

Emma: Okay. (silence).

Hi, good evening everyone. And welcome to the Saskatchewan, oh, sorry. No. Manitoba edition of the NIFSC Project Fireside Information Session. Thank you for taking the time to join us this evening. So my name is Emma and I'm speaking to this evening from traditional Secwepemc Territory near Kamloops, British Columbia. And I'm going to provide you with an overview of the project and tell you a little bit about some of what we've done and what we're going to do. And then afterwards, we're going to hand over to Blaine Wiggins, who's the executive director of AFAC, and he's going to provide or answer any questions that you have. Now, before I do stop, though, I'm going to hand over to our AFAC Elder Allan Peters to provide an opening. And let me just first though unmute him so that he can do that. There we go.

Allan Peters: [Non-English 00:01:57]. Creator, thank you for another day. Thank you for bringing us together today. Thank you for the gift of technology so that we are able to meet and stay safe from this strong sickness. We ask that to help us and guide us so as we can help others. Creator, give us acceptance, patience and understand of each other. Thank you, all my relations.

Emma: Wonderful. Thank you, Allan. First, I would like to cover off who is the Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada, so that we can understand how that organization fits in with the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council Project. So AFAC or the Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada was established in 1991 by Indigenous Firefighters. And it's a united body of regional Indigenous emergency and fire service organizations from across Canada. And AFAC is committed to raising awareness of the fire and life safety challenges in Indigenous communities and improving the outcomes. They work with national, regional, local Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, and with individual communities to bring about change.

The National Indigenous Fire Safety Council Project is the culmination of many years of hard work to get meaningful backing from the government to create an organization that will allow communities to determine their own fire and life safety outcome. What does *'for us by us mean'*? The National Indigenous Fire Safety Council Project is an Indigenous organization for Indigenous communities. Everything that we do is grounded in information from Indigenous communities about what you need and want, what has been successful in the past and what hasn't worked well. Some of the ways that the NIFSC Project supports communities by helping communities to understand how fire and life safety standards are beneficial, providing training to achieve, monitor, and maintain standards, supporting access to adequate funding for sustainable services, and assisting communities and ensuring capital infrastructure is of quality. So, the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council Project is about creating the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council.

The AFAC Board of Directors is committed to the inclusion of all Indigenous Peoples, both in AFAC's current inception and in the development of the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council. The Board is undergoing governance changes that include extending invitations to Inuit and Métis people to serve on the current AFAC board and to participate in the strategic direction and development of the NIFSC. The governance goal of the NIFSC is to reflect all Indigenous Peoples. Because of the limitations of federal policy, we're currently only able to deliver programs and services on reserve, but we all working with the government to remove these barriers and all of the programs that we're developing can be used right now by anyone. We've deliberately designed them that way and we will continue to do so.

This diagram shows how community needs are at the core of everything that we do. The project always has been, and always will be driven by community needs, designed by Indigenous communities for Indigenous communities. Between October 2018 and November 2019, we ran engagement sessions to provide information and gather input. We listened to communities to better understand current challenges and gaps across the country. We heard that immediate action is needed to address the multitude of fire and life safety issues in Indigenous communities. As we develop programs and services that are tested in communities, and the feedback has been incorporated into the product. We're committed to continuous improvement and our programs will always be evaluated and redesigned to meet evolving needs.

So how will the NIFSC make a difference for you and your community? As an ongoing organization with sustainable funding it means that the NIFSC will always be around. Communities can come to us with your questions and be confident that you'll receive sound advice. You know that we are reliable source for quality programs and services. The National Incident Reporting System will make an enormous difference. Currently, there's no data being captured. So that means when we design fire prevention programs, it's based on the best guess as to what the leading cause of fires is. If we have data, we can develop targeted programs to address the problems that are occurring. The National Indigenous Fire Safety Council will be an independent national organization that decides what programs it is going to offer based on the reality on the ground and the actual needs of Indigenous communities. Using the data that's captured in the National Incident Reporting System, we'll be able to develop a plan to address fire and life safety issues according to fact-based priorities.

Currently firefighter training really isn't accessible to most Indigenous Peoples, especially not without leaving your community to study and work. We will develop and deliver training programs that allow people to remain in their community. And we will create flexible working arrangements that meet the needs of the extremely diverse Indigenous communities across the country. The current offering of fire and life safety programs and services is mainly designed for urban populations. We will create programs and services that are appropriate for all Indigenous communities, both from a geographic and cultural

perspective. There'll be programs that reflect you and your community. Again, all programs and services we developed can be used by all Indigenous communities across the country even if funding parameters currently limit program delivery to on-reserve communities.

