

Allan: ... Technology so that we are able to meet and stay safe from this [inaudible 00:00:04] sickness. We ask that you help us and guide us so we can help others. Creator, give us acceptance, patience and understanding of each other. Thank you. All my relations.

Speaker 2: Wonderful thank you, Allan. Let me get back in here.

I think it's important that we cover off who the Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada is so that we can understand then how that fits in with the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council Project. The Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada, or AFAC as it's more commonly known, was established in 1991 by Indigenous firefighters. It's a united body of regional Indigenous emergency and fire service organizations from across Canada. AFAC is committed to raising awareness of the fire and life safety challenges in Indigenous communities, and in improving the outcomes. They work with national, regional, and local Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations and with individual communities to bring about that change. The National Indigenous Fire Safety Council Project is the combination of many years of hard work by AFAC to get meaningful backing from the government to create an organization that will allow communities to determine their own fire and life safety needs.

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 it is that you need, what you want, what's been successful in the past, and also what hasn't worked so well. Some of the ways that the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council Project supports communities is by helping communities to understand how fire and life safety standards are beneficial by providing the training, to be able to achieve, monitor, and maintain standards. By supporting access to funding for sustainable services, and also by assisting communities and ensuring the capital infrastructure is of quality. The NIFSC Project is all about creating the entity that will be the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council who will then be continuing to deliver those programs that will support communities in improving their own fire and life safety outcomes.

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 the Inuit, Métis to sit on the AFAC Board and also to participate in the strategic development and direction as the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council. The government's goal of the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council is to reflect all Indigenous Peoples. Because of limitations of federal policy, we're currently only able to deliver programs and services on reserve. But we are working with government to remove those barriers and one of the programs and services that we are developing and that

we will develop in the future are deliberately designed to be able to be used by all Indigenous communities.

This diagram shows how community needs are really at the core of everything that we do. The project always has been and always will be driven by community needs. It's 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 what are the current challenges and gaps across the country. We heard that immediate action is really needed to address the multitude of fire and life safety issues. As we develop programs and services that are tested in communities and then any feedback that we receive is incorporated into the program design so that then we can make sure that the product does truly meet community needs. We're committed to continuous improvement and our programs will always be evaluated and redesigned to meet evolving needs as the picture changes.

How is the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council Project going to make a difference for you? Well, 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 you can be confident that you will receive sound information and you will know that we're reliable source for quality programs and services. The National Incident Reporting System is going to make an enormous difference. Currently there's no data being capture, that means when we design fire prevention programs, we're doing so based on our best guess as to what the leading cause of fires is. If we have that data, we can develop targeted programs to address the actual problems that are occurring. The NIFSC will be an independent national organization. It will decide what programs and services it's going to offer based on the reality on the ground and on the actual needs of Indigenous communities. By 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.

I am sorry. Firefighter training is currently not accessible to most Indigenous communities, at least not without leaving home to go to access training and to get jobs. We're going to develop and deliver training programs that allow people to remain in their community. We're going to 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 a cultural perspective, programs that reflect you and your community. Again, all programs and services we develop can be used by all Indigenous communities across the country, even if funding parameters currently limit delivery to on reserve communities,

Indigenous communities across the country are experiencing an unacceptable number of fire-related injuries and deaths. There's a 2008 report by the Canadian Mortgage housing corporation that 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 property loss per capita. Many of you will have had the same statistics from us over and over. The reason for that is because that's the only data that there is, and that's shocking and unacceptable. There's no National Fire Protection Act that mandates or enforces fire life 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 at their discretion. That means that support in each region will vary depending how that ISC region wishes to provide funding. There's no fire incident reporting. The data collection that was taking place was focused on [burntfunded 00:09:07] capital assets. It was interested in capital asset rather than fire loss reporting.

