural locations, and limited emergency management personnel. The primary cause of disasters is the ongoing climate crisis, which affects all living beings, and this will only worsen. In British Columbia, First Nations communities are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the climate crisis, and it is crucial to find and implement solutions to address this issue.

The Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction by First Nations in BC has been developed with extensive community engagements and collaboration, incorporating the perspectives and experiences of community members, leaders, and experts in disaster risk reduction and emergency management. This Action Plan is tailored to the unique needs and priorities of First Nations communities in British Columbia and draws on the insights provided through these processes and analysis of past reports.

To meaningfully give effect to the Action Plan, a large investment into resiliency, preparedness, and prevention is required. The creation of a disaster and climate resilience fund for First Nations in BC, contributed to by the relevant federal departments and the Province of BC, is strongly recommended as the next step to significantly change the status quo of responding to large scale devastations, year after year. Providing these much-needed resources to support disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response, and recovery efforts will create a safer and more sustainable future.

The creation of a new resilience fund for First Nations BC will create tremendous opportunities to achieve the reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods, and health, and in the economic, physical, social, cultural, and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities, and the province and country writ large. Some of the specific ways in which a substantial investment of resilience funding would contribute to the action required for preventing new and reducing existing disaster risks includes:

- » **Greater Control over Funding:** First Nations governments need greater control over the allocation and management of disaster and climate resilience funding, which will enable them to tailor funding to their specific needs and priorities. This will reduce the bureaucratic burden associated with accessing funds and increase the effectiveness of disaster and climate resilience initiatives.
- » **Reduced Dependency on Bureaucratic Structures:** Currently, First Nations governments must often rely on federal and provincial governments to access disaster relief and climate adaptation funding. By creating a new fund that is directly contributed to by the relevant federal departments and Province of BC, the need to navigate bureaucratic structures will be reduced, allowing First Nations communities to access the funding and support needed to address vulnerabilities and build resilience more easily.
- » **Increased Self-Determination:** Having greater control over funding and the ability to tailor initiatives to their specific needs, First Nations governments will be exercising self-determination and taking an active role in disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation planning. This will contribute to a more equitable and sustainable approach to disaster and climate resilience initiatives that better reflects the priorities and needs of First Nations communities.

- » **Increased Capacity Building:** A resiliency fund will provide First Nations governments with needed access to increased funding for capacity-building activities, including training programs, equipment and asset acquisition, and community-led initiatives. This will help build community resilience and improve the ability of First Nations communities to respond effectively to disasters.
- » **Enhanced Preparedness and Response:** Importantly, a resilience fund will support enhanced emergency preparedness and response efforts. Communities will have the resources to invest in early warning systems, emergency equipment, and infrastructure improvements to better prepare for disasters and minimize their impact.
- » **Improved Infrastructure:** The creation of a resilience fund will also lead to improvements in infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and other critical infrastructure that is vulnerable to disasters. With improved infrastructure, First Nations communities will be better prepared to respond to disasters and recover more quickly.
- » **Increased Collaboration and Partnerships:** A resilience fund will facilitate increased collaboration and partnerships between First Nations governments, federal and provincial governments, and key stakeholders in disaster risk reduction. This will lead to more effective planning and coordination of emergency management activities and better outcomes for communities.
- » **Climate Resilience:** A significant portion of the resilience fund could be directed towards initiatives that promote climate resilience, such as sustainable land use planning, renewable energy development, and other initiatives that support the transition to a low-carbon economy. This will help First Nations communities adapt to the impacts of climate change and reduce their vulnerability to climate-related disasters.

## Conclusion

It is essential to focus on building community resiliency and capacity building opportunities through increased community engagement, involvement of youth and land stewards, and training for emergency responders and community leaders. Strengthening disaster risk governance through better coordination and partnerships between First Nations, local governments, neighboring communities, and industry support is crucial.

Investing in disaster risk reduction is essential for the economic, social, health, and cultural resilience of communities, and enhancing disaster risk preparedness for response must be prioritized through proactive recovery plans, fire smarting, and long-term rebuilding efforts that take into consideration increased disaster risks due to climate change.

As this *Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction* Action Plan by First Nations in BC details in the 30 by 2030 Calls to Action, a comprehensive approach to address disaster risk reduction for First Nations in British Columbia is urgently needed.

The creation of a *First Nations Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Resilience Fund* would represent a significant step towards addressing the systemic issues that contribute to the disproportionate impact of disasters and climate change on First Nations communities in British Columbia. By enabling greater self-determination and reducing the bureaucratic burden associated with accessing funding and support, First Nations communities would be better able to build resilience and promote safer, healthier, and more sustainable communities.

Effectively implementing the key concepts and approaches identified within this *Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction by First Nations in BC*, will lead to a reduction in disaster risk, enhanced community resilience, and a safer and more sustainable future for First Nations in BC. It is now up to First Nations, government officials, emergency responders, and community leaders to take these recommendations seriously and work together to implement them.