Indigenous communities across Canada are experiencing an unacceptable number of fire-related injuries and deaths. A 2008 report by the CMHC, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, found that Indigenous Peoples in Canada are 10 times more likely to die in a fire and 2.5 times more likely to be affected by fire loss per capita. Now, many of you have heard the same statistic from us over and over that's because this is the only data there is, and that's shocking and unacceptable. There's no national fire protection act that mandates or enforces fire safety standards. There's no mandated enforcement of occupational health and safety on reserve. There's no national coordination of Indigenous fire service standards and programs, and there's no national coordination of level of service standards. Each ISC region can provide programs or fund regional services of their discretion. So, support in each region will vary depending on how that ISC region wants to provide funding. There's no established fire incident reporting. Data collection that was taking place was inconsistent and it focused on band funded capital assets. So really it was interested in capital asset rather than fire loss reporting.

Fire service funding and fire protection is based solely on fire suppression. It's based on formula funding and it's included in flexible funding, which means communities are not required to utilize fire protection funding for fire protection. Housing and capital infrastructure is not subject to a national building inspection process. The current process places the liability for the build on the community, not the builder, whereas off reserve, the builder is liable. And while capital projects are required to be built to national fire protection code, this is based on policy and there's no established independent inspection process. By taking a national-level approach to fire and life safety. The National Indigenous Fire Safety Council is addressing the gap in national fire protection standards. And by addressing these issues collaboratively on a national scale, the coordination of fire service standards, programs, and services in Indigenous communities becomes possible.

Some examples of the gaps that we're talking about are that in Indigenous fire services assume responsibility for departments and community safety, but in the absence of national standards, they have limited training and experience. Because of inadequate funding, there's limited expertise and training, which hinders the adoption of fire service equipment standards. With the exception of on-reserve communities, all other jurisdictions, including provinces, territories, and federal jurisdictions like military bases, airports, seaports, they have established building and fire codes. Building codes ensure that infrastructure is built to established standards and fire codes ensure that infrastructure is maintained to established standards. This is not the case on reserve. There are no national standards for the delivery of fire prevention or public education.

How is the NIFSC going to bring about change? We're going to work collaboratively, sharing our expertise and resources. We're not going to duplicate existing programs and services. And we're going to share our research. Our goal is to help communities to make communities safer. At the core of everything we do, the NIFSC Project supports internal capacity building.

So, we have four project areas. Let's take a look at those. Our governance and corporate development efforts are the activities and steps that will build the organization and make sure that the NIFSC Project is supported by Indigenous Peoples and organizations. This work will establish the NIFSC as an independent Indigenous-run organization that is mandated to improve fire and life safety for Indigenous Peoples and communities across the country. A solid research program allows program development and delivery based on evidence. The research program looks for opportunities to enhance the mission of the organization and to advance fire and life safety initiatives. The Indigenous Fire Marshal Service is our program delivery arm. And we're going to take a closer look at that in the next slide.

The National Incident Reporting System allows for data capture, identification of trends, and the sharing of fire prevention training and standards resources. The information gathered means that we can develop programs that will have the most impact.

We use the term fire marshal for our operations division because the role of a fire marshal is well understood and it relates to what is being delivered. We work with communities to identify and meet your needs, and we collaborate with you to test and develop culturally appropriate programs. Some of our program areas include fire prevention, education, home safety, governance, fire department administration, and leadership training. Programs will be delivered by the IFMS in two languages and through three different delivery mechanisms. Although the requirements of each program may dictate which delivery formats are available. And program development is guided by the National Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee

Right now, the NIFSC Project is working with Indigenous communities, developing and testing fire prevention and public education programs because these programs have the greatest impact on public safety. When you see our programs listed, they're always in this sequence, that's because this is the order in which they will have the greatest impact on saving lives. Our community safety education programs focus on specific safety issues and they're designed to increase awareness. These are programs addressing specific areas, such as cooking and heating, and they're intended for everyone in the community from youth, to children, to Elders and of course, everyone in between. Examples of these programs are things like Youth Fire Setter Intervention, Getting to Know Fire, and Learn Not to Burn.