Fire service funding and fire protection is based solely on fire suppression is based on formula funding and it's included in flexible funding, which means that communities aren't required to use fire protection funding for fire protection. Housing and capital infrastructure is not subject to a national building inspection process. The current process puts the liability of the build on the community rather than the buildup, whereas off reserve, the builder is liable. While captured projects are required to be built to the National Fire Protection Code, that's based purely on policy, and there's no established independent inspection process. By taking a national-level approach to fire and life safety the NIFSC is addressing the gap in National Fire Protection Standards. By addressing these issues collaboratively on a national scale, the coordination of fire service standards, programs and services in Indigenous communities becomes possible.

Some of the examples of gaps that we're talking about is Indigenous fire services assume responsibility for fire departments and community safety, but in the absence of any national standards, they really 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, federal jurisdictions, like military bases, airports, and seaports, they all 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. That's not the case for on-reserve communities. 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 ideas and 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.

Let's take a look at the four project areas. Governance and corporate development efforts are the activities and steps that will build the organization and make sure that the 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 for the 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. 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 the 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's being delivered. We work with communities to identify and meet your individual needs. We collaborate with you to develop and test culturally appropriate programs. Our program areas include fire prevention, education, home safety, governance, fire department administration, leadership training, and many more. Programs will be delivered by the Indigenous Fire Marshal Service in two languages and through three different delivery mechanisms. Although, the requirements of each program may dictate which delivery formats are available. 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 those are the ones that have the greatest impact on fire life safety. When you see our programs listed, they're always in this sequence, and that's because this is the order they will have the greatest impact on saving lives.

Community safety education programs focus on specific fire safety issues and they're designed to increase awareness. These are programs addressing specific areas, such as cooking and heating. They're designed for everyone in the community from youth to Elders. Examples of these programs are things like Youth Fire Setter Intervention, Getting to Know Fire, and Learn Not to Burn. A fire service governance program is designed to support community decision-makers and leaders who are developing policies, bylaws, things like communication plans and fire emergency plans. These programs also look at helping community leaders to identify fire and life safety issues and finding ways to mitigate those risks. Examples of these programs are Community Fire Safety Assessment, Community Risk Reduction, and Risk Mitigation Analysis Services.

Our community infrastructure and engineering support programs assist communities in designing and planning fire-related infrastructure, including water systems and hydrants. They will identify what individual communities need and put appropriate people and resources in place to design and build the necessary infrastructure. These programs are things like Fire Protection Research Services, Plans Examination, and Plans Examination Training. The fire department management programs provide support for chiefs and offices at the administrative level with creating policies, providing guidelines, and the acquisition of apparatus and firefighting equipment. Examples of these programs are the Fire Department Assessment, Fire Officer Training, Policy and Operational Guidelines Support.

We then have our fire inspection services, which identify fire-related risks in communities and assist community leaders with minimizing these risks. They will also help provide building and equipment inspections. Examples of these programs are Fire Code Inspection Services, Fire Extinguisher Inspection and Maintenance Services. Investigations programs provide communities with support for both fire investigations and for data collection. These programs include training non-investigators and also providing accredited training. Examples of these programs are Fire Investigation Services to determine cause and origin and ensure the collection of fire reporting data, Fire Investigator Training and Fire Scene Preservation Training. Finally, fire department operations training looks at equipment repairs and maintenance and education for firefighters and responders at the incident-response level. These programs are things like Accredited Firefighter Training using NFPA standards and Fire Prevention Program Training.

This is a screenshot from our website where we have a dashboard, and you can view the current status of various aspects of the project. To date, 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 has also conducted a study to help in collaborating with local communities to develop evidence-based fire risk mitigation strategies. We've developed 14 programs, and we have hundreds of deliveries in progress.

