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## Assembly of First Nations

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## Assemblée des Premières Nations

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**ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
JULY 11, 12, & 13, 2023; HALIFAX, NS**

**Resolution no. 49/2023**

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**TITLE:** Support for First Nations Wildland Firefighters and Impacted Communities

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**SUBJECT:** Emergency Management

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**MOVED BY:** Chief Byron Louis, Okanagan Indian Band, BC

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**SECONDED BY:** Judy Wilson, proxy, Osoyoos Indian Band, BC

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**DECISION** Carried by Consensus

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**WHEREAS:**

- A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) states:
- i. Article 1: Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law.
  - ii. Article 23: Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.
  - iii. Article 29 (1): Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.

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- iv. Article 32 (3): States shall provide effective mechanisms for just and fair redress for any such activities, and appropriate measures shall be taken to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact.
- B. First Nations are facing increasingly severe emergency events such as floods, wildfires, and critical infrastructure damage, as well as security threats, social and mental health crises, power outages, medical emergencies, communicable disease issues and food, water, and safety of supply line concerns.
- C. The effects of climate change are rapidly altering the landscape of First Nations traditional territories, and First Nations are disproportionately vulnerable to loss from wildland fires due to a high percentage of First Nations living in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).
- D. First Nations must be involved in processes to develop agreements that will better serve their citizens and communities, to develop their own capacity, and exercise their authority in the areas of climate change leadership and emergency preparedness and response including wildland firefighting.
- E. Wildland firefighting requires distinct training separate from urban structural firefighters, as there are different competencies and training regimes required to successfully engage in each firefighting discipline.
- F. In Section 8.62 of Report 8, Emergency Management in First Nations Communities, the Auditor General of Canada recommended:
  - i. Indigenous Services Canada should, in collaboration with First Nations, provincial governments, and other service providers, ensure that First Nations communities receive the emergency management services they need by establishing emergency management service agreements and wildfire agreements in all jurisdictions that include all First Nations.
  - ii. Establish mutually agreed-upon evacuation service standards in the jurisdictions that lack such standards.
  - iii. Increase support for First Nations-led approaches to emergency management.
- G. The exclusion of First Nations from decision-making has resulted in emergency response planning that is not culturally relevant, does not incorporate First Nations knowledge and expertise, and resulted in a loss of economic opportunities before, during, and after wildland firefighting events.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the First Nations-in-Assembly:**

- 1. Direct the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to recognize the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities of First Nations Wildland Firefighters as more than adequate and on par with non-First Nations Wildland Firefighters.

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2. Call upon Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and its regional partners, to work with the AFN and First Nations Wildland Firefighters on formal recognition of the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities of First Nations Wildland Firefighters.
3. Call upon ISC to engage with other federal departments and work with First Nations impacted by wildland fires to support and adequately fund initiatives that incorporate the expertise and knowledge of those communities, given First Nations mastery over their unique hazardscapes.
4. Call upon ISC and its regional partners, to include First Nations Wildland Firefighters and First Nations in any economic opportunities arising out of wildland firefighting or suppression activities on par with the inclusion of Mexico, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, and Costa Rica and/or any other wildland firefighting organization called to assist Canada.
5. Direct the AFN, contingent on funding resources, to work with First Nations Wildland Firefighters in developing a policy proposal within two years for presentation to the First Nations-in-Assembly, which would provide clear recommendations to government for support adequate and stable funding for culturally relevant training and recognized certification for First Nations Wildland Firefighters.

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