Next, we have fire service governance programs, and they're designed to support community decision-makers and leaders with developing policies, bylaws, communication plans, and fire emergency plans. These programs will also help community leaders to identify fire and life safety issues and find ways to mitigate those risks. These are programs like the Community Fire Safety Assessment, Community Reduction Plan and Risk Mitigation Analysis Services. Our community infrastructure and engineering support services assist communities in the designing and planning of fire-related infrastructure, including water systems and hydrants. They will identify what it is that individual communities need and put appropriate people in place to design and build the necessary infrastructure. Examples of these programs are Fire Protection Research Services, Plans Examination Services, and Plans Examination Training. The fire department management programs provide support for fire chiefs and officers at the administrative level to help them with creating policies and operational guidelines and the acquisition of apparatus and equipment. These programs are things like the Fire Department Assessment, Fire Officer Training, and our Policy and Operational Guidelines Support.

Next, we have fire inspection services, which identify fire-related risks in communities, and then assist community leaders with minimizing these risks. They also help provide building and equipment inspections. Examples of these programs are our Fire Code Inspection Services and Fire Extinguisher Inspection and Maintenance Services. Investigation programs provide communities with support for both fire investigations and data collection. These programs also include training non-investigators and providing accredited training. Examples of these programs are Fire Investigation Services to examine cause origin and to ensure the collection of fire reporting data, Fire Investigator Training, and Fire Scene Preservation Training.

Finally, fire department operations looks at training equipment, repairs and maintenance, and education for firefighters and first responders at the incident response level. These are programs like Accredited Firefighter Training using NFPA standards and Fire Prevention Program Training.

Here we have a screenshot from our website where we have a dashboard, and you can use that to view the current status of the various project components. We've performed extensive research and analysis in the areas of governance, mandate, and accountability structure to identify the most appropriate options for the NIFSC governance and organizational structure.

Our research team has created an evaluation instrument to measure program delivery and outcomes. And they've also conducted a study in collaboration with local communities to develop evidence-based risk reduction strategies. We've developed 14 programs, and we have hundreds of deliveries in progress. The interim National Incident Reporting System is currently being implemented and data from over 2000 fire incidents in Indigenous communities is being added to that database. The National Advisory Committee, or the NAC, helps us to

maintain an inclusive approach that meets the needs of all Indigenous communities by providing advice on the project, as it evolves.

Our Technical Advisory Committee, the TAC, gives technical advice on the development and delivery of five safety programs. Part of this process is to review programs from both a regional and national level. The TAC brings together a wide range of education experience and expertise to share best practices and solve common issues. This committee allows for Indigenous fire safety experts to guide the NIFSC programs. And there's an open invitation to all regional technical organizations to participate in the Technical Advisory Committee.

The National Indigenous Fire Safety Council office will open its doors on April 1st, 2022. There's a lot of work to do to get this. We're going to take a look at a high level. The National Indigenous Fire Safety Council will consist of a head office and a presence in each of the seven regions. So BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic. The principal component of the NIFSC will be the Indigenous Fire Marshal Service. That's our boots on the ground who are responsive to regional and community fire and life safety needs. We're working on finalizing funding to make sure it's adequate and doesn't compete for funding with Indigenous communities and organizations. We're determining the footprint of the organization to balance regional support within a national organization. So literally looking at how many people and where will they physically be located. We're getting policy infrastructure and assets in progress. Things like office space, computers, vehicles. Our research team is developing collaboration MOUs, memorandums of understanding, to work with other research organizations and share relevant information.

They're examining mortality and morbidity in Indigenous communities to establish baseline data of fire-related casualties for us to measure our program performance against. They're examining insurance gradings, and grading and costs to develop a business case for residential sprinkler systems. And of course, we continue to develop and deliver programs in the seven IFMS program areas, community safety education, fire service governance, community infrastructure and engineering support, fire department management, inspections, investigation, and fire department operations. The National Incident Reporting System team will develop and implement the permanent and evolving system.

And for those of you who like to get into details, we do publish our funding agreement on our website. So, you can go to indigenouxfiresafety.ca and click on project then document library, and in the search box, if you type CFA that will bring you to that document.

I can't overemphasize how important it is for us to work with communities and organizations. So please reach out and get in touch, and then we can collaborate together to bring about change in your community. Of course, you

can also sign up for our email and snail mail newsletters and follow us on Facebook, but please do reach out to any of these mechanisms at any time.

Now, before I ask Blaine to introduce himself, just to remind as to how the chat works. So if you don't see a menu, if you move your mouse, then that should wake the menu up there at the bottom and you can just click on chat and type a message and that'll come directly to me and then I will ask Blaine those questions. And I see, we actually do have a couple already. So please there are no silly questions and whatever it is that you want to hear is great. So I will now stop sharing this and handover to Blaine.