The interim National Incident Reporting System, the NIRS, is being implemented and we've got data from over 2000 fire incidents in Indigenous communities that's being added to that database. The National Advisory Committee helps us to maintain an inclusive approach that meets the needs of all Indigenous communities by providing advice on the project as it evolves. The Technical Advisory Committee gives technical advice on the development and delivery of our fire safety programs. Part of that process is to review programs, both from a regional and a national level. The TAC, the Technical Advisory Committee, brings together a wide range of education experience and expertise to really share best practices and solve common issues. This committee allows for Indigenous

fire safety experts to guide the NIFSC programs. 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 get there, so 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, and Atlantic. The principal component of the NIFSC will be the Indigenous Fire Marshal Service, the IFMS, which is our boots on the ground. They're responsive to regional and community fire and life safety needs as they evolve. 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 really balance regional support within a national organization, literally looking at how many people and where will they be physically located. We're getting policy infrastructure and assets in place. Acquiring actual office space, computers, vehicles, that kind of thing. Our research team is developing collaboration MOUs, memorandums of understanding to work with other research organizations to share relevant information. They're examining mortality and morbidity in Indigenous communities to establish baseline data of fire-related casualties that we can then measure program performance against. They're examining insurance grading and costs and developing a business case for residential sprinklers.

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. For those of you who like to get into the details, we do actually publish our funding agreement on the website. If you go to our website and go to projects and document library, then there's a little search bar and you can search for CFA and it will come up there and you can read all the details.

I cannot overemphasize how important it is that we work with communities and organizations. So please connect with us so that we can collaborate with you to make a difference. Of course, you can sign up for our email and our snail mail newsletters and follow us on Facebook. Before I ask Blaine to introduce himself, we'll just do a quick reminder of how to ask your questions. If you don't see a menu like in the screenshot there, just move your mouse and that'll kind of wake up these zoom menus and it will pop up there, just click on chat and type your question. I will now hand over to Blaine, and if you would like to introduce yourself to the group.

Blaine Wiggins: Yes, thanks a lot. My name is Blaine Wiggins. I'm the executive director for the Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada. We're really appreciative to have these sessions and they have the ability to provide updates. This is the first of a series of national sessions. We'll be starting doing these on a regular basis so that we can have that interactive discussion, bring everybody up to speed on what we're doing. Incorporate regional input as one of the venues to collect data about what is going on in the regions. How we can address adopt, change, adjust as needed. We've had some really interesting questions from some of the other regions and let's say we encourage you to throw at us everything you got.

One of the things that we're really happy about with this project is the transparency and the collaboration this far both regionally individual fire departments right up through to the national Indigenous organizations, the AFN, Métis National Council, and the ITK, the Inuit organization has been following along. We can announce that the government of Nunavut Fire Marshal's Office, the fire marshal from Nunavut, is officially joining our Board of Directors. So, we're extending another invitation out to the Métis National Council. We hope to have a representation from Métis Nation. Anyway, I will open it up to questions and see what we can come up with for good answers. Hopefully, you leave us stumped and if you leave us stumped, that means we got to go away and do some more work.

Emma: Great. Thank you, Blaine. Before I ask this question, I would just like to acknowledge Monte, thank you for joining us for all of these sessions. I appreciate it. He's just asking, can you please confirm where are we going to be posting the fireside sessions? Where, and when will we be posting them?

Blaine Wiggins: That's a really good question. I know we are posting them. I suspect there'll be either on our website or Facebook sites links to those. Look for those links as soon as we finish compiling them. Sorry, and I do want to apologize. Thank you, Monte. One of the big partners with this project besides the NIOs, national Indigenous organizations, is our partners at ISC. We've been working collaboratively behind the scenes for many years and through that partnership and dialogue and recognition for the advancement. I say we couldn't do this without our partners in Ottawa and at the regional level. We appreciate you guys' support and participation.

Also, I want to recognize I'm speaking to you from the Traditional Territory of the Soda Creek First Nations here, just outside of Williams Lake, BC. My office actually is at the Soda Creek First Nations Community Health Center. It's a great place to work and I'm surrounded by some wonderful people here and glad to virtually connect with the rest of our partners and communities, fire departments across the country. Sorry, the question again, because I have a very short memory.

Emma: Well, you did answer it, but actually it was unfair because I deal with the technical side more. The videos will be uploaded to YouTube and then it'll be

listed on our Facebook and there'll be links to them from the website as well, but they'll actually reside on YouTube and we are going to do that next month, which is next week. There'll be up there next week.

