



2024

**Indigenous Public
Safety Conference**

**Conférence sur la
Sécurité Publique Autochtone**

A POST-CONFERENCE REVIEW

Presented By
**National Indigenous
Fire Safety Council**




**National Indigenous
Fire Safety Council**

**Conseil national
autochtone de la sécurité incendie**

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Acknowledgments

The National Indigenous Fire Safety Council (NIFSC) would like to acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the lands of the Musqueam (*xʷməθkʷəy̓əm*), Tsleil-Waututh (*səlilwətał*), and Kwantlen First Nations (*qʷá:nłə́h*), on which the city of Richmond, British Columbia, is located. The NIFSC extends our deepest respect and gratitude to the Indigenous peoples who have cared for these lands for millennia. Their enduring connection to this territory reminds us of the importance of community, respect for the environment, and the sacred responsibility we all share to protect the land, the people, and the generations to come.

We are committed to working in partnership with Indigenous communities to strengthen fire safety and emergency preparedness, grounded in the knowledge and traditions that have guided these lands for centuries. Through collaboration and mutual understanding, we honor the wisdom of the First Nations and strive to support the safety, resilience, and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples across Canada. Thank you for your continued leadership and stewardship. We stand in solidarity with you as we continue our shared journey toward public safety and community wellbeing.

We are grateful to all speakers, presenters, and instructors who contributed their invaluable knowledge and expertise to the Indigenous Public Safety Conference. These thoughtful presentations on fire safety, first responder health, emergency preparedness, and community resilience have provided critical insights and inspiration for all attendees. Your leadership and dedication to enhancing public safety in Indigenous communities is instrumental in fostering stronger, safer environments for future generations. Thank you for your commitment and for sharing your wisdom with us.

We acknowledge the financial support of Indigenous Services Canada, Tourism Richmond, CN Rail, WaterAx, Fire and Flood, Wildfire Defense Systems, Inc., Western Truck and Fire, Trident Pumps, Flash Wildfire Services and BFL Canada.

Executive Summary

The Indigenous Public Safety Conference (IPSC) and the 35th Annual National Firefighting Competition took place at the River Rock Casino in Richmond, British Columbia, from October 22 – 26, 2024. The event featured pre-conference accredited training sessions, expert speakers, and a tradeshow showcasing a variety of fire safety innovations and Indigenous artisans from across Canada and the United States. The IPSC culminated in a national firefighting competition with regional teams from First Nations communities across Canada.

Over 250 First Nations experts, leaders, youth, elders, knowledge keepers, and professionals gathered to discuss issues regarding First Nations fire safety, emergency preparedness, and climate change. The IPSC was designed to offer attendees a uniquely First Nations perspective on how these issues impact communities and identify risks and opportunities at a regional and national level.

The **35th Annual National Firefighting Competition** is a prestigious event that brought together firefighting teams from First Nations communities across Canada to compete in a series of challenging, skill-based events. These teams, representing different regions, showcased their expertise in fire suppression, emergency response, and teamwork in a simulated competitive environment. The competition highlighted the high-level of professionalism and dedication among Indigenous firefighters. For many, it is more than just a competition, it is a celebration of cultural pride, resilience, and the critical role firefighters play in keeping their communities safe. During the competition, teams demonstrated their ability to work under pressure, exhibiting the techniques and teamwork that are vital in real-world emergencies.

The **Indigenous Public Safety Conference** is a vital annual gathering focused on enhancing fire safety, emergency preparedness, and public safety in Indigenous communities across Canada. At this year's event, participants engaged in workshops, panel discussions, and presentations from various experts on topics such as Indigenous Approaches to Wildfire, Wildfire Readiness, Reconciliation and Fire Services, Climate Change, and more. Participants also had the opportunity to engage in accredited training through courses such as Fire Life Safety Educator, Resilient Minds, Traditional Fire Knowledge, and more. The event fostered collaboration between Indigenous leaders, fire safety professionals, fire departments, governmental entities, and organizations, creating a space for knowledge sharing and empowerment.

Introduction

This report, entitled *2024 Indigenous Public Safety Conference: A Post-Conference Review*, reflects on the training courses, presentations, discussions, experiences, and knowledge shared at the conference. The 2024 Indigenous Public Safety Conference (IPSC) is a crucial event for First Nations communities, as it specifically addresses the unique public safety challenges, such as fire risks, emergency preparedness, community health, and more in a culturally relevant way. By offering accredited training, presentations from industry experts, and hands-on learning opportunities, the IPSC aims to empower community leaders and safety professionals with the tools and knowledge necessary to protect their communities by integrating traditional Indigenous practices with modern safety strategies, ensuring that public safety efforts are effective, sustainable, and community driven.

The IPSC is designed to share knowledge between Indigenous leaders, fire safety experts, emergency management, and public safety professionals. This knowledge exchange allows attendees to gain a deeper understanding of fire hazards, emergency response, and community-based safety strategies. For many First Nations communities, the conference provides an opportunity to lead in their own safety efforts; to build sustainable plans that align with their cultural values and unique environmental challenges.