Blaine Wiggins:

Good evening, everybody. Thank you for taking the time and joining us tonight and as noted, no question that we don't want to receive. It's important to realize that the questions we get really do, and the information and the guidance we get from the communities really do help shape some of the details of what we're doing.

We'll be the first to admit Manitoba without having a regional body, we do have some challenges around information. So, this is one of the intents and outcomes that we're hoping to with these type of open sessions is getting more information from the regional body. AFAC is definitely here to help and support development of a regional organization, whatever we can do and bring to bear whatever resources we can bring to bear. Allan is from the Atlantic Fire Chiefs Association. We provide some logistical support to that association and we've done funding agreements for other regional organizations that don't have an established legal entity. So again, there's a lot of opportunities for us to just collaborate with the existing AFAC organization. And there's a tremendous amount of opportunities within this project. So I know we've been trying to recruit a program or a delivery specialist from Manitoba and recognizing that we don't have boots on the ground on there. And we definitely do want to put some field officers up and running as soon as possible. So, again, let me say, my name is Blaine Wiggins, I'm the executive director and I'm coming from Tk'emlups Traditional Territory here in B.C. I was on the road yesterday. So I was in Soda Creek, First Nations territory yesterday. So I was just bopping around here B.C. So I actually drove through 20 different territories today in a little road trip. But can't do that in Manitoba, I got to go a long way to get into somebody else's another nation's territory.

So we'll start with the questions and I'm sure if I get too long winded and I'll get a flag from the other screen here.

Emma:

Yes, I do have the power to mute you if you talk for too long. Thank you, Blaine. So, our first question is actually asking about AFAC Board. And how is Manitoba represented?

Blaine Wiggins:

Actually, yes. So, going back to just by earlier comments but first, before I jump into that, I do want to acknowledge that not only do we collaborate with

regional organizations, regional political groups, national Indigenous organizations. I want to acknowledge Monty from ISC who is participating as a guest and our partners at ISC headquarters and ISC regions have been really instrumental in this project and like, say we couldn't have done it without the collaboration of this. So, our current constitution, we revised it this last year to be a little bit more inclusive. One of the things that we've done is, did a reach out to the Government of Nunavut Fire Marshal's office, and they have accepted a Board seat. So we will have a representation from the Inuit and Nunavut through the GN, Government Nunavut. We're extending an invitation out to the Métis National Council.

And one of the things actually we're going to do is ask that they represent, because of the traditions of Métis orders, is Métis, is that representative be from Manitoba, but recognizing that it's not necessarily a First Nations representation. So right now our current structure on our Board is we have regional organizations that put forward a board representative, and they sit for a two-year term, our executives sit for three-year term on a site in cyclical rotation. So every year one of the three executive positions come up, the president, vice president, and secretary treasurer. Allan Peters, one of our esteemed Elders Board member is also on our executive. He is our secretary treasurer, current serving secretary of treasure. So, one of the things we would really like to do again, is work with Manitoba to establish a formalized regional organization entity, so that we can actually get a representative from Manitoba onto the Board.

So right now we have a vacancy within Manitoba and since the devolution of [Manith 00:30:51], it's been a challenge obviously transitioning to what a new regional organization would look like. So again, we're really hopeful and maybe this might be an opportunity for us to work collaboratively with grassroots fire chiefs to start a regional organization and get that off the ground. So, it's certainly an idea that we can take back and send out an invite to the First Nations fire departments, Manitoba, and see if we can get something initiated. So we absolutely do want to hear the voice of Manitoba, and we want that representation. It's just getting that formalized structure in place and we'll land, whatever resources we can to help Manitoba establish that.

Emma: Wonderful. Thank you. The next question is asking how can urban Indigenous organizations assist with fire and life safety education?

Blaine Wiggins: That's a good question. So, one of the things as for the fire service practitioners, I recognize not everybody is a fire service practitioner on the call. But for those that are in the fire service, we understand that it's a collaborative service, boundaries, borders jurisdictional lines get blurred. So one of the things that we will be doing is having all of our programs and services available to any organization that wants to deliver them. So, as an example, let's just say that the City of Winnipeg wanted to start utilizing some of our fire prevention programs, we would absolutely encourage that. They would decide how, and

when they would do that. If an urban school program wanting to use one of the programs and reached out for us on how to do that, we would certainly help facilitate that.

