

# Prince George & Area Community Wildfire Roundtable

## Meeting Summary

May 1, 2025, 9:30am – 1:45pm

House of Ancestors “Uda Dune Baiyoh”, 355 Vancouver St.

### Participants:

Jason Fisher (FESBC), Owen Price (FNESS), Kevin Lutz (MOTT), Lauren Scott (MOTT), Colby Molcak (RDFFG), Samuel Bartels (UNBC), Zoe Meletis (UNBC), Diogo Spinola (UNBC), Joseph Shea (UNBC), Violet Zhao (UNBC), Chelsea Chilibeck (SNRC), Rebecca Gray (SNRC), Desirae McMurray (BC Parks), Jonathan Taylor (BCTS), Mark Dyer (BCWS), Jesse Labatiuk (City of PG), Kyle McGhee (City of PG), Tanya Spooner, (City of PG), Tracy-Lee Gartley (City of PG), Karla Graf (CN Rail), Camellia Bhatti (EMCR), Heather McRae (EMCR), Brad Shauer (Enbridge), Esther Winder (Enbridge), Mark Clark (Woodlots BC), Melissa Steidle (Woodlots BC), Marcel Gagnon (All Nations Group), Terry Robert (FBC), Kim Menounos (FBC), Bettina Johnson (FBC), Patience Rakochy (FBC), Scott Brown (FBC)

### Welcome and Introductions

Patience Rakochy, RPF, and Program Manager with Fraser Basin Council welcomed the group, and reiterated the purpose and goals of the roundtable, emphasizing it takes collaborative efforts of multiple partners working together to achieve wildfire resilient communities.

### Wildfire Roundtable Objectives:

- Assist communities with building wildfire preparedness capacity
- Assist in CWPP/CWRP implementation
- First Nations, multi-order government and priority community organizations/individuals
- Engagement strategy for capacity in areas outside of fire protection boundaries
- Identification of training and equipment requirements of rural communities
- Relationship building
- Resource sharing synergies on various initiatives

### 2025 Wildfire Preparedness - Current and Forecasted Conditions for BC and the PG Fire Centre

#### **Presentation by Mark Dyer – Prevention Specialist, BC Wildfire Service**

2025 Wildfire Preparedness - please view the presentation [here](#).

Mark shared information on statistics from the 2024 fire season, current and forecasted conditions, statistics on lightning and wildfire activity by month, and the spring seasonal outlook.

#### Key points included:

- **2024 fire season statistics:** 819,877 hectares burned in the Prince George Fire Centre (of 1,081,146 province-wide) and 449 wildfires in the Prince George Fire Centre (of 1,695 province-wide)
- **Fire Centre and Resources overview:** Zones: (G1) Prince George office is the local PG Fire Centre, (G3) Robson Valley (G4/5) VanJam (G6) Mackenzie (G7) Dawson Creek (G8) Fort St. John (G9) Fort Nelson; Fort St. John is the hub of the Parattack crews, which are similar to initial attack crews, first on scene; all aircraft is contracted out

- **Prevention work:** FireSmart program gaining more momentum, \$90 million has been allocated in 2025 for wildfire prevention initiatives through BCWS, FireSmart initiatives, and the Forest Enhancement Society of BC (FESBC); 9,600 hectares are targeted for treatment in 2025/26 under BCWS programs and an additional 2,100+ hectares under FESBC; 88 cultural and prescribed burning projects planned for 2025.
- **Drought conditions in Northeast:** last 2 years are noteworthy in terms of holdover fires in NE, first year having winter response plans and crews working over the winter on fires in the NE, -shared video by BC Wildfire Service on the [Spring Outlook 2025 - YouTube](#)
- **BC Wildfire Service Web and Mobile App:** a noteworthy tool for everyone to be using!
- **Funding - BCWS Prevention Program** – goal is to reduce the negative impacts of wildfire through the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) program. The two funding streams are:
  - [FireSmart community Funding & Supports \(FCFS\)](#)
  - [Crown Land Wildfire Risk Reduction \(CLWRR\)](#)
- **Putting fire back on the land together:** very little industry burning or prescribed fire, area around PG needs to start implementing more of this, great way to get community more familiar with fire and more engaged, involving agencies, and burning under specific conditions