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## Appendix A: First Nations Leadership Resolutions



### BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

1004 Landooz Road  
Prince George, BC V2K 5S3  
Website: [www.bcafn.ca](http://www.bcafn.ca)

**BCAFN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**September 14, 15 & 16, 2021**  
**Online via Zoom**

**Resolution 24/2021**

**SUBJECT:** SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BC FIRST NATIONS REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

**MOVED BY:** CHIEF DONNA ALJAM, NICOMEN INDIAN BAND

**SECONDED BY:** CHIEF BYRON LOUIS, OKANAGAN INDIAN BAND

**DECISION:** ABSTENTION: KUKPI7 FRED ROBBINS, ESK'ETEMC  
CARRIED

#### WHEREAS:

- A. First Nations must be full and equal partners in all aspects of emergency management decision making, and all phases of emergency management implementation in their territories, as recommended in "Trial by Fire: Nadleh Whut'en and the Shovel Lake Fire Report", the Tsilhqot'in report "The Fires Awakened Us (Nagwedizk'an Gwaneš Gangu Chinidžed Ganexwilagh)" and the Abbott-Chapman report;
- B. The Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia have adopted the United Nations Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction as the guiding approach for disaster risk reduction. The *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction* states that natural disasters are exacerbated by climate change and are increasing in frequency and intensity. The Sendai Framework also outlines a set of practical recommendations to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels of government and across society. It calls for a people centered, preventative approach to disaster

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Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief



through multi hazard and multi sectoral practices that are inclusive and accessible. Through programming an education, the Sendai framework supports empowerment through nondiscriminatory participation, paying special attention to historically marginalized people who are often disproportionately affected by disasters;

- C. The *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction* further states that Indigenous peoples, through their experience and traditional knowledge, provide an important contribution to the development and implementation of plans and mechanisms, including for early warning;
- D. The *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction* calls for the creation of Regional Action Plans which is meant to serve as a foundational document, of a non-legally binding nature, that identifies practices and processes to advance implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 among the Americas;
- E. The *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction* has identified the four priority areas in the development of Regional Action Plans as understanding disaster risk, strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction;
- F. The Tripartite Emergency Management Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in April of 2019 between the UBCIC, BC Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Summit (working together as the First Nations Leadership Council (“FNLC”)), the Government of Canada (represented by Indigenous Services Canada), and the Government of British Columbia (represented by Emergency Management BC and BC Wildfire Service) outlining a relationship as full and equal partners to establish a collaborative and constructive working relationship through a joint high-level dialogue process that focuses on a mutually developed agenda and Tripartite Emergency Management Working Group;
- G. The FNLC and First Nations Emergency Services Society signed a *Declaration and Protocol of Recognition, Support, Cooperation and Coordination* with the First Nations Emergency Services Society of BC in 2009 with the purpose of affirming our intentions to work together in a cooperative manner, and to provide support for one another’s efforts, advance the recognition, respect, and accommodation of Aboriginal title and

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Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief

rights, and treaty rights, to improve the lives of First Nations people in British Columbia, and to support First Nations in their efforts;

- H. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualifications, and has, alongside the government of BC committed to implement, affirms:
  - Article 18: Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.
  - Article 19: States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior, and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.
  - Article 23: Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programs affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programs through their own institutions.
  - Article 26(1): Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories, and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.
    - (2): Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories, and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.
    - (3): States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories, and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned.
  - Article 27: States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open, and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples’ laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process.

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Article 32(1): Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources; and

- I. A BC First Nations Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction would provide the opportunity to understand disaster risk, strengthen disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, invest in disaster risk reduction for resilience and enhance disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction, including the incorporation of traditional knowledge, inherent rights, jurisdiction and the right to self-determination.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

1. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly demand that any Regional Action Plan developed by British Columbia must be done in conjunction with Indigenous peoples and must recognize and uphold our inherent and constitutionally protected Indigenous Title and Rights, and Treaty Rights and be consistent with the historic Supreme Court of Canada’s Tsilhqot’in Nation judgment and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*;
2. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the BCAFN Regional Chief and staff, working with the First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs Executive, working as the First Nations Leadership Council, develop a BC First Nations Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction that will provide opportunity to understand disaster risk, strengthen disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, invest in disaster risk reduction for resilience and enhance disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction;
3. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly support the development and implementation of a BC First Nations led regional action planning session for disaster risk reduction that will strengthen and facilitate First Nation led implementation of the Tripartite Emergency Management MOU;
4. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly direct the BCAFN Regional Chief and staff, working with the First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs Executive, working as the First Nations Leadership Council, The Tripartite Emergency Management Working Group and the First Nations Emergency Services Society to prepare a draft BC First Nations Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction for review by First Nations in BC that upholds the

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Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief

principles of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, implements the recommendations of the “Trial by Fire: Nadleh Whut’ en and the Shovel Lake Fire Report”, the Tsilhqot’in report “The Fires Awakened Us (Nagwedižk’an Gwaneš Gangu Chinidžed Ganexwilagh)” and the Abbott-Chapman report, and is in alignment with the *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction*.