As noted in the presentation, we have some limitations with the current funding model. So we can't do the deliveries ourselves, but we can certainly support community organizations that want to do some ... So let's say a friendship center had a daycare program and they wanted to do a Learn Not to Burn for an after-school program. We could certainly help walk them through. And the three delivery models we have, the us delivering, the IFMS doing the delivery, the train the trainer model, where we train somebody and then they can do the delivery or the self delivery model. So if an experienced fire prevention officer just want to grab on our programs, they generally don't need the training. They can just go in and go, can, I'm going to run this program. I just download it and I'll just go do it.

But a teacher that hasn't done it before to utilize one or our train the trainer models so that they can actually utilize that. The other thing I actually wanted to mention too, is by ... Again, a lot of the things we do, are not by accident. We talked about why the IFMS is called the IFMS, but we didn't talk about the S, and we shifted the focus from Indigenous Fire Marshal's Office to Indigenous Fire Marshal Service, because this organization is meant to serve communities and First Nations people. And those that joined the IFMS we hope are joining an organization to provide services, to be a service to the community, not a regulatory body that can go in and force it. It's, we really do. This is going to be somewhat of a calling, not a spiritual saying, being a priest, but pretty damn close.

Emma: Great. Thank you. So I've got a question here asking about if it's possible to get a copy of the presentation and contact information after this call.

Blaine Wiggins: So my learned colleague can speak more intelligently than I can on the technical stuff. I learned yesterday the presentation is going to be put on YouTube on our YouTube channel with links on our social media website pointing you to the YouTube channel. So they definitely will be there.

Emma: Yeah, thank you. So we will be publishing those and you'd also be able to then view the other regional sessions to see what different questions came up there and to just get a different perspective. So, and certainly, yes, I will message the contact information as well. So we have another question here about compliance and enforcement. So what is the NIFSC's take on compliance and enforcement and what is the approach going to be that we're going to take?

Blaine Wiggins: We have about 631 takes on it. And really that translates to we are there to support a community and Chief and Council, the band administration, the fire department, and the people that community we're not, there is an organization that is there to do enforcement because there's no authority to do it. And it's

the communities that really do decide what they want. So if they wanted our assistance in something as simple as a fire investigation, we would offer that service. If they wanted our assistance to do a fire inspection with an industrial setting, we would provide those services, but it really is, it's the authority is what the community decides what the authority is. And if they want to have us as an organization perform anything on behalf of, we really are just then acting as an agent of the band and the band administration and local bylaws.

So that way, we're not trying to define standards, codes, applicable processes. We're just supporting the community in meeting their own goals and standards. So very much how it happens in other municipal environments where the authority-having jurisdiction, the AHJ, defines what the standards will be, what the code enforcement will be. And we're just there as the technical agent, if we are asked to do that component of it.

Emma: Great. Thank you. And how is the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council working, or the project working around the limitations with COVID?

Blaine Wiggins: So this came up actually for the first time in the Saskatchewan session. One of the things that the IFMS programs were meant to do was around out of the traditional box of how a regional organization goes and deliver services. We were always intending as I talked about the three delivery models for the communities to build capacity, to be able to deliver the programs and for us to provide the support that that community needs. So some communities may need us to come in to do a very basic fire prevention delivery, because they don't have either the capacity or the expertise or the resources. They may not even have a fire department, and they want fire prevention done. Other communities may have a very highly functioning fire department that's doing fire prevention, and they may need us to do some engineering support services on needed fire flow for a new capital building, and do a plans examination so somebody who's got a certified plans examination.

And I'll be the first to admit I was at one point in my career when I heard of certified plans examiner, I had no real idea what it was. So once I found out what it was, I thought all of this is great, I'll go get certified myself and it really has expanded my tactical knowledge of the, not just buildings, but fire infrastructure needed fire flows. Even the simplest can the firetruck actually get up the grade? The driveway that you're designing. These are the simplest questions, but ones that we just never properly do on most cases. So that kind of just some examples of how that would roll out.

Emma: Great. Thank you. Is there any cost to communities receiving these services?

Blaine Wiggins: No. And one of the things ... Sorry, going back to, I didn't finish the COVID question because I went off on a tangent but I'm just going to remember costs, and I'm going to go back to the COVID. So we have adopted, obviously the technology doing the presentations this way, there's no conferences, there's no

regional political meetings, there's no opportunities to set up booths. So say we're looking at different avenues to do reach outs. We've got different communication strategy, our newsletters, our social media, our website, but our staff also are working, our staff, our employees and contractors are working across Canada. We're working virtually, we've always been a virtual organization. So it was kind of a leg up for us to get started on COVID, because we just did what we were doing the day before.