Next question. This is actually one that we have seen before just in a slightly different way. Someone's asking that my Chief and Council aren't really that onboard with the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council, or with supporting the fire department. How is the NIFSC going to help with that?

Blaine Wiggins:

Obviously one of the things we'd like to be doing is working individually with every community. We do on the program delivery side when communities reach out and we get that opportunity to have that direct engagement relationship and providing support and sharing of information back and forth. We are all interconnected here, and each community has some amazing information. That's one of the big things that we want to do is share that information. What is working well, what's not working well between communities. That's one of the things we will be able to do. But at the end of the day is we recognize that every governance, every Chief and Council has a hundred things that they're dealing with. Especially from the fire side, we only see the one big red truck outside and that's our one thing.

Unfortunately, when a community hasn't had a fire or the risks that we all know are there, when governance doesn't see that it doesn't necessarily translate to the importance and priority and what a governance body needs to look at. What we want to do is support both the department and Chief and Council. One of the best things we can do is raise the awareness around accountability. We're not talking legal accountability. We're talking about leadership, accountability. That's something we've been working with Assembly First Nations on, Métis National Council, the ITK, around ensuring that our leaders, both at the community, regional, and national level, really have an understanding. Now, one of the things that we gap and we talked previously about legislation, our stance on legislation it's one of the many pillars of fire. It's not the end all be all forcing a community that needs to do something, having that authority, isn't going to necessarily get the outcomes we're looking for.

At the end of the day, what we've determined is we support that, but we support other processes. One of the big processes is education and awareness around that accountability. That moral accountability, that we take responsibility for our fire safety, us as peoples, us as communities, us as fire departments. I've said this many times before, when I've been speaking is, there will be communities' Chief and Councils that'll tell our organization don't come back for a while and we're not going to send you a Christmas card because they didn't like what we had to say. They didn't like that we told the Chief and Council, you are responsible. You are not addressing your responsibility.

The nice thing is we're doing it from a fact-based position, from a science-based position, from an industry-based position. We're not doing it from a political

lens and landscape. It doesn't matter who's sitting around that table, leading that community. It's the same challenge, the same responsibility. We recognize that there are going to be Chief and Councils that are not going to like the hard facts that we're going to present. But at the end of the day, too, it's not just we're not going to go on school, a governance body. We're going to help them, ask them how we can help to bridge the gaps, whether it be a capacity, a technical gap, a funding gap, it's all about solving the problems and minimizing the dangers that we're addressing.

Again, I go back to our partners, our non-First Nation communities. There's a lot of elements that they have to do. They have to deal with building codes. They have to go through an inspection process. There's the level of insurance that has to come with many aspects. If you get a mortgage off reserve, you have to have house insurance, it's a requirement of your mortgage. Again, there's a lot of have-tos that happen off reserve that increase fire and life safety. We need to ensure, even though there's not a legal requirement, there's not an act that requires it. We have a moral requirement that we need to address. I hope that ... It's a very broad question, and again, it's going to be a case-by-case basis on what and how we work with a community leadership, but at the end of the day, sometimes it's going to be tough love, but it's going to be the truth.

The last thing that we want as an organization, and we want as professionals, is to walk away from a community and not say what we needed to say because of political fear of that governance body. At least we'll leave the truth on the table. It's going to be an interesting ride. Some of our fire officers and delivery specialists, we've got Leon Smallboy from Alberta with us. We've all been in the room with Chief and Councils when we've delivered those, and we'll continue to deliver that message. Very long-winded answer, my apology.

Speaker 2: Thank you. We have another question here, how can I best contribute? I've got a lot of feedback through discussions with many community leaders from across Canada relating to fire and life safety.

Blaine Wiggins: Actually. Yes, thank you. The best way you can contribute is get a hold of us. We will give you our ... For each of the areas we have leads, area leads we call them and our area lead in the development is Jeremy Parkins, who's managing all our new program development and any adjustments to programs, so he's a great contact. We want to be talking, we want to be sharing, we want to be hearing. We also have, as noted in the presentation, we have the Technical Advisory Committee, which is made up of all of the First Nations Organizations that deliver programs and services across the country. In Saskatchewan, Prince Albert Grand Council is a part of that conversation. We'd like to open it up larger, but right now we have seven organizations representative of that at that ... Sorry and including our partners, ISC, and help us support us from a policy and a governance framework, funding framework also that is a part of the discussion.