The conference also serves as a bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous experts in various fields, which promotes collaboration and the formation of long-term partnerships. It helps First Nations communities not only address immediate public safety needs, but also build capacity for the future, ensuring that they are well-prepared for evolving risks like climate change, increased wildfires, and natural disasters.

Pre-Conference Training

In advance of the official IPSC, two days were dedicated to providing fire safety and prevention training courses. The training took place on October 22-23, 2024.

Auto Extrication - Electric Vehicles (EVs) (Kevin Patterson – EV-X): This course focused on specialized techniques for safely extricating individuals from electric vehicles, an increasingly common need due to the rise of EVs. Participants gained hands-on skills in handling high-voltage systems, ensuring safety for both responders and victims. This course was beneficial for improving readiness and safety in emergencies involving new vehicle technology.

Wildfire S-100 (Kristopher Liivam – Arctic Fire Safety): This course covered essential firefighting tactics for wildfire suppression, with a focus on protecting First Nations lands. Participants learned practical skills for fire line construction, hose deployment, and pump operations, equipping them to effectively respond to local wildfire risks. This training is invaluable for communities facing heightened wildfire threats due to climate change.

Traditional Fire Knowledge (Arnold Lazare – NIFSC): This course integrated Indigenous fire management practices, focusing on traditional knowledge of controlled burns and land stewardship. Participants learned how these methods support environmental health and wildfire prevention, bridging traditional and modern fire management techniques. The course fostered cultural preservation while promoting effective fire mitigation strategies.

Resilient Minds (Steve Fraser – Canadian Mental Health Association): Resilient Minds provides mental health training tailored for public safety professionals, with a focus on resilience-building strategies. The course covered psychological health, stress management, and peer support, helping first responders maintain mental wellness in high-stress roles. This training is key to sustaining long-term health and effectiveness in emergency services.

Fire Life Safety Educator (Paul Knuusgard – Justice Institute of British Columbia): This course prepared individuals to teach fire safety principles within their communities. Participants developed skills in public education, learning to create and deliver fire safety programs that are engaging and accessible. The training supports broader community awareness and prevention, fostering a safer environment for all residents.

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (Kenzie Hartt – Ember Alliance): This course trained participants to develop and implement Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs), helping communities assess their unique fire risks and create mitigation strategies. By empowering leaders to proactively manage wildfire threats, CWPPs increase community resilience and preparedness, particularly for remote or high-risk areas.

Building Codes and Plan Reviews (Leon Smallboy – NIFSC): Focusing on fire safety in construction, this course taught participants how to evaluate and enforce building codes. They learned to review construction plans for fire safety compliance, ensuring structures are built or modified with fire prevention in mind. This training benefits community infrastructure by promoting safe, compliant building practices.

Day 1: Summary of Proceedings (October 24, 2024)

Keynotes, Plenary Panels, and Sessions

Opening and Welcome Speeches

Day 1 opened with a deeply meaningful opening ceremony led by Alec Guerin, a respected Knowledge Keeper. Alec began by offering a heartfelt prayer in his ancestral language, grounding the gathering in spirituality and respect for Indigenous traditions.

Following the prayer, Alec delivered a land acknowledgment, honoring the traditional territory on which the event took place. He emphasized the enduring connection between Indigenous Peoples and the land, reminding attendees of the importance of recognizing and respecting the caretakers who have safeguarded it for generations.

Following the opening ceremony, introductory remarks were provided by keynote speaker Terry Diabo, a founding member of the Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada (AFAC). Terry Diabo, a founding member of the Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada (AFAC), delivered a powerful keynote speech reflecting on AFAC's legacy and its instrumental role in establishing the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council (NIFSC).

Terry shared the history of AFAC's commitment to inclusivity, emphasizing the importance of representing all Indigenous Peoples. This vision laid the foundation for the NIFSC, which officially replaced AFAC on April 1, 2022, with the establishment of its inaugural Board of Directors.

The governance model of the NIFSC is built on collaboration, relying on the National Advisory Committee and partnerships with national Indigenous organizations to fulfill its mandate. Terry highlighted AFAC's foundational goals for NIFSC, which include creating a sustainable, Indigenous-governed organization that develops standards, programs, and reporting systems tailored to the needs of First Nation communities.

With strategic objectives free from political influence, the NIFSC aims to promote careers in Indigenous fire services and enhance community safety. Terry's speech inspired attendees by showcasing how AFAC's vision evolved into a nationally recognized organization dedicated to advancing public safety in Indigenous communities.

Morning Plenary Panel: National Fire Strategy

The opening panel discussion, *National Fire Strategy - Current State of Indigenous Fire*, brought together leading voices to explore the challenges and advancements in fire safety within Indigenous communities. Panelists, including Jeremy Parkin, Nick Rhone, Arnold Lazare, Len Garis, Amanda Robinson, and Jessica Gordon, addressed the integration of statistical research, operational strategies, and community-focused initiatives. They highlighted gaps in infrastructure, the role of culturally relevant fire safety practices, and steps toward a unified national fire strategy to improve resilience and safety outcomes for Indigenous communities across Canada.