I've got one of my other very fine learned colleagues on the call here. We're adopting some advanced COVID protocols who recognize that we're now in deep, the serious the next wave. And so we need to take a little bit more precautions. Our standard right now is, we don't travel unless it's absolutely essential. It meets provincial health order guidelines around essential travel. But the great thing is, and we're also adopting and adapting some technology so we can continue doing Home Safety Assessments. That's our number one job is improve safety in the houses. We know that's where the fatalities are happening. They're not happening in schools, it's not happening in elder care facilities, they're happening in home. So we've got to hit that and hit that as hard as we can.

So with COVID, we're looking at some adaptive technology so that we can continue to do HSAs without actually having to go into the homes, utilizing tools where we have the occupants basically take us through a real-time video tour while we're doing our assessments outside the home. So we know firefighters have bunker gear, so there'll be fine in winter. And the other nice thing about the way we're doing it is we're trying to empower fire departments. So we're contracting some of the services directly to communities. And so we encourage you if you're from a fire department and you're interested in performing some of these services and would like to put some firefighters to work on a short-term basis, please give us a call and we'll be happy to have that conversation and see what we can do and explore to get these programs and services into your community.

And one of the things just kind of I'll skip. I'll address the costing. So the costing is, we trying to get the capacity in the communities. So there's no cost for our programs or services. There may be a circumstance down the road, and I'll just use an example. Let's say Métis community really does want us to do something we can't do. We can't provide those services right now to a non-First Nations community. So, there may be a costing model there but not First Nations communities. Like you say, if anything, we're flipping it around and we're trying to figure out how to put firefighters to work in the community instead of all of our services being the IFMS personnel and contractors going out to the communities.

So again, COVID like you say, it's thrown some challenges our way, but we're being adaptive. Some of the regional organizations we've been working with FNES and PAGC, they're looking at some of the ways we're doing some of our

work. We're looking at some of the ways they're doing their work. We're adapting, we're sharing information. That's been a great spinoff of this project is actually truly being collaborative, knowing what our neighbor organizations are doing, and what's their priorities, what's their deliveries. So anyway, costing and COVID, I think I got them both.

Emma: And I apologize because I was busy typing to people. And so I wasn't listening to you and I failed to catch on failing to answer the question so well done for addressing that. And I have seen Monty, I assume that's your daughter. She is adorable. Hi.

Emma: Okay. So questions have come in. One is a comment, but perhaps you could speak to it about the codes that you're speaking about. First Nations don't fall under and any federal code except for building and that building inspectors and ONM advisor within First Nation, just trying to encourage communities for better fire safety in residential buildings. And perhaps you could speak to how the NIFSC might support those that are already trying to do that good work.

Blaine Wiggins: Yeah. So we work with jurisdictions all the time, fellow jurisdictions and they all have their own processes. And sometimes they're a little bit limiting, but at the end of the day, the whole reason for an inspection process is to ensure that a building is built to code. If it's built to code, it's going to be safe. And more importantly, it's going to be built as designed and last a lifetime of the building. So, build a building substandard, obviously you're not going to get the true capital lifetime cycle out of the building. So what we want to do is, is establish support mechanisms on at all levels. So everything from helping to train building inspectors, helping to provide a national building inspection standard, building inspection tools, utilizing iPads and whatnot to do that, loaning those tools out.

If the community doesn't have a building inspector and they knew they need those inspection services will be able to facilitate that. The other aspect too is, it also helps with the current process for capital assets require a building inspection and a building to built code. Having the NIFSC there to assist with the community, basically you've got an independent voice that is looking at the building as it's going up, and they're there to represent the interest of the community, and that's one of the things in the whole process right now that a building doesn't necessarily ... the whole building process puts the community at a liability for the building. And I've personally experienced this where some communities have cut corners just to get the building inspection completed, but knowing that there's deficiencies in it so that they can absolve themselves of the debt of the building at once it's built through the ISC current policy procedures. If you go off reserve, the building being built to code is really put more on the builder than it is the person who's building the building, the owner of the building. So, in this case it would be the band or even individuals.

The other aspect there too is, it will really support insurance and the buildings that are built to code are going to be easier to insure and maintain the building

maintenance, etc. I mean, we could do a two hour discussion Q&A just on the whole inspection process. We really happy to have partners that have been working on different aspects. First Nations Building Officers Association has got some really good groundwork already started here. Other areas, like a Technical Service Advisory group and Alberta's done some really good building inspection work. Again, don't reinvent the wheel, don't start from scratch, talk to our partners about what they're doing and utilize best practices.