We have technically eight partners there, but many of the organizations will have three, four, five people from their organizations because they have different subject matter experts. We will have 25, 30 people on the line during those Technical Advisory Committee meetings, as we're looking at each of the programs. The other thing we do with the Technical Advisory Committee, any research we're doing, we propose that research ... This year, we're working on eight different research pieces. We bring those research topics to the TAC in case there's a regional lens or something that we haven't looked at. We've got a couple of reports that have already been published and feel free to look at our website. It's fantastic for the first time nationally, we are doing our own research. We're not requiring on academic environments that are interested in First Nation communities, want to approve First Nation communities. We're driving this ourselves.

The other collaborative benefit with both the TAC and the NIFSC Project as a whole, and it's really unfortunate, when the first time this happened was last year 2019, but it took till 2019 for all the regional First Nations and national First Nations emergency service focused organizations to sit down at a common table. That to me is ... I mean, we can't look back we have to live in our present, but at least we're doing it now. We should have been doing it 20 years ago. We've got other national fire and emergency services bodies that we've been working together for decades. We've got a year and a half now. We've got a lot of catch up to do. Sorry, long-winded answer, my apologies. I hope everybody had dinner. We're going to be here for a while. Just kidding.

Speaker 2: It's okay. You're passionate about your subject, it's good. This next question leads on to that. It's asking about how can you get involved from an employment perspective? Are there jobs and what training are we offering?

Blaine Wiggins: Again, another question that comes up in all the regions, because I think there's been limited opportunities for us to ... Great opportunities to volunteer. We can't take 10 steps without having an opportunity to volunteer, but for actual employment the NIFSC is going to be First Nations focused. Right on our website right now we have employment and contract opportunities. We'll continue to post those. One of the things that we're really keen on is having Indigenous representation, and we recognize that ... Again, I use my learned colleague Leon as an example. Leon got 20 plus years of experience certifications that he could make an entire wall out of, not everybody's going to have that.

One of the things we want to do is encourage those that are wanting to change careers or those that are starting their career, give them an opportunity in the fire service. They just have been appointed a firefighter, and that's all they've got. But we want to train them, mentor them, support them and bring them up to the level of our eventually the program delivery specialists.

Emma: Great. This is just quickly showing everyone there, how you can access you go to our website and click on opportunities, and that has all the current

opportunities, since that's a great place to keep an eye on. We have a question here about, and sorry I'm just trying to paraphrase it.

Are you going to get involved in, urban interface, wildland, and emergency management?

Blaine Wiggins:

Good question. Urban interface is a part of the fire service as it stands right now. So yes, that is a part of the training equipment standards, policy response, et cetera, et cetera. Yes, that is normal part of structural firefighting. Wildland firefighting, we identify there is a gap in wildland firefighting. As I articulated, I live here in Williams Lake. 2017 was an eye-opener for how First Nations get excluded from the national wildland firefighting scene. Literally, I was driving by firefighters from Mexico, South Africa, and Australia, but I didn't drive by one First Nations wildland firefighter during the summer 2017.

One of the things we want to do is work with a CIFFC the national body, work with our regional partners to ensure that there is training for wildland firefighting, and eventually down the road. It is our goal to have a national repository of wildland firefighting teams and sprinkler protection unit teams that will be utilized first before anybody's brought in from out of country. Especially if we've got First Nations that want support. Here in BC, during the wildland season, you have fire departments from Vancouver. We all know what career firefighters make. They make six figure salaries; they're driving up in rank in the overtime and the employment for First Nations has been limited. We want to change that. We want First Nations to be first out and the last to come home. We also want to work with CIFFC to develop a national fire coordination center.