Concurrent Sessions – Fire Operations Stream:

First 5 Command (Dave Robertson – Fire Edge): This session emphasized effective decision-making during the critical first five minutes of emergency response. Dave Robertson explored strategies for rapid assessment, command establishment, and coordination, equipping leaders with the tools to enhance situational control and safety.

Fireground Safety and Risk Assessments (Jeremy Parkin – Rama Fire Rescue Services): Parkin discussed strategies for maintaining safety during fireground operations and emphasized the importance of conducting thorough community risk assessments. These tools help identify vulnerabilities and tailor fire prevention and response plans to specific community needs.

WISER: Waterless Initial Suppression for Exigent Response (Gary Foo and Nick Rhones – Independent First Nations Alliance): Foo and Rhones explored the WISER system, which utilizes innovative waterless fire suppression techniques for rapid response in areas where water access is limited. This approach addresses logistical challenges faced by remote communities, enhancing initial firefighting capabilities.

Concurrent Sessions – Fire Prevention Stream:

Fire Prevention through Inspections and AI (Shaun McCumber and Kevin Hardy - Mustimuhw Information Solutions Inc.): Presenters highlighted how Mustimuhw Information Solutions integrates AI into fire inspection processes to identify risks and improve prevention. The session showcased AI-driven analytics to bolster proactive safety measures in Indigenous communities.

Fire Deaths in Indigenous Communities (Len Garis - NIFSC): Garis presented research on fire-related fatalities in Indigenous communities, highlighting systemic causes and preventative strategies. The session emphasized the importance of culturally tailored interventions to reduce risks and save lives.

Concurrent Sessions - Wildfire

National Wildland Fire Management (Michelle Vandevord and Blaine Wiggins - NIFSC):

This presentation examined the current state of wildland fire management, with an emphasis on Indigenous leadership. Strategies for addressing wildfires through traditional knowledge and modern technology were shared, emphasizing community resilience.

Community-Based Wildfire Planning (Kenzie Hartt - Ember Alliance): Hartt introduced tools and strategies for wildfire planning that prioritize local involvement. This session highlighted how empowering communities ensures more effective preparedness and mitigation.

Community Fire Risk Reduction Dashboard (DeLea Mapstone - Canadian Public Safety Operations Organization): Mapstone introduced enhancements to CanOps' Community Fire Risk Reduction Dashboard, a data-driven tool that helps communities identify and address fire risks effectively. These improvements provide greater accessibility and actionable insights for fire safety planning.

Concurrent Sessions – Climate Change

Carbon Footprint and Fire Prevention (Dave Waterhouse – Montreal Fire Department):

Waterhouse discussed reducing fire departments' carbon footprints through sustainable practices. The session also explored the socio-economic benefits of robust fire prevention measures, underlining environmental and financial impacts.

Kickstarting Climate Resilience (Cheryl Evans - Climate Ready Together): Evans shared methods for fostering community-driven climate resilience. Dust-Busting 101 focused on identifying small, actionable steps that inspire broader climate adaptation initiatives.

Harmony in Diversity (Marley Kozak - The Resilience Institute): Kozak shared lessons from climate adaptation initiatives in the Piikani Nation and Wood Buffalo region. The session emphasized inclusive engagement strategies that harmonize cultural diversity and resilience-building efforts for long-term adaptation.

Concurrent Sessions – Emergency Management

CN Rail Emergency Response (Steven Santelli – CN Rail): This session outlined CN Rail's emergency response training programs, focusing on railway incidents near Indigenous lands. Santelli highlighted collaboration opportunities and readiness strategies to mitigate risks associated with rail operations.

Skills for High-Stress Operations (Marc D'Aquino and Cam Challenger - Holistic EPR):

This session covered techniques for maintaining performance and decision-making under

pressure, equipping attendees with strategies to manage stress effectively in critical situations.

Decision-Making Under Uncertainty (Jonathan Reimer - Emergent Risk Management Ltd.): Reimer examined frameworks for effective decision-making in emergency management when conditions are unpredictable. The session offered practical tools for navigating ambiguity and minimizing risks during crises.

Concurrent Sessions – Fire Strategies and Policies

Traditional Fire Knowledge Policy Management (Arnold Lazare - NIFSC): Lazare detailed the incorporation of traditional fire knowledge into policy frameworks. He highlighted how Indigenous fire practices could guide sustainable and culturally respectful safety management strategies.

Honoring Nada Fronk (Monte "Awan" Fronk - Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe): Fronk shared his personal story of loss and advocacy, addressing the critical issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. His powerful narrative highlighted the need for systemic change and community healing.

Fire Bylaws 101 (Jeremy Parkin – Rama Fire Rescue Service): Parkin provided a foundational overview of fire bylaws, focusing on their development, enforcement, and role in enhancing public safety. The session equipped attendees with tools to tailor bylaws to their community's unique needs.

