

Wildfire-Ready: Building Resilience Through the Alberta FireSmart™ Community Scorecard

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Dr. Anabela Bonada

Managing Director, Climate Science

Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation, University of Waterloo

Enjolie Bedi, MEB

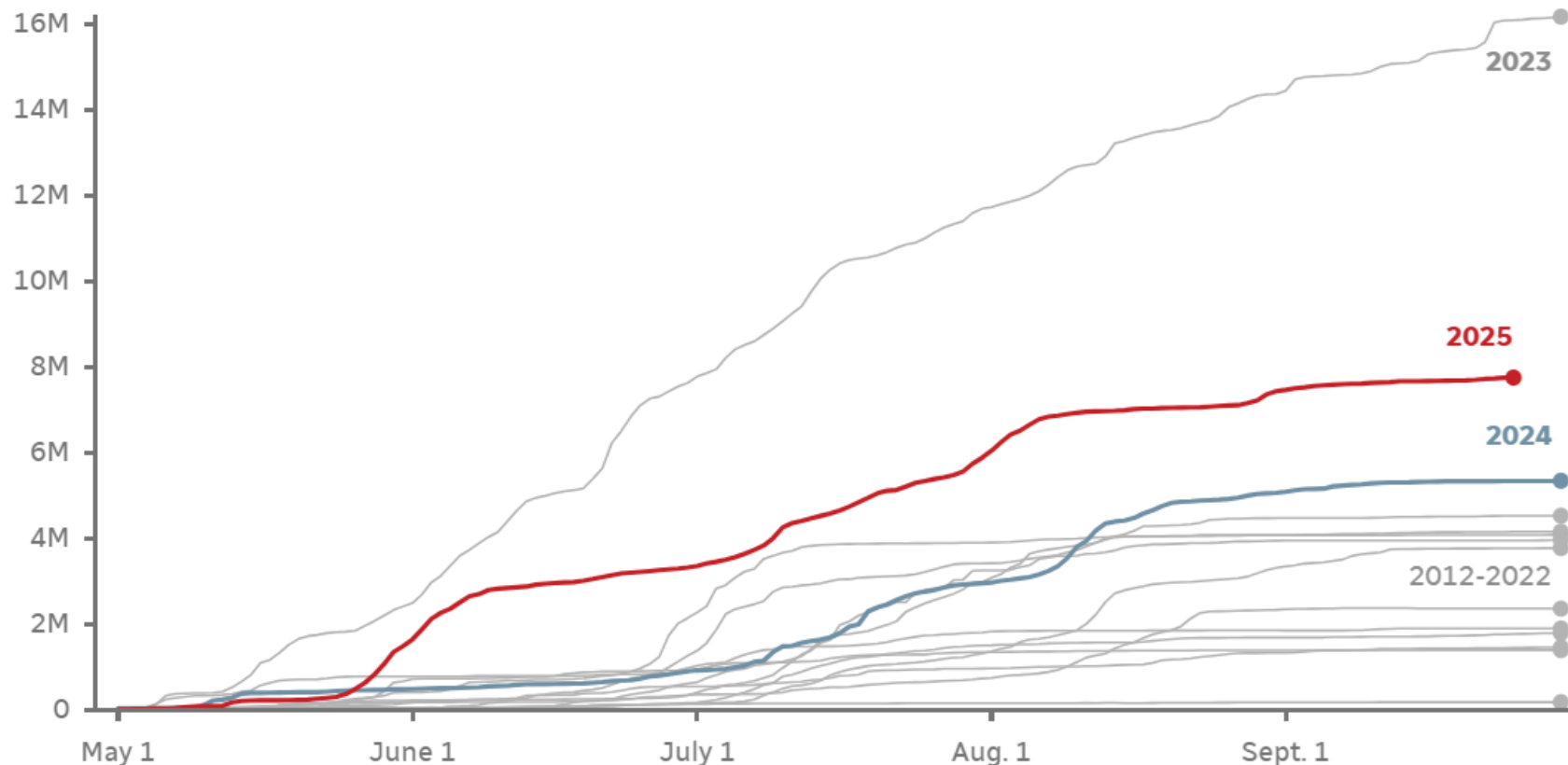
Project Manager, University of British Columbia



Wildfire Risk is Increasing

How much has burned so far this year in Canada

Estimated cumulative hectares burned in wildfires from satellite-detected hotspots