Again, our other goal dream down the road is to develop a national dispatch center, so it makes sense to have a national wildfire coordination center where we can work collaboratively with non-Indigenous partners. The other question was around emergency management. Our focus has been around fire and life safety but our standard answer to that question is if First Nations leadership asks us to do more in emergency management then we will rise to the occasion. Right now, our focus is just to get the NFISC up, get the IFMS, the fire marshal, the Fire Marshal Service fully operational. But we all know that there is a natural overlap between fire departments and emergency management. We've already started some very targeted training in emergency management, emergency operation center training is an example, that's something that is on our books that we're going ahead with. As the needs, and as the discussion and the dialogue continues, we definitely want to see that.

Our other goal, once we get the NIFSC up and running, is to develop a national fire and emergency services training academy. It just would make sense that not only structural firefighting, wildland firefighting, but emergency management would be a part of that training. One of the things we need to figure out is how to get the training into the communities. There are some specialized training

we'll have to do onsite, obviously for those that are in the fire service, but it's using technology to train people in their communities. One of the other goals, because I'm just full of goals is there is right now, no small airport operation training. That's actually one of the things there's many, many fly-in communities that just are not trained to deal with these instances.

I believe Saskatchewan was the last place we had an aircraft incident. There's another gap that we need to be trained on. Anyway, we have some goals. The other thing we want to hear from communities is what else are we missing? What's the priority? What should we be putting as part of our strategic goals? It may take two, three, five years, but tomorrow is one day closer to that goal and we didn't have it yesterday. Please throw at us your guys' ideas. If you feel that a regional training center would benefit you, then throw it out there, let's figure out how to make it happen.

I've been involved in a couple of regional training centers through my career, and they were all successful. They're all well done, and they're all very collaborative and they were utilized at the end of the day. We recognize that certain fire training you can't do in a community, but the majority of it we can do, and we'll figure out how we can use technology and the advancements of technology and the advancement of our society as a whole to make that training happen. So, thank you.

Emma: Great. Thank you, Blaine. Next up, can you tell us about how the NIFSC Project is working within the context of the current COVID pandemic?

Blaine Wiggins: Yes. Everybody's spending a lot of time in their homes, but actually one of the benefits for AFAC is we were always been a virtual organization. We never had bricks and mortars. We don't go to an office. We were actually quite used to working virtually. It really wasn't much of a transition for us, and we really wanted to encourage a national presence. We have basically staff now, our staff and contractors in BC, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and we're trying to recruit in the Atlantic and Saskatchewan and Manitoba. It's been a really good working relationship. We do have somebody that does come into Manitoba, but we say we are really wanting to get a presence in Manitoba and especially because Manitoba doesn't have a regional emergency services organization. We want to address that gap.

They've got the tribal fire officers, they do a fantastic job, but it would be great if there were more formalized and had a more unified voice. The strength in our voice collectively is much better. Yes, through zoom we're implementing, and we've implemented some limited COVID standards around travel as an organization. We've done some very limited specific travel for businesses, but we are just implementing an advanced COVID procedure as we get into the worst part of the flu season and the winter season. But we have been able to get to communities where it's been appropriate and we're working with communities also. The one thing that we've been doing differently right from

the beginning is, it's our goal to ensure that we get as much work into the community as we can, instead of an outside organization coming in and doing the work for the community.

Our Home Safety Assessments and our Fire Department Assessments have been launched, and HSA is Home Safety Assessments. We're having the local fire departments do them. One of the things actually we're just working on right now is working on a little bit of an advanced technology so that we could go to a doorstep, leave a device, clean device for a home occupant. They can do the walk around in the home while the fire personnel that is doing the Home Safety Assessment is outside and just directing them on what they need to see and what they can make recommendations on. Again, we're using technology every which way, but loose. We really welcome the day when this is all over, obviously the impact strain on the economy, on communities, on mental health has been pretty harsh to say is an understatement and economically, our communities have always been at a disadvantage and this has just put us again at a larger disadvantage.