Concurrent Sessions – Occupational Health and Safety

The 7 Gifts from Burnout (Arjuna George - Silver Arrow Coaching & Consulting): George's session focused on identifying burnout signs among fire professionals and transforming challenges into growth opportunities. Participants learned strategies to enhance resilience, well-being, and leadership through self-awareness.

Firefighters Health and Safety (Len Garis - NIFSC): Garis discussed challenges to firefighters' physical and mental well-being, advocating for comprehensive health and safety measures to support their long-term resilience and effectiveness.

Cancer Prevention in Firefighters (Richard Amnotte - City of Levis - Fire Department): Amnotte discussed strategies to reduce cancer risks for firefighters, including protective equipment, health monitoring, and decontamination protocols. This session underscored the importance of prioritizing firefighter health and safety to mitigate long-term risks.

Panel Discussion 2: Cancer Prevention - Operational Best Practices and Mental Health Resiliency and Fireground Decontamination

The second panel discussion, *Cancer Prevention - Operational Best Practices and Mental Health Resiliency & Fireground Decontamination*, brought together experts Blaine Wiggins, Jeremy Parkin, Richard Amnotte, and Len Garis to address the critical health risks firefighters face in the line of duty. During this discussion, the expert panelists emphasized strategies for reducing cancer risks, such as improved decontamination practices, protective protocols, and proper use of equipment. The panelists also highlighted the importance of mental health resiliency for firefighters, and other first responders, through peer support and training. They advocated for a holistic approach to firefighter well-being that integrates physical and psychological safety measures into daily workplace activities.

Tradeshow

Following the individual and plenary panel sessions, conference attendees had the opportunity to explore exhibits from vendors showcasing cutting-edge fire safety equipment, innovative technologies, and community-focused solutions. This time allowed participants to engage directly with industry professionals, ask questions, and discover resources tailored to the unique needs of Indigenous communities. The relaxed environment also facilitated networking, enabling attendees to connect with peers, share experiences, and strengthen professional relationships, all contributing to the collaborative spirit of the event.

Tradeshow vendors included:

- 3T1B Products Inc., 5 Star Services, Alberta K9 Inc, Altohelix, Associated Fire Safety Group, Canadian Safety Equipment Inc, Fattruck Alberta, Fire Power Emergency Apparatus & Service Ltd., Firemark AI Inc., FireSwarm Solutions Inc., Global Fire Rescue Service Inc., LIVunLtd., MARTIN & LEVESQUE UNIFORME INC, Mercedes Textiles Limited, Nova / Hummingbird Drones, Rocky Mountain Phoenix, Safetek Profire, Scotty FIREFIGHTER, Surgically Clean Air, Inc., Trident Pump Inc, Vallfirest North America - the Wildfire Company, WASP MANUFACTURING LTD, WFR Wholesale Fire & Rescue, Hawk Lace, Ironstar Indigenous Company, Mariella key, Michaelhilldesigns, Native souls & crafts, Prospering Nations, Shadae Johnson, Shining Bear Designs, SIYACreations, Sweetgrass Soap, Arctic Fire Safety Services, Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Center, Canadian Mental Health Association - Resilient Minds, Canadian Volunteer Fire Services Association (CVFSA), Firefighters

Without Borders Canada, First Nations Emergency Services Society, FNESS,
OFNTSC

This year's Indigenous Public Safety Conference proudly offered corporate sponsorship opportunities to engage with and support the Indigenous fire safety community. Sponsorship packages provided businesses with a platform to demonstrate their commitment to public safety while fostering meaningful connections with conference attendees.

With options ranging from Bronze to Gold, sponsors contributed to the success of the event by supporting key activities, such as workshops, networking events, and community-driven initiatives. Their involvement enriched the conference experience, creating opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all sponsors for their invaluable contributions, which played a pivotal role in advancing Indigenous fire safety and public safety initiatives across the country.

Corporate Sponsors



WILDFIRE DEFENSE SYSTEMS

Award Ceremony

In recognition of the significant contributions to the field of national statistics and ongoing support in promoting evidence-based approaches to public policy, the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council was proud to present Statistics Canada with the Indigenous Fire Safety Leadership Award.

The award was presented to Chief Statistician of Canada, André Loranger, and accepted by acting Assistant Chief Statistician, Sébastien Larochelle. Blaine Wiggins and Arnold Lazare presented the award and gifted a ceremonial eagle feather to Sébastien Larochelle, the eagle feather holds profound significance in Indigenous culture, symbolizing strength, wisdom, and respect. Its presentation is a deeply meaningful gesture, representing gratitude and the acknowledgment of exceptional contributions.

This award celebrated Statistics Canada's vital role in supporting fire safety through their data-driven research. Their efforts have empowered First Nation communities to develop effective strategies to prevent fire-related loss of life and property, ensuring a safer future for current and future generations.

The eagle feather not only recognized their impactful work but also underscored the importance of partnerships in advancing community safety. This achievement reflects a shared commitment to enhancing fire prevention and preparedness in Indigenous communities.