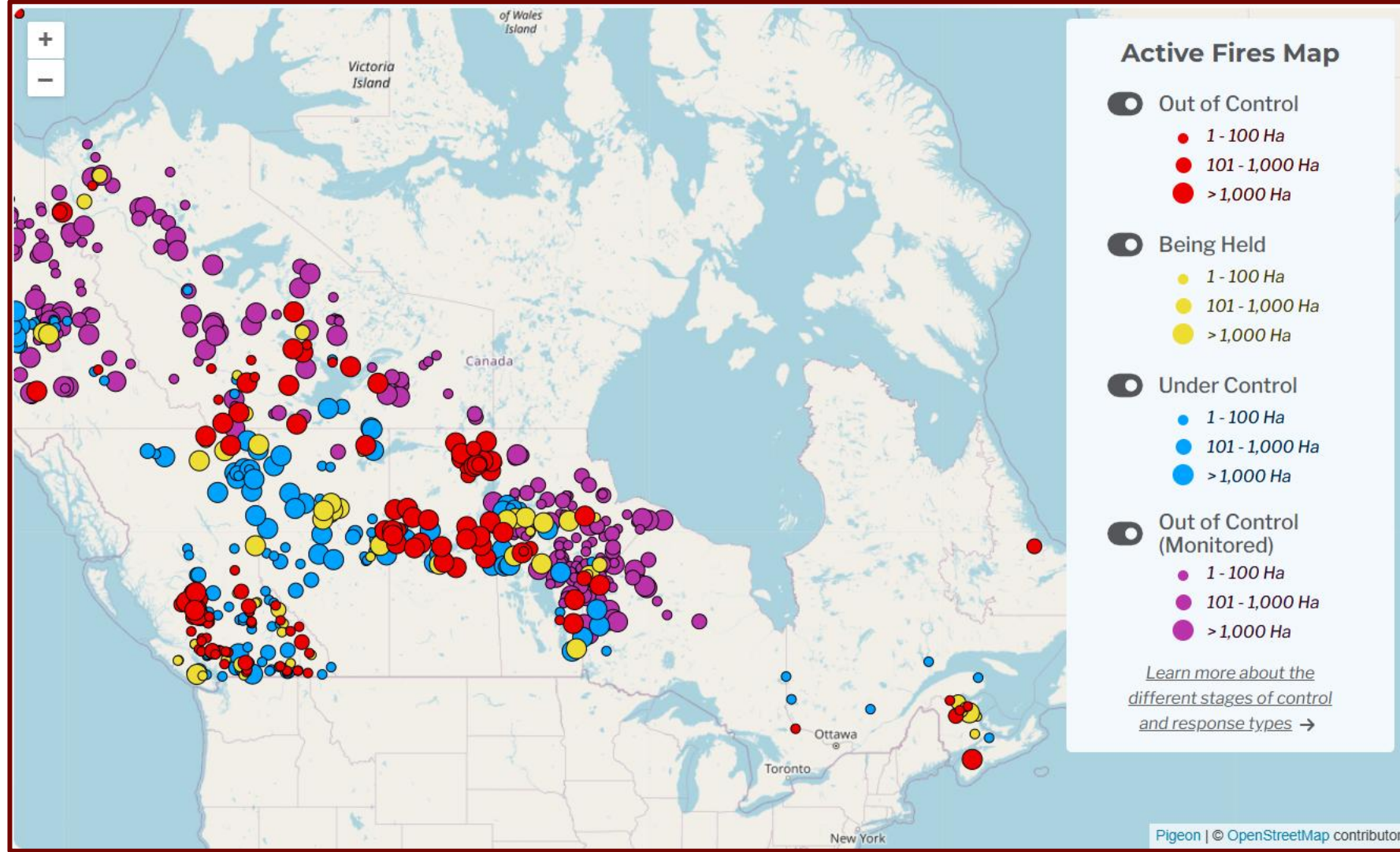
**7% of
Canada's
forest have
burned in the
last 3 years.**

Data last checked on Sep. 25, 2025, at 2:31 p.m. ET

[Get the data](#)