*Q: What would that winter work for holdover fires look like?*

A: On foot flagging lines that equipment can't go along, would hire dozer, buncher, excavator to remove vegetation along fire perimeter, find hotspots which are dug up, vegetation gets dragged and forecasted to be burned; It's about access, to support equipment operations or retardant drops when the time comes; BCWS is very supportive of making projects happen related to salvage burns/carbon sequestering

- It was noted that the **Service BC app** should be downloaded, so when people are evacuated they can access government support (best to pre-register and confirm identity, which allows ESS to provide clothing, accommodation, incidentals in case of event, receive e-transfer directly without coming to reception centre – *it's recommended people register via the app*)

*Q: Why Parattack, not helicopters?*

A: The Parattack program is fastest way to get gear and crew to fire, most efficient way to get resources, especially over large land base, helicopters are hired to go support them (in BC significant aviation firefighting due to the terrain)

## Member Roundtable Updates

A round of organizational updates was held, allowing participants opportunity to share their wildfire preparedness planning work and activities, including funding updates, lessons learned, fuel treatments planned, resources, contact sharing, and sharing around potential collaborations.

**\*Action – all members with specific, longer updates for future PG CWR meetings to connect with Patience to be added to the agenda**

- **Tanya Spooner, Tracy-Lee Gartley, City of PG** - recently hired FireSmart educator Tracy-Lee, doing work for emergency preparedness week, including upcoming May 12<sup>th</sup> education event at PG public library; held [Be Ready Event](#) at Pine Centre Mall in March for community emergency preparedness; had staff attend ICS train the trainer course recently, sent staff from ESS team to McLeod Lake (MLIB) to support

an exercise there; past weekend hosted 340 volunteers and emergency management staff from throughout BC for [NESST](#) (Network and Emergency Support Services Teams) conference.

- **Zoe Meletis, UNBC** – graduate program coordinator; planning Wildfire Workshop event in October 22-24 to bring people together at UNBC for wildfire discussion, looking for speakers, MITACS funding and internship opportunities may be available for research that you may have needs for - *please contact Zoe with questions/speaker suggestions regarding Wildfire Workshop event: [wildfireworkshop@unbc.ca](mailto:wildfireworkshop@unbc.ca)*
- **Diogo Spinoza, UNBC** - completed study to see impacts of wildfire on forest soils as carbon sinks, *looking for student work and partnerships.*
- **Joseph Shea, UNBC** - has student who has submitted work for publication on remote sensing to estimate moisture contents and looking at different weather conditions in stands, *happy to share research publications with group once published.*
- **Samuel Bartels, UNBC** - interested in fuel treatment sites and biomass for feedstock, looking at biochar project; *interested in connecting with others regarding research and fuel management treatments.*
- **Violet Zhao, UNBC**, working on research focused on forest resilience and what comes back after fire, bringing back fire ecology class at UNBC – *Please contact Violet if interested in giving talk for UNBC fire ecology program: [violet.zhao@unbc.ca](mailto:violet.zhao@unbc.ca)*
- **Esther Winder and Brad Shauer, Enbridge** - 30% of provincial energy is coming for Enbridge pipeline through PG Fire Center; working to ensure industrial activity happening around pipeline is done with fire safety in mind and safety plans are in place for what happens when wildfire comes in way of pipeline; looking to have continued interaction with BCWS to ensure continued safety of firefighters and public.
- **Owen Price, FNESS** - primary role in supporting community resilience for 19 First Nations in NE from Fort Fraser to Fort Nelson, working directly with Nations to leverage grant funding in wildfire mitigation and building applications for CRI program (Community Resilience Investment Program) through BC Wildfire Services
- **Heather McRae, EMCR** - Tony Fialla has moved to BCWS as Fire Center Manager; combined emergency center will now be in PG with an extension office in Smithers, PG will be looking after the entire north region, Terrace office is closed with personnel moving over to Smithers who will support PG services.
- **Jesse Labatiuk, City of PG** - Working on CRI Community Wildfire Resiliency Plans (CWRP) with the consulting company, Strategic (SNRC), finished procurement process, FFP in September and projects completed for November with an engagement process planned in the fall.
- **Desirae McMurray, BC Parks** - continuing work on BC Parks emergency and wildfire management plans within the parks, preparing for supporting evacuees in parks, ensuring meeting and connections continue; working on communications plans and partnerships with Rec Sites and Trails.
- **Jason Fisher, FESBC** - last week announced almost 20million in funding for 2025/26, 1.4million for projects in Omineca or NE, and 700k through woodlot program for wildfire risk reduction work; 10yr anniversary next of FESBC, need to go back and look at past projects/maintenance on WRR projects. [Funding Opportunities : Forest Enhancement Society of BC](#)
- **Karla Graf, CN Rail** - here in listening mode, works closely with Monty out of Penticton on risk assessment of rail operations; fire cabooses are distributed across the network, PG is one area, and working on getting more. [Donations and Sponsorships | Community | Delivering Responsibly | cn.ca](#)
- **Rebecca Gray, Chelsea Chilibeck – Strategic Natural Resource Consultants (SNRC)** - Strategic has been retained by the City of PG to complete a CWRP for the City. This will replace the 2019 CWPP. The CWRP is expected to be complete later this fall (October – November). Community input sessions will be held later this summer/early fall.