Networking Event

This year's conference featured a networking event that brought together guests, speakers, and vendors in a collaborative atmosphere focused on fostering meaningful relationships. The event served as a unique platform for stakeholders to connect, exchange ideas, and explore solutions to the critical issues affecting fire safety and public well-being in Indigenous communities.

Held in the main ballroom, the gathering created opportunities for professionals from various sectors to share insights, discuss challenges, and build partnerships aimed at preventing fire-related losses and improving safety strategies.

Run 4 Fire – National Firefighting Competition Teams

The *Run 4 Fire* session introduced the teams participating in the 35th Annual National Firefighting Competition, celebrating the skill, dedication, and camaraderie of Indigenous firefighters from across Canada. Each team's presentation highlighted their commitment to excellence in fire safety and emergency response, showcasing regional pride and unity. This session served as a spirited prelude to the competition, which took place on October 26th, inspiring attendees with the expertise and teamwork demonstrated by these firefighting professionals. It also reinforced the importance of collaboration and shared learning in advancing public safety efforts.

The 35th Annual National Firefighting Competition included teams from:

- Team Ontario
- Team Alberta
- Team Atlantic
- Team British Columbia
- Team Manitoba
- Team Quebec
- Team Saskatchewan
- Team Nunavut

Entertainment

The first day of the conference concluded with a hypnotist performance by Ted Swan captivated the audience with a humorous performance that included interactive elements, creating a lighthearted atmosphere for participants to unwind and connect. This show provided a refreshing break, promoting camaraderie and community spirit among the conference attendees.

Day 2: Summary of Proceedings (October 25, 2024)

Keynotes, Plenary Panels, and Sessions

Morning Plenary Panel:

The Day 2 morning plenary panel continues the vital dialogue initiated on Day 1, delving deeper into the ideas, challenges, and opportunities highlighted in the opening panel discussion, *National Fire Strategy - Current State of Indigenous Fire*. This session reflects on feedback from participants and panelists as it explores actionable steps and collaborative strategies to address the critical fire safety needs of Indigenous communities.

The session aims to energize participants with concrete actions and shared resources, paving the way toward a unified and inclusive National Fire Strategy that prioritizes safety, resilience, and cultural respect for Indigenous communities across Canada.

Attendees are encouraged to actively contribute to the discussion, as this panel sets the foundation for shaping the next steps toward collaborative fire safety excellence.

Concurrent Sessions – Fire Operations

Reconciliation & Fire Services (Leon Smallboy - NIFSC): Smallboy discussed the critical intersection of reconciliation and fire services, emphasizing the need for inclusive practices that acknowledge Indigenous perspectives. He shared strategies for building trust between fire services and communities, fostering mutual respect and collaboration. Attendees gained insights on how reconciliation can transform public safety into a partnership rooted in cultural understanding and shared responsibility.

Firefighting Challenges in Indigenous Communities (Adam Hawryliw – Iqaluit Fire Department): Hawryliw shared firsthand experiences of firefighting in remote Indigenous communities, highlighting challenges such as limited resources, vast service areas, and harsh conditions. He outlined innovative approaches for overcoming these obstacles, focusing on teamwork and adaptability. This session underscored the resilience of Indigenous firefighters and the importance of community-led solutions in public safety.

Ignitable Liquid Detection Canines (Matt Lapointe & Kelsey Boettcher - Alberta K9 Inc.): Lapointe and Boettcher demonstrated the capabilities of trained detection dogs in identifying ignitable liquids at fire scenes. They explained how these canines contribute to precise and efficient fire investigations, enhancing public safety by determining causes more quickly. Attendees learned about the rigorous training process for these dogs and their handlers, highlighting their vital role in fire forensics.

Concurrent Sessions – Fire Prevention

National Fire Information Database (Amanda Robbins - National Research Council): Robbins presented a comprehensive analysis of fire incidents in Indigenous communities from 2005 to 2021, using data from the National Fire Information Database. Her findings illuminated trends in fire risks and responses, offering a foundation for targeted prevention strategies. This data-driven session helped attendees understand the value of evidence-based approaches to improving fire safety.

Tribal Community Risk Reduction (Monte “Awan” Fronk - Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe): Fronk highlighted the importance of tailored risk reduction strategies in tribal communities, integrating traditional knowledge and modern safety practices. He provided actionable steps for identifying and mitigating risks unique to Indigenous communities. This session emphasized the significance of community involvement in developing effective and culturally respectful safety initiatives.

FireSmart BC (Malina Garner - First Nations' Emergency Services Society): Garner detailed the FireSmart program's approach to reducing wildfire risks, focusing on practical, community-driven initiatives in British Columbia. She shared success stories from communities that have implemented FireSmart principles, demonstrating their effectiveness in mitigating wildfire damage. Attendees left with tools and inspiration to apply similar strategies in their regions.

Concurrent Sessions – Wildfire

Wildfire-Ready Communities (Anabela Bonada - Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation, University of Waterloo): Bonada discussed empowering communities to prepare for and mitigate wildfire risks through education, planning, and action. Her session included examples of successful wildfire-ready programs and emphasized the importance of community ownership in adaptation efforts. Attendees gained actionable steps to foster resilience in the face of increasing wildfire threats.