We're working through COVID and quite honestly some of the regional organizations have looked at what we're doing and are trying to adopt some of their delivery methodology to catch up. Because they've designed, all those the boots on the ground. We had the other option as one of the primary ways we were going to do delivery. Train the trainer and self delivery models were designed and developed before anybody ever heard the word COVID. We got a jumpstart on doing things in an alternative way.

Emma: Thank you. Next, it doesn't surprise me. I'm hearing this in Saskatchewan because it's definitely an area that we have lots of unilingual communities. How is NIFSC going to serve unilingual communities?

Blaine Wiggins: Interesting. Obviously, everything we do, just so I'll go with the two obvious languages, French and English. Everything we do within NIFSC, including the program delivery, we'll be able to deliver in French and English. Again, it's about sharing our expertise and that's one of the things we're really happy about having the Government of Nunavut on board. They are experts at translation on how to take programs and translate them. Now I recognize that Inuktitut it's not going to be very useful for communities in Saskatchewan, but it's how they do it, is what's going to be helpful for us.

I had the big, amazing opportunity to work in Nunavut and I work not for the GN, but I work with the GN, government of Nunavut, fire marshal's office. I got to see firsthand how the translation and how important it was. We want to rely on that. As we move forward, start translating and especially with resurgence of languages, do translations fire safety messaging and eventually be able to deliver programs in traditional languages. We're really excited by that, but we also need our young people to learn the language, retain the language, and use the language, and we will embrace that wholly.

Emma: Great. Now this. How do you work with Prince Albert Grand Council and the Saskatchewan First Nations Emergency Management?

Blaine Wiggins: Prince Albert Grand Council and the Saskatchewan First Nation emergency management, they are actually one of the, what we call TSGs, technical services groups, or I may have gotten that wrong, but anyways, so they do deliveries. We have two types of regional organizations that we work with, ones that are funded and do deliveries on an ongoing basis. PAGC is one of those First Nations emergency services, TSAG in Alberta, and Ontario First Nations Technical Corporation in Ontario. We have four regional First Nations organizations. The GN would be considered a regional one if they were South to 60, but they are a boots on the ground, regional of Nunavut. But we also have, and just to explain, we also have other regional organizations such as the Atlantic Fire Chiefs, the Quebec Fire Chiefs, the Ontario Native Firefighter Society that don't do ongoing. They do some deliveries, but they're not an ongoing delivery organization, but those organizations actually sit on our Board.

At BC and Saskatchewan, the regional organizations also sit on our Board. First and foremost, our president, Michelle Vandervord president of AFAC, is from PAGC Saskatchewan First Nations Emergency Management. We have a direct relationship there through our government, which is ultimately responsible and the governance body, because of the project, usually governance body will meet quarterly or five times a year. Our Board meets 13 times a year. We have a Board meeting every month to go over the project, provide updates, check on schedules. Then of course we have our AGM which is our 13th meeting. That's one facet. The other facet is we have the Indigenous Fire Marshal Service, which works operationally.

The IFMS is linked up with regional organizations if they want to have discussions with us. We've had face-to-face meetings with Saskatchewan ... Sorry BC just because of our proximity we've reached out and offered to meet with TSAG, we've had meetings with Ontario First Nations Technical Corporation, and we met with Michelle on behalf of PAGC on an operational level. The purpose of that is basically a) to collaborate, b) make sure that we're sharing information about what deliveries we're doing, make sure that we don't duplicate services, and identify where there's opportunities that would be mutually beneficial.

Right now, we're actually in discussion with PAGC First Nations Emergency Management for them to help us do deliveries in Saskatchewan. It's a very comprehensive relationship on multiple levels with Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is very well-represented both within the project, the governance, and the operations.

Emma: Great. I have one last question. If anyone out there is thinking they might have a question, get typing away. This question is asking around, we spoke in the

presentation about setting up regional footprint. What is that going to look like in Saskatchewan?

