

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: First Nations Leadership Council
FROM: Wayne Schnitzler, Interim Executive Director, FNESS
DATE: July 8, 2021
RE: Emergency Management for First Nation Communities

1 PURPOSE:

The following briefing note is intended to provide the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) with information about the Emergency Management for First Nation Communities report prepared by FNESS. In providing this information to the FNLC, FNESS is requesting that the FNLC support FNESS in their drive to enhance emergency response and preparedness, meet the recommendations in the Abbott-Chapman Report, and align with the modernization of the *Emergency Program Act*.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The last few years have seen several developments intended to improve emergency management in the Province of British Columbia (BC) and for First Nation Communities. FNESS has been a lead agency in providing support and programs to First Nation communities since 1986 and is well positioned to facilitate the development and implementation of the recommendations and initiatives outlined in the attached FNESS Emergency Management for First Nation Communities report.

Over the past ten years, the FNESS Emergency Management department has conducted 79 emergency plan reviews with communities and has held 10 community engagement sessions. Since 2019, the department has expanded its support and services, and strengthened its partnerships dramatically to participate in and include:

- FNESS Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)
- First Nations Liaison for the South West Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PREOC)
- FNLC and EMBC bi-weekly emergency management coordination calls
- Indigenous Advisory and Monitoring Committee to monitor the Trans Mountain Expansion Project
- The Tripartite Emergency Management Services Memorandum of Understanding
- Emergency Program Coordinators Working Group
- PREOC and Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC) Monitoring
- COVID-19 coordination calls
- Laptop project
- Capabilities project
- Satellite phone project

The Abbott-Chapman Report, which flowed from the devastating 2017 flood and wildfire seasons, acknowledges the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which states that *“Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security”*.

The 2015-2030 Sendai Framework for risk reduction outlines a set of practical recommendations to build a culture of safety and resilience across all levels of government and across society. The primary goal of the Sendai Framework is to strengthen each pillar of emergency management, through all-of-society efforts.

1.2 CURRENT STATUS

First Nations have the primary responsibility of facilitating the achievement of the recommendations pertaining to First Nations where the provincial and federal governments have primary responsibility.

Local governments will begin to implement the recommendations primarily through their Emergency Program Coordinators (EPC). While some larger First Nations in BC have formalized an EPC into their community structure, many have not. FNESS has capacity, trust and a wide range of experienced emergency professionals to fulfill the functions of a local EPC for First Nation communities who do not have one, and to assist the EPCs where they do exist. The parallel long-range goal would be to develop local capacity in First Nation communities through a coaching and mentoring approach providing assistance while at the same time increasing knowledge and skills for future success.

FNESS is well positioned to support First Nation communities with their emergency management programs and be the bridge between First Nation communities and other governments to achieve the recommendations made in the Abbott-Chapman Report and Sendai Framework.

2 NEXT STEPS

1. FNESS is asking that the FNLC support FNESS in their drive to fill the gaps in the four pillars of emergency management (i.e. preparedness, mitigation, response, recovery), meet the recommendations in the Abbott-Chapman Report, and align with the modernization of the *Emergency Program Act*.
2. FNESS needs to be financially supported to increase our capacity to deliver effective emergency management programs to First Nation communities so they can be better prepared in the event of large-scale incidents resulting from climate change.

3 APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Emergency Management for First Nation Communities report

- Appendix B – Financial Plan

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APPENDIX A – Emergency Management for First Nation Communities report

APPENDIX B – Financial Plan