So another good example of ... Basically don't invent something, just steal it and steal it with permission obviously. [Finbo 00:48:24] has been utilizing remote video inspections for say building officers for literally years now, where they have an inspector working with somebody locally, especially for fly-in communities where the cost of travel is extremely prohibitive, but it's about getting that service done using alternative technology and alternative platforms. So it really is, it's an exciting time for us, but at the end of the day is, we're just the agent that's supporting the process. We have the tactical advisory committee that's made up of all First Nations organizations that do deliveries. There's seven organizations. I actually believe eight, including the Government Nunavut Fire Marshal's Office.

So, eight First Nations organizations that are involved in setting standards, helping refine standards, and/or defined standards. And the one that we talked about briefly in the presentation. So occupational health and safety, your provincial work safe. There's a gap in understanding how important that is. It's not just about the safety, it's about the requirement and the standards for the proper equipment, the proper training, the proper safety aspects, and like, say that's one of the big areas that we gap. There's reason why non-First Nations fire departments have the rigidity that they do, and they have the equipment that they do and they have the ... even something as simple as cleaning their turnout gear, they're required to, by law, by regulation where we cut corners, because we're not required to.

And that's, again, it's a big area that we need to catch up on. We're not going to do it overnight, but at least if we can start having those standards in occupational health and safety, they're not going to be enforced, but if we can actually reach for those standards, and there's a reason why those standards are in place around presentive cancers that have been identified. In some areas, volunteer firefighters we'll see more house fires and industrial fires than career firefighters. And I know one of the fire departments I served as a volunteer we would see 10 fires a month. And then I talked to career firefighters in Vancouver and they wouldn't see 10 fires in a year. So again, I think we're kidding ourselves to think that volunteer firefighters and small environments are not at risk, they are at probably more risks. So anyway, I'll get off the occupational health and safety bandwagon. I think I beat that one.

Emma: So I have an inquiry actually from Lake St. Martin First Nation, they're in the process of going into their newly rebuilt community, and they're setting up a fire department. So how can the NIFSC help?

Blaine Wiggins: Give us a call, let's link in, and let's ... Again, we don't have a cookie cutter approach. We really need to spend the time, invest the time into your community to understand what your needs are, and then how we can fill in the gaps. And again, our goal is to work the IFMS out of service, so it's not needed again. So it's giveaway all the knowledge we can and get as much equipment into the communities we can. Build the expertise within the communities, not come in and do something and leave and take the knowledge with us. We really want to incorporate. And I'm hoping that we will come up with a nationally accepted Indigenous term for knowledge transfer, because that is our goal is to get the knowledge and expertise that we have into the hands of the community so that they can do for themselves.

And then we can go on to the next community that needs that support. And again, there going to be varying levels of support that's required maybe as something as simple as rewriting a bylaw because the fire department has a mutual aid agreement with officer of department and the mutual aid agreement has to be consistent with the provincial regulations. So, we saw that in Ontario a couple of years ago, where a lot of First Nations fire departments mutual aid agreements were terminated because they couldn't meet that newly required provincial regulation. So yes, call us, contact us and we'll provide some contact information directly to the question. I think I know who's contact you're going to give.

Emma: So just for anyone that's thinking of contacting us, if you just email to info@indigenousfiresafety.ca, and then we'll make sure that that information gets to the right person instead of kind of sending out a whole bunch of different email addresses at the moment, but absolutely we have all the different programs that we went through in the seven different areas. So, we can definitely help with getting your Chief and Council understanding how they can best support the fire department, as well as helping you with actually training firefighters and getting operational guidelines and things like that in place so that's really exciting. I have one more question in the line. So if anyone out there is thinking that you have something get typing and this question is asking about employment opportunities with the organization.

Blaine Wiggins: I thought you'd never asked, so thank you whoever asked the question. So our goal is to create employment opportunities. And as simply as I can put it we will have our fire officers very ... So we are working on the job descriptions and roles responsibilities of the NIFSC right now. We don't know, again, the analytics around where to put people where to put offices, how to group offices by do we have one in each region? Do we have East, West, Central and Quebec because they're different. So we're doing all that analytical work, but we will be talking

with the regions, it won't just be a straight up formula because that doesn't really take into account the needs.