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Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief

# First Nations Summit

## RESOLUTION #0621.08

**SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BC FIRST NATIONS REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

**WHEREAS:**

- A. The *Trial by Fire: Nadleh Whut'en and the Shovel Lake Fire* Report, the T̓silhqot'in report "*The Fires Awakened Us (Nagwedizk'an Gwaneš Fangu Chinidžed Ganexwilagh)*" and the Abbott-Chapman report all recommend inclusion and partnership with First Nations on all aspects of emergency management decision making, and all phases of emergency management implementation.
- B. The Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia have adopted the United Nations' *Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction* as the guiding approach for disaster risk reduction. The *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction* states that natural disasters are exacerbated by climate change and are increasing in frequency and intensity. The *Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction* also outlines a set of practical recommendations to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels of government and across society. It calls for a people-centered, preventative approach to disaster through multi hazard and multi sectoral practices that are inclusive and accessible. Through programming and education, the *Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction* supports empowerment through nondiscriminatory participation, paying special attention to historically marginalized people who are often disproportionately affected by disasters.
- C. The *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction* further states that Indigenous peoples, through their experience and traditional knowledge, provide an important contribution to the development and implementation of plans and mechanisms, including for early warning.
- D. The *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction* calls for the creation of Regional Action Plans which is meant to serve as a foundational document, of a non-legally binding nature, that identifies practices and processes to advance implementation of the *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction* among the Americas.
- E. The *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction* has identified the four priority areas in the development of Regional Action Plans as understanding disaster risk, strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction.

Suite #1200 – 100 Park Royal South, West Vancouver, BC V7T 1A2 Tel: 604.926.9903 Fax: 604.926.9923 Toll Free: 1.866.990.9939  
Internet: [www.fns.bc.ca](http://www.fns.bc.ca)

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### RESOLUTION #0621.08

**SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BC FIRST NATIONS REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

- F. The Tripartite Emergency Management Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in April 2019 between the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), the Government of Canada (represented by Indigenous Services Canada), and the Government of British Columbia (represented by Emergency Management BC and BC Wildfire Service) outlining a relationship as full and equal partners to establish a collaborative and constructive working relationship through a joint high-level dialogue process that focuses on a mutually developed agenda and Tripartite Emergency Management Working Group.
- G. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualifications, and has, alongside the government of BC committed to implement, affirms:

**Article 18:** Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.

**Article 19:** States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior, and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

**Article 23:** Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programs affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programs through their own institutions.

**Article 26:** (1) Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories, and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired. (2) Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories, and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired. (3) States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories, and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned.

**Article 27:** States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open, and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples' laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process.

**Article 32(1):** Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.

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**RESOLUTION #0621.08**

**SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BC FIRST NATIONS REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

- H. The FNLC and First Nations Emergency Services Society of BC signed a *Declaration and Protocol of Recognition, Support, Cooperation and Coordination* in 2009 with the purpose of affirming our intentions to work together in a cooperative manner, and to provide support for one another's efforts, advance the recognition, respect, and accommodation of Aboriginal title and rights, and treaty rights, to improve the lives of First Nations people in British Columbia, and to support First Nations in their efforts.
- I. There is a need for a cohesive approach to First Nations emergency management, as we are disproportionately affected by the effects of climate change and the resulting increase in natural disasters. A BC Region Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction would be a tool and resource to be tailored to suit the emergency planning needs of a First Nation.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:**

1. That the First Nations Summit Chiefs in Assembly require that any regional action plan developed by British Columbia:
  - a. be developed in full collaboration with First Nations;
  - b. recognize and uphold our respective inherent and constitutionally-protected Title, Rights and Treaty Rights;
  - c. reflect key common law decisions such as the 2014 historic Supreme Court of Canada decision in *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*; and
  - d. implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.
2. That the First Nations Summit Chiefs in Assembly re-affirm support for the First Nations Summit Political Executive and staff's ongoing participation and engagement on emergency management initiatives with the Governments of Canada and British Columbia.
3. That the First Nations Summit Chiefs in Assembly support the development and implementation of a BC First Nations-led regional action planning session for disaster risk reduction that will strengthen and facilitate First Nation-led implementation of the Tripartite Emergency Management MOU.
4. That the First Nations Summit Chiefs in Assembly direct the First Nations Summit Political Executive and staff, working with the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) as the First Nations Leadership Council, to seek resources for the development of a BC First Nations regional action plan session for disaster risk reduction that will:
  - a. involve strategy and planning to implement responses to emergencies;
  - b. provide opportunity to understand disaster risk, strengthen disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, invest in disaster risk reduction for resilience;
  - c. enhance disaster preparedness for effective response and "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

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**RESOLUTION #0621.08**

**SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BC FIRST NATIONS REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

5. That the First Nations Summit Chiefs in Assembly direct the First Nations Summit Political Executive and staff, working with BCAFN, UBCIC, the Tripartite Emergency Management Working Group and the First Nations Emergency Services Society, to prepare a BC First Nations Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction for BC and Canada to review and provide feedback on, that:
  - i. is in alignment with the *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction*,
  - ii. upholds the principles of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*,
  - iii. implements the recommendations of the *Trial by Fire: Nadleh Whut'en and the Shovel Lake Fire Report*, the Tsilhqot'in report "*The Fires Awakened Us (Nagwedizk'an Gwaneš Gangu Chinidzed Ganexwilagh)*" and the Abbott-Chapman report, and
  - iv. establishes the importance of ensuring that First Nations emergency management planning includes traditional knowledge, and is respectful of inherent rights, jurisdiction and the right to self-determination.