Post-Wildfire Examinations (Kelsey Winter - FPInnovations): Winter presented findings from research on the long-term impacts of wildfires on communities, offering insights into recovery and rebuilding. She explained how post-wildfire examinations inform better land-use planning and disaster prevention strategies. This session emphasized the importance of learning from past events to protect communities in the future.

Saskatchewan's Indigenous FireSmart Approach (Clifford Jerome Buettner - Prince Albert Grand Council - Forestry and Emergency Protective Services): Buettner shared Saskatchewan's innovative FireSmart initiatives, which combine Indigenous knowledge with modern wildfire management techniques. He highlighted successes in building partnerships and increasing community engagement in wildfire prevention. Attendees learned how this integrated approach enhances safety and resilience.

Concurrent Sessions – Climate Change

Update Your Knowledge (William Maddess - Dalhousie University): Maddess stressed the importance of continuous learning for fire and emergency professionals, sharing strategies for staying informed about evolving challenges. He introduced resources for professional development and knowledge-sharing, emphasizing adaptability in a rapidly changing safety landscape.

Climate Data for Wildfire Preparedness (Christopher Boucher & Jeremy Fyke - Canadian Centre for Climate Services): Boucher and Fyke demonstrated how using climate data can enhance wildfire prevention and resilience planning. They showcased tools for analyzing climate trends and modeling future risks, helping communities make informed decisions. The session emphasized proactive planning to address long-term challenges posed by climate change.

EMAP Mitigation for Climate Change (Cole Jackson – Indigenous Public Services): Jackson shared strategies under the Emergency Management Assistance Program (EMAP) that focus on mitigating climate change impacts in Indigenous communities. He provided examples of successful initiatives and discussed funding opportunities for preparedness projects.

Concurrent Sessions – Emergency Management

Energy Emergency Lessons (Ryan Schubert - Metis Nation of Ontario): Schubert reflected on lessons learned from recent energy emergencies, emphasizing the importance of preparedness and adaptation. He highlighted strategies for managing critical infrastructure and ensuring community safety during energy disruptions.

Transportation of Dangerous Goods (Josée Boudreau - Transport Canada): Boudreau outlined safety regulations and best practices for transporting hazardous materials, focusing on minimizing risks to communities. She emphasized the importance of training and adherence to protocols to ensure safe transport operations.

CANUTEC Emergency Response Guide (Fady Al Zarka - Transport Canada): Al Zarka introduced the 2024 Emergency Response Guide, detailing its use in managing dangerous goods incidents. He provided practical examples of how the guide supports first responders during emergencies.

Concurrent Sessions – Fire Strategies and Policies

Indigenous Services Canada Standards (Kevin McDonald – Indigenous Services Canada): This session focused on service standards designed to support fire safety and emergency management in Indigenous communities. Kevin emphasized the importance of culturally tailored services to meet community-specific needs effectively.

Community Safety & Social Justice (Gina M. Nagano - House of Wolf & Associates Inc.): Nagano explored the intersection of social justice and community safety, emphasizing equitable infrastructure development. Her session highlighted how addressing systemic inequalities can lead to safer, more inclusive communities.

Policy Development for Fire Codes (Leon Smallboy & Blaine Wiggins - NIFSC): Smallboy and Wiggins detailed the process of developing policies that integrate fire and building codes with Indigenous perspectives. They emphasized balancing safety requirements with cultural preservation.

Concurrent Sessions – Occupational Health and Safety

Implementing Occupational Health & Safety Programs (Jan Chappel - Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety): Chappel provided a step-by-step guide to creating effective occupational health and safety programs. She highlighted the importance of leadership, worker engagement, and continuous improvement in fostering safe workplaces.

Developing Emergency Coordinator Roles (Marc D'Aquino – Holistic EPR): D'Aquino emphasized the critical role of emergency coordinators in enhancing community preparedness. He shared strategies for developing these roles, focusing on training, communication, and leadership.

Change Management in Safety Programming (Ryan Schubert - Metis Nation of Ontario): Schubert shared insights into managing change in health and safety programs, offering strategies for adapting to evolving challenges. He emphasized the importance of flexibility and community involvement in successful program implementation.

35th Annual National Firefighters Competition

The National Indigenous Fire Safety Council (NIFSC) proudly presents its 35th Annual Firefighting Competition, a showcase of skill, teamwork, and fire safety expertise among Indigenous firefighters from across the nation. This event emphasizes fitness, wellness,

and the advancement of firefighting techniques, providing participants with a platform to demonstrate their abilities in a series of dynamic, challenging drills known as "evolutions."

Firefighting teams compete in a range of evolutions designed to replicate real-life scenarios and critical tasks performed by firefighters. These include:

1. **SCBA Wall Relay** - A relay that tests the effective use of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) while navigating obstacles.
2. **Fuel Removal** - A test of endurance and coordination where firefighters transport heavy equipment across marked distances.
3. **Thermal Energy Drill** - Participants perform physically demanding tasks such as hose dragging and target hitting to simulate emergency response.
4. **Water Pack Target Throw Down** - Teams fill and carry water packs, aiming to knock down targets with precision and accuracy.
5. **Portable Pump Dual Attack Line** - Firefighters deploy and operate hose lines to hit targets, showcasing water application and communication skills.