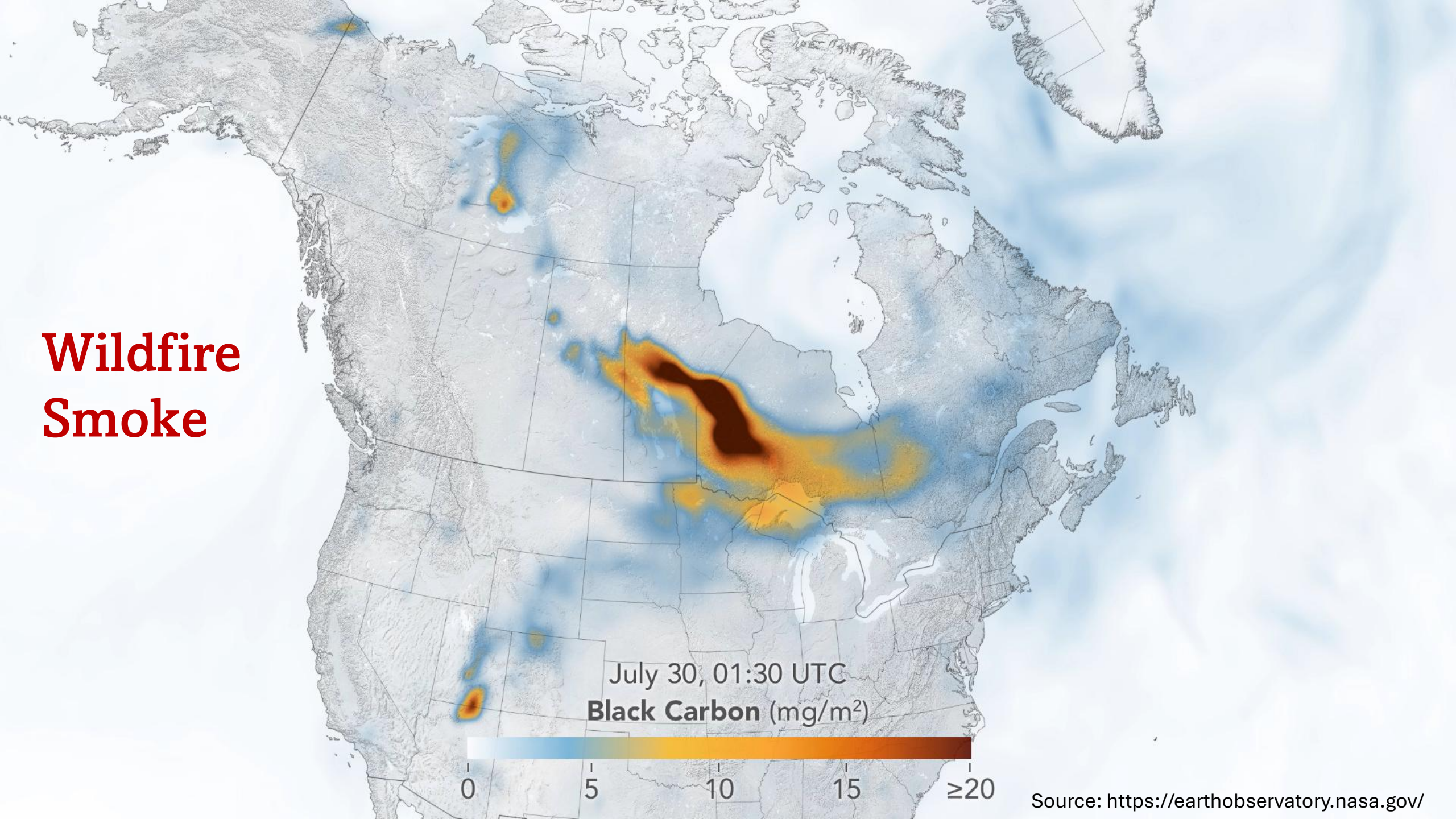
Source: Canadian Wildland Fire Information System (Graeme Bruce/CBC)

Wildfire Risk is Expanding Beyond Traditional Zones



Source: <https://www.cifffc.ca/>

Wildfire Smoke





Between 1980 and 2021, **Indigenous communities** represented **42% of all wildfire-related evacuations**, despite accounting for **just 5% of Canada's population**. In 2023—the most destructive wildfire season on record—**over 95 Indigenous communities were forced to evacuate**.



The Emotional Toll of Wildfire

Psychological & Emotional Toll

- High evacuation rates → long-term displacement, family separation, trauma
- Children/youth: disrupted schooling, safe spaces lost, lasting anxiety
- Pregnancy: disrupted care, increased stress

Mental Health Outcomes

- 39% PTSD, 52% low stress resilience (Alberta & Nova Scotia study)
- Indigenous populations disproportionately vulnerable due to systemic barriers

Structural Challenges

- Limited access to mental health services & culturally safe evacuation
- Evacuation protocols often neglect Indigenous cultural needs

Community Response to Wildfire



The Alberta FireSmart Community Scorecard

First tool of its kind in Alberta (and Canada) to quantify wildfire preparedness at the community level.