So we'll be looking at everything from a geographic distribution, rural remote distribution, population distribution, current risk assessment status. And I can see us continually through attrition. We may decrease one region and increase the numbers in another region. So we are recruiting as I said, we were looking for a program delivery specialist. So I'll just explain really briefly what a delivery specialist is. Basically it's our top tier position. It's somebody who's got certification, got experience, and most importantly has good contacts with communities, has already established that, has relationships with the communities, because especially what we're doing everything is about relationships, but working with communities. And so if we've got somebody that's experienced and certified, but they don't have any community contacts they're sitting there waiting for the phone to ring, we want to be the ones calling and nudging and basically taking advantage of the relationships we already have.

So we recognize that fire officers, we will have a training program as we bring in our basically entry-level fire officers. And our goal is that every fire officer that we bring in it may take eight to 12 years, but they become a delivery specialist where they have that the certification, the experience, and the community contacts, we can grow that. So, our goal is, again, it's about having Indigenous employees working and representing us. So if we have somebody who is mid career or starting their career and has got a little bit of fire experience and volunteered with the local fire department, they don't have one piece of paper. We want you to apply because that is the type of person we're going to take from basically birth of their career.

If they want to stay with the organization right through to retirement. And we're happy to do help and mentor and do the training. And so that's why we're wanting to recruit a delivery specialist in Manitoba so that we actually have somebody that can then help us recruit and help us mentor. We have some already established in Quebec and Ontario and Alberta. We've got some resources already in BC. So the Atlantic and Manitoba right now are kind of our two big gap areas. And we're doing some contacts door knocking in the Atlantic, and this is my door knocked Manitoba. So if you've got somebody out there, we've talked with a couple of people, try to encourage them to apply. Two lessons I always leave is that for those that know the fire service, if you become a ... Well, in four or five years of training and certification whether it be Winnipeg or one of the bigger fire departments that going to come knocking, and they're going to try to steal you and we get it, we're going to lose a lot of our staff to municipal fire departments.

A fire prevention starting job is a six figure salary, we know we can't compete, but here's the big but, is if we lose somebody that we've invested five or six years of training and mentoring in, that means we've created a slot to train and

mentor somebody else. Some of the non-First Nations fire chiefs, when I talked to them about our process and what we're doing they say that we're a little bit mental. Why would you train somebody to know you're going to lose them? It's like, well, here's the difference. Retired firefighters go off and non-First Nations firefighters they go off and go off and do whatever they do. Our people go back and serve their community. So if we train you and you spend your entire career in a municipal fire department, your 25 years in a municipal fire department, we know once you've done your career, you need to go back and help your community.

So to us, we're planting seeds now that will benefit communities in 15, 20 years from now where they're going to have that local expertise. We can go back and support your community. So to us, it's a win-win. It's about short-term, long-term opportunities and how we build capacity within the community. So lots of employment opportunities look at our website and encourage other people to look and apply. And just have the discussion with us. If you don't think you're qualified, just give us a call and you'd be surprised how qualified you really are.

Emma: Beautiful. Thank you. Well, that is all the questions. So I just have a couple of housekeeping items. So as we've mentioned, we are going to be putting these on YouTube. So please do look out for those. You will also be receiving an email that will have a brief survey about the session. And I ask that you please do take the time to complete it, because we will actually read every single response. And that kind of feedback really ties into what we've said about being 'for us by us.' We need to hear from you about what is working, what isn't working, what we can do better, so that we can continue to get our message out there and deliver the best possible services. So thank you in advance for doing that. Blaine, do you have anything that you would like to add?

Blaine Wiggins: Yeah. Again, these sessions, like you say, this is our first run at these virtual Fireside Sessions [inaudible 01:01:21]. I have a fire with me, so it's not that virtual where you feel the heat. So we're to do these on a quarterly basis. And we've learned a lot from the sessions. The sessions coming up will be not an overview of the project as much that we wanted to do, the first one here. They will be more specific on what we're actually doing in the project, what we've accomplished in the last quarter. So look for those. If you've got comments about what we could do better, what information we can get out there, please let us know, and we will respond in kind. We will do what you're asking us to do.

Emma: Great. Thank you. I'm going to just hand back over to Allan for him to please close our meeting.

Allan Peters: Right.

Emma: Let's see.

Allan Peters: Where is my face?

This transcript was exported on Dec 08, 2020 - view latest version [here](#).

Emma: I think your face is coming.

Allan Peters: All right. Here I am. [Non-English 01:02:52]. Creator, thank you for bringing us together. We asked for continued guidance so we can help others. We ask that to keep us safe from the strong sickness so we can continue to help others. Until we meet again, all my relations. Thank you.

Emma: Thank you very much. And thank you all for your time and your thoughtful questions. Please stay in touch and stay safe.