## Community Wildfire Resiliency Plans (CWRP), RDFFG

**Presentation by Colby Molcak – Emergency Services Coordinator, Regional District of Fraser-Fort George**  
*RDFFG update and next steps – CWRPs - please view the presentation [here](#).*

Colby presented an update on the CWRP's including a high-level overview of what's in the plans, and shared next steps:

- RDFFG is in the **final steps of finalizing 7 CWRPs for the RDFFG**; requiring ministry review and approval before completion and publication.
- **CWRP's are the new version** of the CWPP's following the 7 FireSmart principles.
- **A lot of pre-planning work** went in, did 7 different community presentations in each electoral area and with First Nations partners, to incorporate local staff and community knowledge
- **CWRP's will be published in the next 2 months**, will be up on the RDFFG website.
- **About 40 recommendations** in the plan, ranging from small to large projects, with over 100 fuel treatment units; a lot of opportunity for collaboration with different groups; Funding hinges on the recommendations made in the plan. (Recommendations include the action, who's in charge, priority level, timeframe, resources required, and metrics for success)
- **FireSmart funding** programs for spring 2026, looking to hire on 2 FireSmart educators by June, as well as new manager of emergency preparedness
- **Outcomes and future possibilities** include working with woodlots, adjacent to fuel treatment areas; RDFFG is looking to connect for collaborative opportunities and looking to make connections to move into the last stage of the plan,  
*-please reach out to Colby for collaborative opportunities as RDFFG moves in to last stage of the CWRP: [colby.molcak@rdffg.bc.ca](mailto:colby.molcak@rdffg.bc.ca)*

*Q: How would you describe a wildfire resilient community?*

A: Previously it was more about fuel management and reducing risk by removing fuels, but with CWRP it's bigger, including more focus on the education piece, so now getting out to the public, teaching people what they can do on their own properties, and planning for their evacuations; 70% of municipal area of PG is privately owned property, so ultimately how we become a resilient community is with effort from everybody

## Community Recovery as a Key Element of Wildfire Preparedness

**presentation by Camellia Bhatti – Manager, Community Recovery, North, EMCR**

Camellia presented on community recovery as part of wildfire preparedness plans, emphasizing that community recovery planning is integral to preparedness, to ensure resilience during and after wildfire events.