Who Should Complete It

The Scorecard is most effective when completed **collaboratively**, drawing on multiple sectors:

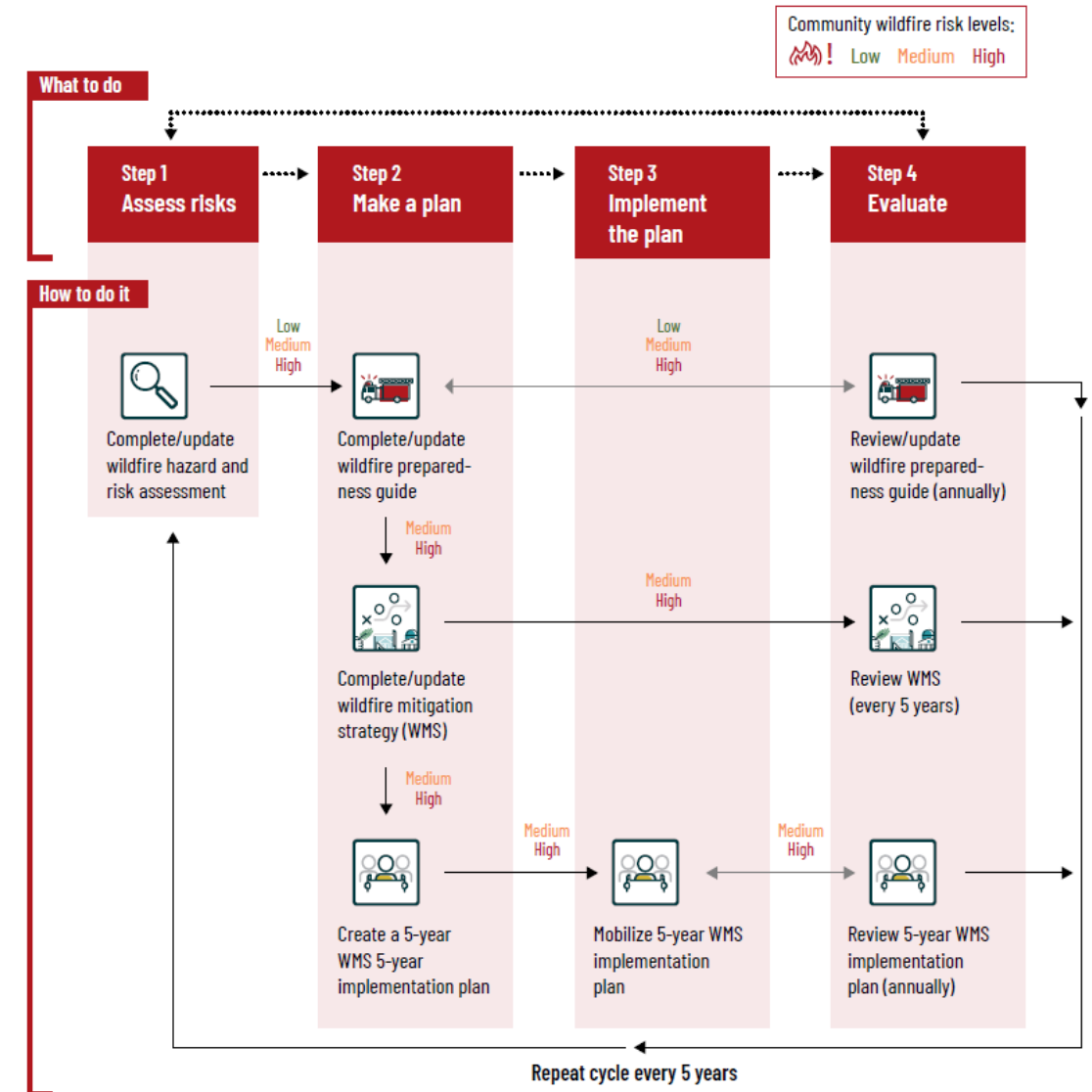
- Emergency management & fire services
- Local government staff & elected officials
- Public health & social services
- Industry representatives (e.g., forestry, mining, tourism, agriculture)
- Critical infrastructure managers (e.g., utilities, transportation)
- Community organizations & NGOs

The Value of the Alberta FireSmart Community Scorecard

- Practical, cost-effective tool to assess wildfire preparedness and identify improvements.
- First standardized way to measure community-level wildfire readiness across jurisdictions.
- Provides a clear process within the Alberta FireSmart Community Wildfire Risk Management Cycle.
- Supports a holistic approach to strengthening community resilience.