Competition Results

- National Firefighting Competition 1st Place Winners: Cross Lake Cree Nation, Manitoba
- National Firefighting Competition 2nd Place Winners: Garden River First Nation, Ontario
- National Firefighting Competition 3rd Place Winners: Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Alberta
- National Firefighting Competition Most Sportsmanlike Team Winners: Team Iqaluit, Iqaluit Fire Department, Nunavut
- National Firefighting Competition Run 4 Fire Prevention Presentation Winners: Cross Lake Cree Nation, Manitoba



**National Firefighting
Competition 1st Place Winners**
Cross Lake Cree Nation, Manitoba



**National Firefighting
Competition 2nd Place Winners**
Garden River First Nation, Ontario



**National Firefighting
Competition 3rd Place Winners**
Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Alberta



**National Firefighting
Competition Most
Sportsmanlike Team Winners**
Team Iqaluit, Iqaluit Fire Department,
Nunavut



**National Firefighting
Competition Run 4 Fire
Prevention Presentation
Winners**
Cross Lake Cree Nation, Manitoba



**2024 National Firefighting
Competition Teams**

Conclusion: Lessons Learned

The **2024 Indigenous Public Safety Conference** and **35th Annual National Firefighting Competition** culminated in a powerful celebration of learning, collaboration, and progress. Over the course of the event, participants from diverse backgrounds and regions came together to exchange knowledge, showcase skills, and build lasting connections. These efforts reaffirm the collective commitment to improving public safety in Indigenous communities across Canada, blending traditional wisdom with modern innovation.

One of the central themes of the conference was the integration of **traditional Indigenous knowledge** into contemporary fire safety and emergency preparedness practices. Sessions on traditional fire knowledge and policy development highlighted the value of Indigenous approaches, such as controlled burns and community-led risk assessments, in creating sustainable solutions for wildfire and fireground safety. Attendees left with a deeper understanding of how Indigenous cultural practices can complement scientific advancements, ensuring that fire management strategies are both effective and culturally resonant.

The focus on **education and training** throughout the event emphasized the importance of empowering communities to lead their own safety initiatives. Courses on topics like fire bylaws, building codes, and fire life safety education provided actionable tools to help community leaders make informed decisions about fire prevention and response. Additionally, innovative sessions, such as those on AI-driven fire inspections and the use of ignitable liquid detection canines, demonstrated how modern technology can be harnessed to meet the unique challenges faced by Indigenous communities.

The 35th National Firefighting Competition showcased the incredible talent, resilience, and teamwork of firefighters from across Canada. Teams demonstrated their proficiency in high-pressure scenarios, inspiring attendees with their commitment to excellence. Beyond the competitive aspect, the event reinforced the importance of skill-sharing and camaraderie in fostering a strong public safety network. The competition was a testament to the strength of the communities' fire services and the vital role of collaboration in emergency services.

The topics of mental health and wellness were key themes woven throughout the conference. Sessions on resilience, burnout prevention, and mental health strategies for first responders addressed the critical need for holistic support systems. Attendees were encouraged to prioritize self-care and peer-support as essential components of effective fire and emergency services. The emphasis on mental health resiliency reflected a growing

recognition of the challenges faced by public safety professionals and the importance of sustaining their well-being.

Data and evidence-based strategies also played a prominent role, with sessions like the analysis of the National Fire Information Database shedding light on patterns of fire incidents in Indigenous communities. These insights offered attendees a foundation for creating targeted prevention programs that address the specific needs of their communities. Similarly, discussions on climate adaptation and post-wildfire recovery underscored the importance of proactive planning in the face of environmental changes and escalating wildfire risks.

Networking opportunities, including the tradeshow and informal mingling sessions, provided valuable platforms for attendees to connect with peers, vendors, and industry experts. These interactions fostered relationships that will extend beyond the conference, enabling ongoing collaboration and resource sharing. The event highlighted the strength of a united community working toward shared goals, demonstrating that public safety is most effective when it is a collective effort.

As the conference came to a close, the lessons learned were clear: public safety in Indigenous communities requires a holistic approach that balances cultural respect, technological innovation, and collaborative partnerships. The conference reinforced the idea that progress is built through shared knowledge and collective action, inspiring attendees to take these lessons back to their communities and continue working toward safer, more resilient futures.

The **2024 Indigenous Public Safety Conference and 35th Annual National Firefighting Competition** were more than just an event; they were a rallying point for change and a celebration of community strength. By blending tradition, technology, and teamwork, this conference illuminated a path forward, ensuring that Indigenous communities across Canada are equipped to face the challenges of today and tomorrow.