- **Recovery is a continuous process** that starts before the wildfire event, during the preparedness phase, and extends throughout the recovery cycle; important to foster long-term resilience for communities impacted by wildfires and mitigate social, economic and environmental impacts of wildfires; Proactive recovery planning can greatly shorten recovery times and reduce long-term impacts on affected communities; Start thinking about recovery not as a future problem, but a current responsibility
- **EMCR Community Recovery Team** got formalized 2 years ago to support local governments and First Nations; Collaborates with other stakeholders to develop and implement recovery strategies; Play a leading coordination role, to help people identify funding and connect stakeholders to support recovery

- **Develop Community Recovery Plans** to coordinate partners, access funding and measure progress over time; Understand your strengths and recognize your vulnerabilities, knowing how you'll prioritize the different areas of recovery for your local government or organization; Recommended to keep the plans short and concise, easy for everyone to follow; Take advantage of the existing work your community already has (EcDev plan, CWRP, etc), and focus recovery plan on priorities and next steps

Questions to ask in Community Recovery Planning include:

- *What are your community or organization's top 3 priorities or major impacts after a wildfire vent?*
- *Considering your top 3 priorities, identify your recovery partners. What immediate actions can you take to initiate or strengthen recovery planning?*
- *Who are the key stakeholders in your community that need to be involved in the recovery process?*
- *Who will be leading recovery efforts in your community or organization?*
- *What resources or tools would you need to begin developing a recovery plan for your community?*
- *How can you involve community members or local organizations in the recovery process?*
- *How would you communicate with residents during recovery?*

*Q: Regarding the economy side of recovery, what happens if another impact happens, like losing a major employer - do you play a role?*

A: Yes, through the disaster recover framework, which assigns roles and responsibilities on how we support, so if economic sector hard hit, we would partner with Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation (JEDI) to support that community; JEDI has ability to set up community transition tables and meetings, to assist folks to identify new economic opportunities; Would bring together stakeholders, i.e. NDIT, Community Futures, etc, and collaborate on resources; Would look at funding opportunities across the province, could help community hire an expert to help map that process out

*Q: Would you recommend doing recovery plans at same time as emergency plans?*

A: Yes, when thinking about opportunities to engage with community, consider what you already have planned, not a new work piece, but how can you make this easy and efficient using connections and resources you already have

**Resources:** Camellia highlighted a few resources:

- BCEDA [Frameworks - British Columbia Economic Development Association](#)
- EMCR [Disaster Recovery Guide](#)
- EMCR [Community Post-Disaster Needs Assessment \(PDNA\)](#)
- **Event specific recovery guides** are being developed, materials being worked on will be released when ready
- **Mental Health supports:** EMCR has a list of organizations that can provide critical incident and stress management supports, and funding opportunities also  
- *please reach out to Camellia and team for assistance or resources: [camellia.bhatti@gov.bc.ca](mailto:camellia.bhatti@gov.bc.ca)*
- **Note:** A follow-up email will be sent that includes a number of resources.

## Community FireSmart and Resiliency Collaborative (CFRC)

Owen Price – Mitigation Specialist, First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS)

Owen provided an update on the CFRC's, their purpose and utility:

- Part of the foundational elements of a CRI application is to have the CRFC, it's a collaborative bringing people and agencies together,
- For all First Nations communities applying it's a requirement to have this collaborative, FNESS funds communities to go these meetings, now starting to get into 2-year applications

The City of PG and RDFFG are planning to use the PG Community Wildfire Roundtable as their collaborative; requires approval by BCWS (the collaborative work that goes on at these tables is a critical element of the CWRP's and the community's ability to access funding).

## Quick Recap & Check In

### Penticton Wildfire Summit – Sharing of Key Take Aways

- **Bringing Fire Back to the Landscape** – was a key theme throughout the conference.
- **Valuable networking** and knowledge-sharing, really phenomenal keynotes
- **Funding available for Junior FireSmart Coordinators**, to advertise and bring a youth on, with resources like mascot suit, they work with a mentor to hold hands-on workshops in schools
- **Educational program for school classrooms**, i.e., from K-3 would become part of their lesson plan, the material is available for teachers to present and integrate, it's all available for free; EMCR has similar program called "Master of Disaster"; Logan Lake had students do fuel mitigation work
- **Informative data** on health impacts of wildfires, other fire departments (CAL FIRE)
- **Insurance companies** are starting to take notice, starting to come around with options for rate adjustments related to FireSmart, to help manage things better on the insurance end of things

**Next meeting date:** fall 2025, end of October or early November (will likely hinge around the review and approval of the RDFFG and CPG CWRPs).