**MOVED BY:** Judith Sayers, President Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council


**SECONDED BY:** Kathryn Teneese, Ktunaxa Nation

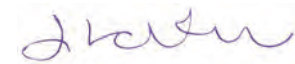
**DATE:** June 10, 2021

Passed by consensus.

**ENDORSED BY:**

  
Cheryl Casimer

  
Robert Phillips

  
Lydia Hwitsum

# OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

FOUNDING HEAD OFFICE  
209 - 345 Chief Alex Thomas Way  
Kamloops, B.C. V2H 1H1  
Tel: 250-828-9746  
Fax: 250-828-0319



VANCOUVER OFFICE  
401 - 312 Main Street  
Vancouver, B.C. V6A 2T2  
Tel: 604-684-0231  
Fax: 604-684-5726  
1-800-793-9701  
Email: ubcic@ubcic.bc.ca  
Web: www.ubcic.bc.ca

UNION OF B.C. INDIAN CHIEFS  
CHIEFS COUNCIL  
JUNE 30<sup>TH</sup>, 2021  
VIRTUAL MEETING

Resolution no. 2021-44

## Re: Support for Development of a BC First Nations Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction

**WHEREAS** First Nations must be full and equal partners in all aspects of emergency management decision making, and all phases of emergency management implementation in their territories, as recommended in “Trail by Fire: Nadleh Whut’ en and the Shovel Lake Fire Report”, the Tsilhqot’in report “The Fires Awakened Us (Nagwedizk’an Gwaneš Gangu Chinidzed Ganexwilagh)” and the Abbott-Chapman report;

**WHEREAS** the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia have adopted the United Nations Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction as the guiding approach for disaster risk reduction. The *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction* states that natural disasters are exacerbated by climate change and are increasing in frequency and intensity. The Sendai Framework also outlines a set of practical recommendations to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels of government and across society. It calls for a people-centered, preventative approach to disaster through multi hazard and multi sectoral practices that are inclusive and accessible. Through programming and education, the Sendai framework supports empowerment through nondiscriminatory participation, paying special attention to historically marginalized people who are often disproportionately affected by disasters;

**WHEREAS** the *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction* further states that Indigenous peoples, through their experience and traditional knowledge, provide an important contribution to the development and implementation of plans and mechanisms, including for early warning;

**WHEREAS** the *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction* calls for the creation of Regional Action Plans which is meant to serve as a foundational document of a non-legally binding nature, that identifies practices and processes to advance implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 among the Americas;

2021-44  
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**WHEREAS** the *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction* has identified the four priority areas in the development of Regional Action Plans as understanding disaster risk, strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction;

**WHEREAS** the Tripartite Emergency Management Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in April of 2019 between the UBCIC, BC Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Summit, working together as the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), the Government of Canada (represented by Indigenous Services Canada), and the Government of British Columbia (represented by Emergency Management BC and BC Wildfire Service) outlining a relationship as full and equal partners to establish a collaborative and constructive working relationship through a joint high-level dialogue process that focuses on a mutually developed agenda and Tripartite Emergency Management Working Group;

**WHEREAS** the FNLC and First Nations Emergency Services Society signed a *Declaration and Protocol of Recognition, Support, Cooperation and Coordination* with the First Nations Emergency Services Society of BC in 2009 with the purpose of affirming their intentions to work together in a cooperative manner, and to provide support for one another’s efforts, advance the recognition, respect, and accommodation of Aboriginal title and rights, and treaty rights, to improve the lives of First Nations people in British Columbia, and to support First Nations in their efforts;

**WHEREAS** the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualifications, and has, alongside the government of BC committed to implement, affirms:

**Article 18:** Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.

**Article 19:** States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior, and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

**Article 23:** Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. Indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programs affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programs through their own institutions.

**Article 26(1):** Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories, and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.

**(2):** Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories, and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.

**(3):** States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories, and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned.

**Article 27:** States shall establish and implement, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned, a fair, independent, impartial, open, and transparent process, giving due recognition to indigenous peoples’ laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, to recognize and adjudicate the rights of indigenous peoples pertaining to their lands, territories and resources, including those which were traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. Indigenous peoples shall have the right to participate in this process.