Annex A: Indigenous Public Safety Conference Schedule

Indigenous Public Safety Conference



National Indigenous Fire Safety Council / Conseil national autochtone de la sécurité incendie



Schedule

24 October Thursday		25 October Friday	
8:00 - 9:30	Opening Ceremony/ Keynote Address/Breakfast	8:30 - 9:30	Breakfast
9:30 - 10:30	Session 1 Panel Discussion	9:30 - 10:30	Session 5 Panel Discussion
10:30 - 10:45	Break	10:30 - 10:45	Break
10:45 - 11:45	Session 2	10:45 - 11:45	Session 6
11:45 - 12:45	Lunch	11:45 - 12:45	Lunch
12:45 - 13:45	Session 3	12:00	Trade show Day 2 concludes
13:45 - 14:00	Break	12:00 - 13:30	Closing Ceremony/ Keynote Address
14:00 - 15:00	Session 4	13:30 - 13:45	Break
15:15 - 16:00	Cancer Prevention Session	13:45 - 14:45	Session 7
17:30	Trade show Day 1 concludes	14:45 - 15:00	Break
16:00 - 19:00	Networking Event	15:00 - 16:00	Session 8

Session Detail

Stream

- Fire Operations
- Wildfire
- Emergency Management
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Fire Prevention
- Climate Change
- Policy management

Session 2 (10:45-11:45)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dave Robertson First Five Command ● Shaun McCumber/Kevin Hardy Fire prevention through inspections and utilizing Artificial Intelligence ● Michelle Vandevord/Blaine Wiggins Value Protection Basics ● Dave Waterhouse Your FD's Carbon Footprint improvement and the socio-economic impact of Fire Prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Steven Santelli CN Rail Emergency Response and Training Opportunities ● Arnold Lazare Traditional Fire Knowledge Policy Management ● Arjuna George The 7 Gifts From Burnout

Session 3 (12:45–13:45)

- **Jeremy Parkin**
Fireground Safety, Conducting Community Risk Assessments
- **Laura King**
Prevention programming for YOUR community
- **Kenzie Hartt**
Community-Based Wildfire Planning
- **Cheryl Evans**
Dust-Busting 101: Community-Based Approaches to Kickstart Climate Resilience
- **Marc D’Aquino/Cam Challenger**
Skills for High-Stress Operations
- **Monte “Awan” Fronk**
Honoring Nada Fronk A Native Fathers Experience with his Missing and Murdered Indigenous Daughter
- **Len Garis**
Fire Fighters Health and Safety

Session 4 (14:00–15:00)

- **Gary Foo and Nicholas Rhone**
Waterless Initial Suppression for Exigent Response
- **Len Garis**
Fire Deaths in Indigenous Communities
- **DeLea Mapstone**
Community Fire Risk Reduction Dashboard Enhancement Project
- **TBD**
Harmony in Diversity: Harnessing Thematic Engagement for Climate Adaptation - Insights from Piikani Nation and the Region of Wood Buffalo
- **Jonathan Reimer**
Decision-making under Uncertainty in Emergency Management
- **Jeremy Parkin**
Bylaws 101
- **Richard Amnotte**
Cancer Prevention and Risk Reduction

Session 6 (10:45–11:45)

- **Leon Smallboy**
Reconciliation & Fire Services
- **Amanda Robbins**
Exploring the National Fire Information Database 2005–2021 for fire incidents involving Indigenous Communities in Canada
- **Anabela Bonada**
Wildfire-Ready: Empowering our Communities to Mitigate Wildfire Risk
- **William Gordon Glenwood Maddess**
Update your Knowledge
- **Ryan William Schubert**
Energy Emergency - Lessons Learned
- **Kevin McDonald**
The Levels of Service Standards (Indigenous Services Canada)
- **Jan Chappel**
Build it Better: Approaches for Implementing an Occupational Health and Safety Program



Session 7 (13:45-14:45)

- **Adam Hawryliw**
Fire fighting in our communities and the struggles you deal with
- **Monte “Awan” Fronk**
Tribal Community Risk Reduction- A Cultural Approach
- **Kelsey Winter**
Post-wildfire examinations
- **Christopher Boucher/Jeremy Fyke**
Climate Data for Long-term Wildfire Planning and Preparedness
- **Josée Boudreau**
Transportation of Dangerous Goods Directorate (TDG)
- **Gina M Nagano**
Community Safety & Social Justice Infrastructure
- **Marc D’Aquino**
How to Develop a Strong Emergency Coordinator Position in your community

Session 8 (15:00-16:00)

- **Matt Lapointe/ Kelsey Boettcher**
Ignitable Liquid Detection Canines: Sniffing out cause and origin
- **Malina Garner**
FireSmart BC & Community Resiliency in British Columbia
- **Clifford Jerome Buettner**
Saskatchewan's Indigenous Approach to Wildfire and Firesmart
- **ISC**
Session Content to be determined
- **Fady Al Zarka**
CANUTEC and the 2024 Emergency Response Guidebook
- **Leon Smallboy/ Blaine Wiggins**
Policy development to utilize Fire & Building Codes
- **Ryan William Schubert**
Change Management and Strategy in Health and Safety Programming