All communities, regardless of risk level, should complete the Scorecard annually since wildfire risk is dynamic.

Alberta FireSmart™ Community Wildfire Risk Management Cycle



Applying the FireSmart System to Strengthen Community Wildfire Resilience

Applying the FireSmart™ System to Strengthen Community Wildfire Resilience



Enhance Collaboration and Coordination



Interagency Cooperation

Educate and Empower the Whole of Society



Education

Reduce Wildfire Risk



Vegetation Management



Legislation



Development

Improve Wildfire Response



Emergency Planning



Cross Training

Scoring Best Practices

- A **30-question assessment** for wildfire preparedness within Alberta
- Evaluates best practices across communities
- Results are grouped into **10 action areas** to guide improvement
- **Note:** The tool was not developed with Indigenous consultation. Further refinement and testing are needed to ensure it is culturally and contextually appropriate for Indigenous, rural, and remote communities.

Wildfire Hazard
and Risk
Assessment



Wildfire
Preparedness
Guide



Wildfire
Mitigation
Strategy



Interagency
Cooperation



Education



Vegetation
Management



Legislation



Development



Emergency
Planning



Cross-Training



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Alberta FireSmart[™] Community Scorecard

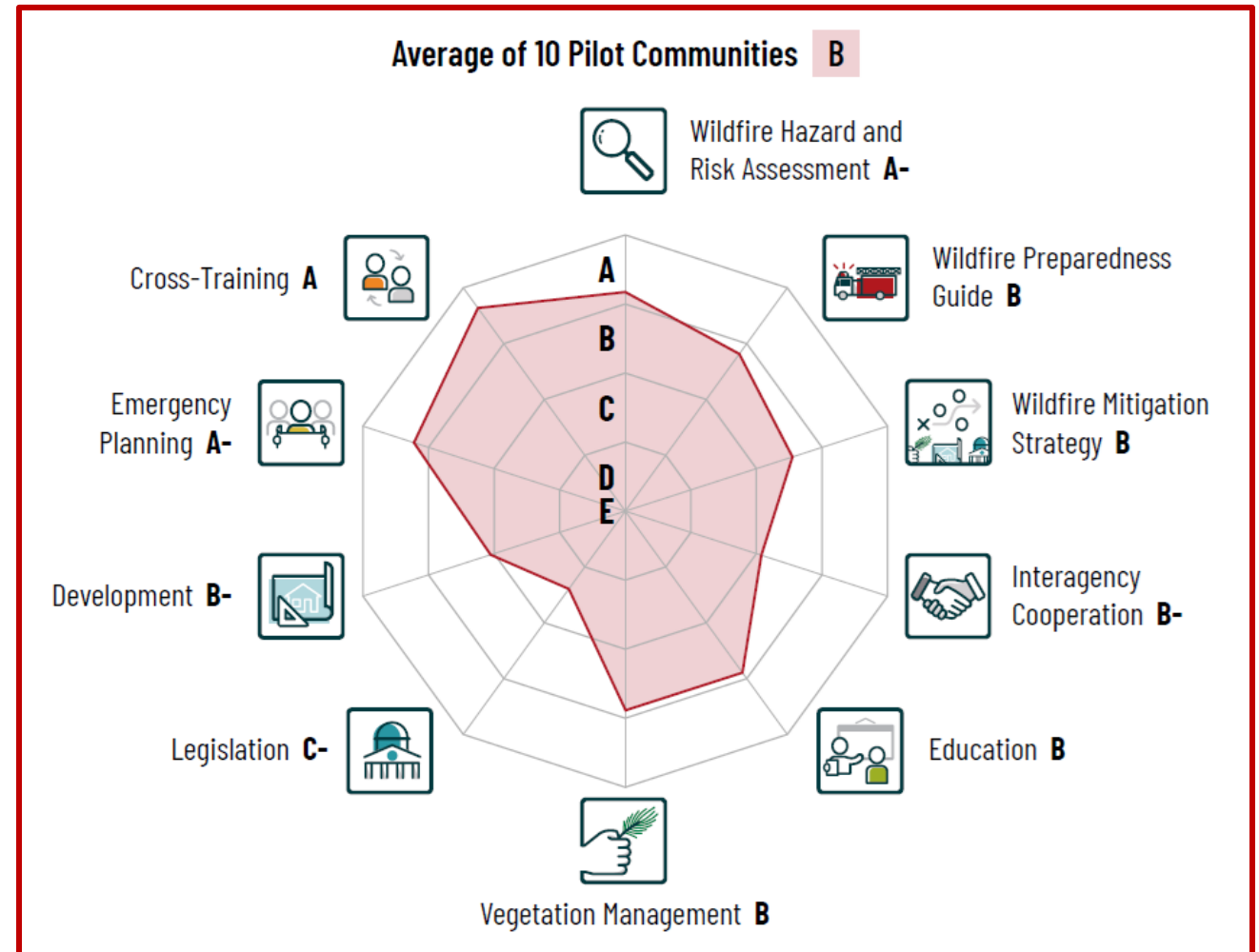
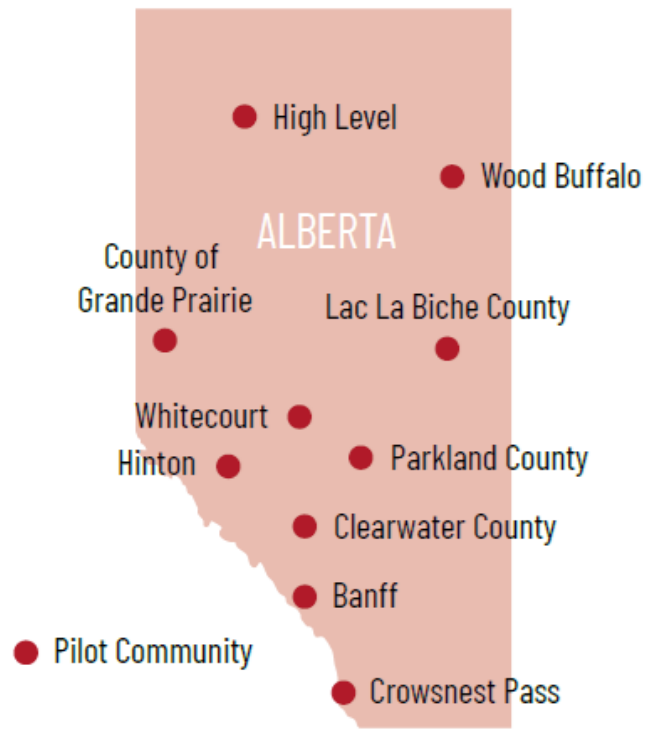
Introduction