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**Article 32(1):** Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources; and

**WHEREAS** a BC First Nations Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction would provide the opportunity to understand disaster risk, strengthen disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, invest in disaster risk reduction for resilience and enhance disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction, including the incorporation of traditional knowledge, inherent rights, jurisdiction and the right to self-determination;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** the UBCIC Chiefs Council demands that any Regional Action Plan developed by British Columbia must be done in conjunction with Indigenous peoples and must recognize and uphold our inherent and constitutionally protected Indigenous Title and Rights, and Treaty Rights, and our Indigenous laws and legal orders, and be consistent with the historic Supreme Court of Canada’s Tsilhqot’in Nation judgment and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*;

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the UBCIC Chiefs Council directs the UBCIC Executive and staff, working with the BC Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Summit as the First Nations Leadership Council, to develop a BC First Nations Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction that will provide opportunity to understand disaster risk, strengthen disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, invest in disaster risk reduction for resilience and enhance disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction;

**THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** the UBCIC Chiefs Council supports the development and implementation of a BC First Nations led regional action planning session for disaster risk reduction that will strengthen and facilitate First Nation led implementation of the Tripartite Emergency Management MOU;

**THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** the UBCIC Chiefs Council directs the UBCIC Executive and staff, working with the BC Assembly of First Nations and the First Nations Summit as the First Nations Leadership Council, The Tripartite Emergency Management Working Group and the First Nations Emergency Services Society to prepare a draft BC First Nations Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction for review by First Nations in BC that upholds the principles of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, implements the recommendations of the “Trail by Fire: Nadleh Whut’en and the Shovel Lake Fire Report”, the Tsilhqot’in report “The Fires Awakened Us (Nagwedizk’an Gwaneš Gangu Chinidžed Ganexwilagh)” and the Abbott-Chapman report, and that is in alignment with the *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction*.

**Moved:** Kukpi7 James Hobart, Spuzzum First Nation  
**Seconded:** Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Neskonalith Indian Band  
**Disposition:** Carried  
**Date:** June 30, 2021

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## Appendix B: General Survey

### BC First Nations Regional Action Plan for Risk Reduction

As supported by BCAFN, FNS, and UBCIC resolutions adopted in 2021, we are developing a *BC First Nations Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction* that will be based in the Sendai Framework and serve as a foundational document for all BC First Nations.

A *BC First Nations Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction* will provide the opportunity to: (1) understand disaster risk, (2) strengthen disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, (3) invest in disaster risk reduction for resilience, and (4) enhance disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction, including the incorporation of traditional knowledge, inherent rights, jurisdiction, and the right to self-determination.

First Nations must be full and equal partners in all aspects of emergency management decision making, and all phases of emergency management implementation in their territories, as recommended in “Trail by Fire: Nadleh Whut’en and the Shovel Lake Fire Report”, “The Fires Awakened Us (Nagwedizk’an Gwaneš GanguChinidžed Ganexwilagh)”, and the Abbott-Chapman report.

Your contributions based on your experiences with recent emergencies will greatly help us to inform the development of Sendai-based BC First Nations Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction which will be brought forward for review by First Nations in BC once drafted.

If you have any questions about this initiative, please contact Kelly Mortimer at [kellymortimer@fdms.ca](mailto:kellymortimer@fdms.ca)

1. Introduction
  - a. Name
  - b. Email
  - c. Community/Nation
  - d. Organization
  - e. Role
2. What do BC First Nations need to be better informed on and more comprehensive in our understanding of as it relates to disaster risk?
3. In what ways can BC First Nations strengthen our governance to better manage disaster risk?
4. Where are investments most needed to increase resiliency in First Nations communities and across ancestral territories?
5. In what ways could better preparations be made that would lead to more effective responses, recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction for BC First Nations?
6. Currently Emergency Management funding for First Nations flows through a bilateral agreement between Canada and BC. Through resolutions at UBCIC, BCAFN, and FNS, First Nations chiefs and leadership have called for this funding agreement to be tripartite. What kind of negotiation approaches and models for engaging in negotiation with Canada and BC do you envision to turn this into a tripartite funding agreement?
7. What else do you think should be included or considered in the Regional Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction?

# Appendix C: Youth Survey

## Call for BC First Nations Youth Actions on Disaster Risk Reduction

*Are you concerned about you, your family, and your friends being affected by wildfires, floods, draughts, earthquakes, and other natural disasters? Are you concerned that children and youth will face difficulties due to climate change? Do you want to take actions to build a more resilient world? Do you want to support climate change mitigation efforts?*

*If yes, and you are a First Nations youth in British Columbia, please complete this survey and be entered to win one of 3 cash prizes (1st place prize - \$700; 2nd place prize - \$200; 3rd place prize - \$100)!*

Disasters happen. Climate change is increasing the frequency of floods, wildfires, and severe weather. Other hazards, ranging from power outages and disease outbreaks to earthquakes and tsunamis, also pose a risk in British Columbia. But risks can be reduced, and resiliency increased through disaster risk reduction.

More must be done to support and engage First Nations youth in disaster risk reduction as you are the ones who will benefit the most from reducing disaster risk and impacts.

You are our future, your voice matters, and we want to hear from you! Your contributions will greatly help us to inform the development of a BC First Nations Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this 21-question survey. If you have any questions about this initiative, please contact Kelly Mortimer at [kellymortimer@fdms.ca](mailto:kellymortimer@fdms.ca).