Blaine Wiggins:

That's a good question. One of the things we're working on right now is the analysis of where to put staff, how many staff, what does that look like? Again, I go back to that. We don't want to duplicate services. The four regions where we have an operational group already we have somebody that is there on the ground. So, we need to have a very comprehensive discussion once we determine where the resources will go, how that works. Nothing is off the table. All good ideas will come to fruition and we don't have a cookie cutter process. As an example, I'm just using this as an example, let's say in BC, they're just really overloaded, and they don't have the capacity to take on the work. They're just happy that we've worked side by side, and we're actually having discussions about actually putting our resources in their offices right now, because they have a little bit of space. Again, it is that close, but just use the example. Maybe BC says, no, you guys just set up shop and we'll work collaboratively, and we'll make sure that we're sharing information and not duplicating services, but you bring in your own people.

Saskatchewan may say, you know what, we have the capacity to essentially subcontract the work. It may be our funding and our deliveries, but it's done by PAGC staff. We're not at that point yet. We don't know. I just wanted to use the two examples of how they may be polar opposite but have different circumstances.

Again, one of the things that we strongly, strongly believe in is that through our analysis we don't want to spend the majority of our time with our staff traveling. We want to put and have a distributed model where the staff are working geographically and may have a group of First Nations that are working with them, and it limits the amount of travel that they're doing. So that translates to more time with the communities that they're working with. I don't want to use a circuit rider type of example, because that's a well-established program, but we have our provincial fire marshals do that now in different provinces where they geographically place their fire officers closer to the communities that they're serving.

That really has to be an important thing, don't put everybody in an office in a big city. That's the messaging that we heard; we certainly want to make sure that we address. And getting into rural remote communities is another message that was really strongly engagement is that some rural remote communities will see regional support once every three or four years. We need to do a better job at that. Especially with communities that need our help and are asking for help, we got to get the people closer. Watch the website, you'll have updates on our staffing models. We'll be having discussions, and we're certainly happy for any input and ideas. Also please apply for jobs.

- Emma: Which leads us neatly into the next question. Specifically, about job opportunities in Northern Saskatchewan.
- Blaine Wiggins: Absolutely, like I said-
- Emma: How can we help Northern communities with employment opportunities?
- Blaine Wiggins: Like I said, through training at the local level, that will create the opportunity for those that want to seek employment and also placing our staff in the North so that there are actually jobs for them to apply to. So, they're not forced to move South.
- Emma: Brilliant. Thank you. That is all of the questions. Thank you, everyone for those. That was great. Thank you for your time. Before I hand back to Allan to close the meeting, just a couple of housekeeping items to cover off. You will be receiving a survey about the session, and I would ask that you please do take your time to fill it in. I promise it's quick, and that we actually do read all of the responses and we take that information and use it to help us do a better job of everything that we do. Please take the time to do that. As we mentioned earlier, we will be publishing a recording of this session and one of the other regional sessions as well. That'll probably be by the end of next week, I would guess online and just watch out on our Facebook pages, probably the best place to get immediate updates on things.
- But we'll also look at if there's a way that we can just notify everyone that attended sessions when they're published. I know a few people did join later. Rest assured you didn't miss out and you can watch us over and over again. Blaine, do you have anything else that you would like to add?
- Blaine Wiggins: No. Just like I said, please shoot questions to us. Don't wait for a session to come up. We've got the website where you can shoot questions. If you want to know who our people are, want to talk to them, just ask and we'll provide that information.
- Emma: Great. Let me just see if, there we go see if I can manage to unmute Allan, wonderful. Allan, can I please hand back over to you to close our meeting.
- Allan: [inaudible 00:58:46]. [Non-English 00:58:46]. Creator, thank you for bringing us together today. We ask for continued guidance so we can help others. We ask that you keep us safe from this [inaudible 00:58:57] sickness, so we can continue to help others. Until we meet again, all my relations. Thank you.
- Emma: Beautiful. Thank you, Allan. Thank you everyone for your time and please stay safe.
- Allan: [inaudible 00:59:13] Blaine, we'll talk sometime. I need a favor.

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Blaine Wiggins: Yes, sir. We will. I'll get you [inaudible 00:59:22].

Allan: All right.

Emma: Good night, everyone.