Canadian communities are facing increasing wildfire risks as the climate changes. Reducing these risks is urgent and requires informed, coordinated action. The Wildfire Community Scorecard was developed to help communities, like yours, assess their preparedness, identify areas for improvement, and prioritize next steps. The tool is designed to be practical and accessible, including for small and medium communities that may have limited resources, ensuring that all communities can strengthen their resilience to wildfire.

The Scorecard criteria are designed to help communities assess their current level of wildfire preparedness, identify practical opportunities to strengthen their resilience to wildfires, and track progress over time. It provides a standardized process that communities follow throughout the Alberta FireSmart Community Wildfire Risk Management Cycle (Figure 1) and highlights a holistic approach that communities can take to improve their wildfire resilience (Figure 2).

Who Should Complete It

Pilot Results



Challenges and Enablers

Challenges

to FireSmart™
Implementation



Funding
constraints



Staffing
limitations



Lack of enforceable
bylaws for resilient
buildings

Enablers

of FireSmart™
Success



Financial incentives
motivate community
engagement



Interactive FireSmart
Home Assessments boost
participation and build
long-term awareness



Neighbour-to-neighbour
collaboration fosters a
more resilient and
proactive community

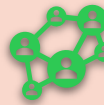
Discussion



How does this apply in your community?



What important pieces are missing?



What would make the tool culturally relevant and useful for your community?



Share barriers and enablers from your own experience.

Key Takeaways

Wildfire risk is rising, and Indigenous communities face disproportionate impacts.

The Alberta FireSmart™ Community Scorecard is a practical tool—but needs adaptation.

Indigenous leadership, knowledge, and cultural safety are essential for resilience.

Stronger partnerships between communities, governments, and researchers can close the gaps.

Together, we can co-create wildfire solutions that protect people, land, and culture.

For more information visit IntactCentre.ca

Contact for this project:

Dr. Anabela Bonada

Managing Director, Climate Science
Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation, University of Waterloo
abonada@uwaterloo.ca

Michael Coutu

FireSmart Specialist
Wildfire Risk Mitigation and FireSmart
Forestry and Parks, Government of Alberta
michael.coutu@gov.ab.ca



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