### 1. Introduction

- Name
- Email
- Community/Nation
- Organization
- Role

### 2. Age

- Under 15
- 15-19
- 20-24
- 25-30
- More than 30
- Other (please specify)

### 3. Which of the following options most closely aligns with your gender?

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary
- A gender not listed here
- Prefer not to answer

### 4. At this moment in time, how concerned are you about the impacts of climate-change related disasters?

- I am not concerned about it
- I am slightly concerned about it
- I am moderately concerned about it
- I am very concerned about it
- If feeling concerned, what are you specifically concerned about?

### 5. Thinking about your future, how concerned are you about the potential for future impacts of climate-change related disasters?

- I am not concerned about it
- I am slightly concerned about it
- I am moderately concerned about it
- I am very concerned about it
- If feeling concerned, what are you specifically concerned about?

### 6. Has your community (or place you live) recently experienced a disaster (e.g., evacuating or being on alert due to wildfire or floods)?

- No
- Yes, this past year (approximately)
- Yes, 1 to 2 years ago (approximately)
- Yes, 3 to 5 years ago (approximately)
- Not sure
- Other (please specify)

### 7. What kind of disaster(s) did you experience (select all that apply)?

- Drought
- Wildfire
- Flooding
- Landslides
- Earthquakes
- Accident
- Other (please specify)

### 8. If applicable, how prepared were you and your family to face the disaster you experienced?

- Not prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Well prepared
- Very well prepared
- N/A
- In what ways were you prepared and/or what could you have done better to prepare?

### 9. If and when you/your family/your community were experiencing a disaster (e.g., evacuating or being on alert due to wildfires or floods), how safe did you feel?

- I felt very unsafe, scared, and anxious
- I felt a bit unsafe, scared, and anxious
- I felt safe but still a bit scared/anxious
- I felt safe, secure, and cared for
- N/A

### 10. What kinds of support would help you feel more prepared before disasters? Select all that apply.

- Better understanding of the disaster response system
- Better understanding of risks to my community
- Better understanding of how to mitigate risk (defensible space, etc.)
- Better understanding of evacuation orders and procedures
- Better understanding of what to take in an evacuation
- Better understanding of why people don't evacuate

- g. Better understanding of how best to help vulnerable population (children, elders, ill, etc.)
- h. Better understanding of the mental health implications of disasters
- i. Practice in emergency response
- j. Community group support (neighbourhood Firewise Groups, etc.)
- k. Disaster preparedness equipment / materials
- l. Coordinated disaster preparedness planning
- m. Other (please specify)

11. What kinds of support do you think would help you/your family/your community to recover from disasters?

Select all that apply.

- a. Help with mental health services
- b. Help with processing post disaster financial claims
- c. Help reducing post-disaster risks
- d. Help with post-disaster ecosystem recovery
- e. Help with post-disaster financial recovery
- f. Other (please specify)
- g. None of the above

12. Have you ever been involved in disaster preparedness, response, or recovery efforts as a youth in your community? Select all that apply.

- a. I worked with my community to mitigate risk BEFORE a disaster
- b. I was a first responder DURING a disaster
- c. I assisted my community DURING a disaster
- d. I worked with my community to recover AFTER a disaster
- e. Other (please specify)
- f. None of the above

What specific types of disaster-related activities would you like to become more involved with if given the opportunity:

13. Before disaster (select all that apply)?

- a. Receive first-responder training
- b. Become more educated about disaster risk
- c. Engage in public outreach to keep activities and needs in the public eye
- d. Volunteer in the community to reduce risk
- e. Participate in community meetings to learn more and participate in risk reduction efforts
- f. Other (please specify)
- g. None of the above

14. During disaster (select all that apply)?

- a. Help with evacuation of communities
- b. Evacuate or shelter livestock
- c. Participate in programming at evacuation shelters
- d. Serve as a volunteer in the community during the disaster
- e. Other (please specify)
- f. None of the above

15. After disaster (select all that apply)?

- a. Educate/support ecosystem recovery
- b. Educate/support community resilience and recovery
- c. Serve as a volunteer in the community after the disaster
- d. Work with other youth in recovery efforts
- e. Attend community meetings to learn and participate in recovery efforts
- f. Other (please specify)
- g. None of the above

16. What kinds of support would help you be more prepared to assist your community BEFORE a disaster?

Select all that apply.

- a. Help understanding the risks to my community
- b. Resources to help educate my family and friends in my community about disaster risks
- c. Help mitigating risk to my home and community
- d. More experience performing during traumatic situations
- e. Connections with emergency personnel who respond to disasters
- f. Connections with volunteers in the community that respond to disasters
- g. Connections with others who have experience in disaster response
- h. Having an “Emergency 72-hour kit” for my home
- i. Other (please specify)
- j. None of the above

17. What kinds of support would help you be more prepared to assist your community DURING a disaster?

Select all that apply.

