

Assembly of First Nations

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Assemblée des Premières Nations

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SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY
December 2-3-4, 2025, Ottawa, ON

Resolution no. 64/2025

TITLE: Supporting First Nations through the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council

SUBJECT: Emergency Management

MOVED BY: Chief Kelsey Jacko, Cold Lake First Nation, AB

SECONDED BY: Eric Tootosis, Proxy, Poundmaker First Nation, SK

DECISION: Carried by consensus

WHEREAS:

- A. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* (UN Declaration) states:
- i. Article 21(1): Indigenous people have the right, without discrimination to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, areas of education, employment, vocational training, housing, sanitation, health and social security.
 - ii. Article 29(1): Indigenous people have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands and territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programs for Indigenous Peoples for such conversation and protection, without discrimination.
- B. First Nations across Canada continue to face critical gaps in emergency services, including delays and communication breakdowns in dispatch services, which can result in increased risk to life, property, and the environment.
- C. Culturally appropriate, First Nations-led emergency management organizations could support First Nations in emergency management through addressing longstanding issues in:
- i. Emergency response infrastructure, ensuring timely, coordinated, and community-informed responses that respect First Nations' governance, languages, and traditional knowledge;
 - ii. Responding to the lack of coordination during national incidents or regional incidents to support urgent and long-term community requirements with federal, provincial and territorial agencies; and

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- iii. Occupational risks, including exposure to carcinogens, mental health challenges, and post-traumatic stress.
- D. The First Nations Fire Protection Strategy 2023 to 2028, co-developed by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and Indigenous Services Canada aims to support a decrease in the national rate of First Nations fire incidents, improve fire response time, and address infrastructure gaps that impede emergency response on-reserve. The Strategy was developed with input from First Nations technical organizations, tribal councils, First Nations leadership, the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council (NIFSC), and other fire service professionals.
- E. The NIFSC is an Indigenous-governed organization with the mandate and expertise to advance fire and life safety for Indigenous communities. The NIFSC has made significant progress in the development and delivery of standards, training, and accreditation programs tailored to First Nations' fire service needs.
- F. There is an urgent need to continue to develop and implement opt-in supporting policies and programs such as:
 - i. A National Indigenous Dispatch Centre, to enhance emergency response coordination, improve health and safety outcomes, and align with First Nations' self-determination and support jurisdiction over community safety and emergency management;
 - ii. A national incident management training program that strengthens First Nations' leadership in emergency operations and community-led response systems; and
 - iii. Managing fire-related Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) initiatives, including identified injury, medical and mental health risks.
- G. Funding is required for First Nations' and emergency management organizations such as the NIFSC to support fire prevention initiatives and the implementation of First Nations' own emergency management related priorities, where First Nations may opt in to the programs and services provided by the NIFSC.

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

1. Support the leadership of the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council (NIFSC) to:
 - a. Initiate and facilitate a national dialogue with interested First Nations on the creation of an opt-in National Indigenous Dispatch Centre;
 - b. Manage and expand First Nations' fire service programs, including those focused on structural fires, wildfires, and interface fires for First Nations who request it; and
 - c. Support the development of opt-in community standards and implementation of accredited training to respond to fires.
2. Direct the Assembly of First Nations to work in partnership with the NIFSC to engage interested First Nations, leaders, and emergency service stakeholders in consultation on the design, scope, and operational capacity of emergency management.
3. Urge the federal government to provide funding and technical support to First Nations and the NIFSC to support emergency management, including feasibility studies, regional engagement sessions, and planning activities necessary for the mandate provided by First Nations-in-Assembly.

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4. Declare that any planning and implementation for activities for the NIFSC must be opt-in, include consideration of regional service models, First Nations' languages, traditional knowledge, and interoperability with existing emergency response frameworks.
5. Call upon Indigenous Services Canada, Public Safety Canada, and other relevant federal departments to recognize and prioritize First Nations-led emergency service infrastructure, as part of reconciliation and the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

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