- a. Training on the incident command system
- b. Coordination with organized animal evacuation efforts
- c. Integration with disaster response services (such as local office of emergency services, first responders, law enforcement, fire services)
- d. Volunteering within my community to help and provide support
- e. Having an “Emergency 72-hour kit” for my home
- f. Other (please specify)
- g. None of the above

18. What kinds of support would help you be more prepared to assist your community to recover AFTER disasters?

- a. Knowledge about resources available in British Columbia to help with disaster response
- b. Written outreach materials relevant to disasters
- c. Ability to learn from a network of BC First Nations professionals to help respond to disasters in the future
- d. Other (please specify)
- e. None of the above



19. What challenges do you face when it comes to acting against climate change? Select all that apply.
- I don't know where to start
  - I do not have enough information or knowledge
  - The feeling that individual actions do not make a difference
  - I do not know where to share my concerns and/or ideas
  - Climate friendly lifestyles are too expensive
  - I do not get support from my family and friends
  - I do not face any challenges
  - Climate change is not my responsibility
  - I don't know which First Nations organizations to reach out to for information or help
  - Other (please specify)
  - None of the above
20. If we were to offer more training related to disaster risk reduction for youth, what topics do you want to know more about? Select all that apply.
- The changing landscape / increasing of disaster risks facing BC First Nations communities
  - How communities can mitigate or manage disaster risks
  - Mobility your community to prepare for disaster
  - Coordinating with local and provincial entities
  - Understanding how your community fits into the disaster response systems
  - Facilitating disaster recovery within your community
  - Challenges faced by other First Nations communities in responding to disasters
  - How disasters affect mental health and how to help
  - How to protect your home and family
  - Other (please specify)
  - None of the above
21. Would you be interested in attending an Emergency Management Youth Forum or being contacted to receive more emergency management information?
- Yes
  - No

## Appendix D: Key Themes and Recommendations In Past Emergency Management Reports

### REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA TO THE PARLIAMENT OF CANADA - REPORT 8: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES—INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA (NOVEMBER 2022)

- » **Limited access to emergency management services:** Many Indigenous communities in Canada have limited access to emergency management services, due to factors such as remote locations, inadequate infrastructure, and limited funding. The report recommends that the government work with Indigenous communities to develop a national approach to emergency management that is tailored to their needs.
- » **Insufficient training and capacity:** Many Indigenous communities lack the training and capacity to effectively prepare for and respond to emergencies. The report recommends that the government invest in training and capacity-building initiatives for Indigenous communities, and work with them to develop local emergency management plans.
- » **Inadequate support for recovery:** Many Indigenous communities face significant challenges in recovering from disasters, including limited resources and inadequate support from government agencies. The report recommends that the government provide more comprehensive support for recovery efforts, including mental health and wellness services for affected individuals and communities.
- » **Limited involvement of Indigenous communities in decision-making:** The report notes that Indigenous communities have historically been excluded from decision-making processes related to emergency management. The report recommends that the government work to involve Indigenous communities in all aspects of emergency management planning and decision-making.
- » **Backlog of structural mitigation projects:** The First Nation Infrastructure Fund has a dedicated budget of \$12 million per year until March 2024 to finance projects that aim to prevent emergencies through structural mitigation. However, there is a backlog of 72 project proposals that are yet to be assessed for funding eligibility, with the majority submitted between 2018-19 and 2021-22. Furthermore, the department identified 112 eligible projects but didn't fund them. Of these, 74 have been in the backlog for over five years, with four remaining for nearly a decade. The estimated cost of these 112 projects is at least \$291 million, but 43 of them have no associated cost.
- » **“With the current First Nation Infrastructure Fund annual budget of \$12 million, it would take over 24 years for the department to fund these projects – setting aside the projects that had not been costed and any new proposals. As a result, First Nations communities are likely to continue to experience emergencies that could be prevented or mitigated by building the infrastructure... The greatest unmet structural mitigation needs were in British Columbia” (Office of the Auditor General, November 2022 - Report 8: Emergency Management in First Nations Communities – Indigenous Services Canada).**

## TRIAL BY FIRE: NADLEH WHUT'EN AND THE SHOVEL LAKE FIRE REPORT (2018)

- » Develop and implement effective emergency management plans that reflect the unique needs and challenges of First Nations communities and include traditional knowledge and cultural practices.
- » Strengthen partnerships and collaboration between First Nations and government agencies in emergency planning and response and ensure that communication channels are clear and effective.
- » Support the development of local capacity for emergency management, including training and resources for community members.
- » Address the root causes of wildfires, including climate change and forest management practices, and invest in wildfire prevention and mitigation measures.

## THE T̂SILHQOT'IN REPORT – 2017 WILDFIRES: “THE FIRES AWAKENED US (NAGWEDIŹK'AN GWANEŠ FANGU CHINIDŹĒD GANEXWILAGH)”

- » Develop and implement community-led emergency management plans that reflect the unique needs and priorities of each community and incorporate traditional knowledge and cultural practices.
- » Build partnerships and collaboration between First Nations and government agencies and ensure that communication channels are open and transparent.
- » Invest in local capacity for emergency management, including training and resources for community members, and provide support for long-term recovery and healing.
- » Address the root causes of wildfires, including climate change and forest management practices, and promote the use of traditional fire management practices.

## ADDRESSING THE NEW NORMAL: 21ST CENTURY DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA (“ABBOTT CHAPMAN REPORT”) (APRIL 2018)

- » Strengthen partnerships and collaboration between First Nations and government agencies in emergency planning and response and ensure that communication channels are open and transparent.
- » Develop and implement effective emergency management plans that reflect the unique needs and challenges of First Nations communities and include traditional knowledge and cultural practices.
- » Invest in local capacity for emergency management, including training and resources for community members, and provide ongoing support for recovery and healing.
- » Address the root causes of disasters, including climate change and resource management practices, and promote sustainable and resilient communities.

## FROM THE ASHES: REIMAGINING FIRE SAFETY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES (JUNE 2018)

- » Develop and implement community-led emergency management plans that reflect the unique needs and priorities of each community and incorporate traditional knowledge and cultural practices.
- » Build partnerships and collaboration between First Nations and government agencies and ensure that communication channels are open and transparent.
- » Invest in local capacity for emergency management, including training and resources for community members, and provide ongoing support for recovery and healing.
- » Address the root causes of disasters, including climate change and resource management practices, and promote the use of traditional fire management practices.

## ALIGNED RECOMMENDATIONS AMONGST THE REPORTS

- » Strengthening partnerships and collaboration between First Nations and government agencies in disaster management planning and response, including the use of traditional knowledge and community-driven approaches.
- » Improving communication and information-sharing between government agencies and First Nations during emergencies and providing timely and accurate information to communities.
- » Developing culturally appropriate and community-led emergency plans that reflect the unique needs and challenges of First Nations communities and ensuring that these plans are regularly updated and tested.
- » Supporting the development of local capacity for emergency management, including training and resources for community members, and ensuring that funding and resources are accessible to First Nations communities.
- » Investing in wildfire prevention and mitigation measures, such as fuel management and prescribed burning, and promoting the use of traditional fire management practices.
- » Addressing the root causes of climate change and taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- » Incorporating traditional knowledge and land-based practices into disaster management planning and response and recognizing the importance of Indigenous-led land stewardship and resource management.
- » Recognizing the long-term impacts of disasters on Indigenous communities, including the need for ongoing support for recovery and healing, and ensuring that cultural practices and traditions are respected and protected during and after emergencies.

While this list above is a general alignment, the list below are the aligned recommendations in the context of the intersection of First Nations with other governments. It is important to recognize the unique challenges and opportunities that arise from the relationships between Indigenous communities and federal, provincial, and municipal governments. The reports mentioned earlier provide some recommendations that are specifically relevant to this context:

- i) Strengthen partnerships and collaboration between First Nations and government agencies in emergency planning and response and ensure that communication channels are open and transparent.
- ii) Develop and implement effective emergency management plans that reflect the unique needs and challenges of First Nations communities and include traditional knowledge and cultural practices.
- iii) Invest in local capacity for emergency management, including training and resources for community members, and provide ongoing support for recovery and healing.
- iv) Address the root causes of disasters, including climate change and resource management practices, and promote sustainable and resilient communities.

These recommendations highlight the importance of building collaborative relationships between governments and First Nations, while also acknowledging the need for disaster management plans and practices that are tailored to the specific needs and perspectives of First Nations. To ensure effective collaboration, it's important to prioritize open communication channels, mutual respect and recognition of First Nations inherent rights and jurisdiction, and a willingness to learn from traditional knowledge and cultural practices. Additionally, investing in local capacity-building and supporting sustainable and resilient communities can help to reduce the risks and impacts of disasters, while promoting long-term resilience and well-being. Overall, these reports highlight the need for a more collaborative and inclusive approach to emergency management in First Nations communities.

## Appendix E: Contributors

The successful completion of this Disaster Risk Reduction Action Plan would not have been possible without the contributions and expertise of numerous individuals and organizations. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude and acknowledge the following individuals and entities for their valuable contributions:

Dan George of Four Directions Management Services for leading the engagement of this disaster risk reduction action plan work, providing invaluable guidance and expertise throughout the process.

Kelly Mortimer of Four Directions Management Services for skillfully drafting the Action Plan and integrating all of the feedback received, ensuring its coherence and effectiveness.

Wayne Schnitzler and Cecile Brass from FNESS (First Nations Emergency Services Society) for their outstanding leadership and dedication in spearheading this work, ensuring its alignment with the goals and aspirations of the First Nations communities they work tirelessly for.

The entire management team and Board of Directors of FNESS for their expertise, commitment, and valuable input, which greatly influenced the development of this action plan.

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# Notes:



**Action Plan *for* Disaster Risk Reduction BY FIRST NATIONS IN BC 2023-2030**

First Nations Leadership Council | British Columbia Assembly of First Nations | First Nations Summit | Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs  
First Nations Emergency Services Society | Four Directions Management Services Ltd.