



How would the IFMO benefit First Nations communities?

The IFMO can provide capacity-building and risk-mitigation programs and services to FN communities. For example:

- > **Prevention and Public Education** – Develop culturally relevant programs for all demographics (e.g., children, elders, at risk populations); for example, provision and installation of smoke and CO alarms.
- > **Community Fire Services Capacity** – Support communities in providing a range of fire, public safety, and community infrastructure services—training, fire department management, capital asset acquisition, infrastructure planning, community risk reduction, wildfire response, fire investigation, among others.
- > **Regional Support** – Ensure opportunities for funding, equipment, fire prevention initiatives, and training.
- > **Capacity Support for Governance** – Provide impartial, validated, and standards-based expertise to First Nations governance and leadership at the regional and national level to support local bylaws, national policy, and the evolution of community infrastructure.

- > **Insurance** – Support access to and rates for individual and community infrastructure insurance.
- > **Research** – Perform First Nations-specific research in conjunction with national agencies and provincial Fire Marshal/Fire Commissioner offices focused on, for example, fire service equipment, home sprinkler systems, training standards, alternative solutions applications, and insurance.
- > **Incident Data Base** – Support research to reduce fire incidents through infrastructure and data collection.
- > **Wildfire Interface Response** – Integrate community-based fire services to engage in national fire incidents that require structural protection, interface response, and sprinkler protection units.
- > **Indigenous Fire Service Employment** – Increased employment opportunity for Indigenous people.



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Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada and the Indigenous Fire Marshal Office Project

The Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada (AFAC) is currently undertaking the development of an Indigenous Fire Marshal Office (IFMO) project. This brochure provides information on the project background, the history of the AFAC, and the current fire service challenges faced by our First Nations communities. AFAC has worked for many years to research and raise awareness of these issues. Following the release of the AFAC-authored report: *Transforming Canada's Indigenous Fire Service (2017)*, the Hon. Carolyn Bennett, then Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, announced support for the creation of an IFMO.

AFAC undertook the IFMO project with the following goals:

- > Secure new funding for required capacity to develop to build and operate the IFMO.
- > Collaborate with existing First Nations fire & emergency services.
- > Engage with First Nations communities to help define the IFMO.
- > Design programs and services to build and maintain capacity within First Nations communities.
- > Address identified gaps in First Nations fire service.

About AFAC


AFAC was started by volunteer firefighters as a grassroots organization to advocate for the First Nations fire services. It has grown to be a nationally registered association comprised of regional First Nations emergency and fire service organizations and is recognized by the AFN through Resolution 18-92 *Recognition of an Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada (AFAC)* and Resolution 33-94 *Creation of an AFN Chiefs' Committee on Fire and Emergency Services*. AFAC has developed a research-based strategic approach with four key priorities. To meet these goals, AFAC has determined that an entire shift in the approach to First Nations fire service is needed to address the common fire service goal of eliminating loss of life and property.

The first priority was to collaborate with First Nations leadership, resulting in the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Resolution DR16 (2017) that the Chiefs-in-Assembly:

1. Direct the AFN to support AFAC in the creation and implementation of an Indigenous Fire Marshal Office with the intent of creating safer communities without putting any new financial burdens on the First Nation communities.
2. Recommend that the Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada continue to develop and implement the Indigenous Fire Marshal Office.
3. Recommend that the Indigenous Fire Marshal Office shall be independent of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and would report to a governance body comprised of fire specialists and First Nation leadership as determined by Canada's First Nations.
4. Recommend that the Indigenous Fire Marshal Office shall be operational and provide services to First Nations community as soon as feasible.
5. Recommend that the Indigenous Fire Marshal Office shall be funded with new federal funds and no existing fire or emergency service programs that meet the standards set by the Indigenous Fire Marshal's Office be devolved as a result of this initiative.

THE IFMO PROJECT PLAN



 **AFAC Strategic Priorities**
(revised January 2017)

Fire Prevention

- > Delivery of National Fire Prevention Programs.
- > Liaison with Fire Prevention Organizations/Associations.
- > Promote National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards and best practice for First Nations fire service.
- > Define adequate fire prevention programs in First Nations communities.
- > Support the evolution of a national fire reporting system.

Legislative Standards

- > Support First Nations leaders to define and implement National Fire Protection Legislation on reserve that defines Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) and applicable codes.
- > Support the use of building and fire codes on reserve adopted by First Nations as required in proposed Fire Protection Legislation and/or Regulations.
- > Support the evolution of a national comparable fire inspection strategy.
- > Provide technical support to First Nations fire departments for enhancing their Fire Underwriter Survey.

Fire Service Operations Standards

- > Develop operational standards (training, equipment, environmental scan, fire protection programs, community infrastructure support, volunteerism, etc.).
- > Enhance fire service capacity on reserve.
- > Enhance community fire service support through regional First Nations emergency services organizations and an IFMO.
- > Support continued improvements of Level-of-Service Standards for communities.

National Coordination for Indigenous Fire & Emergency Services

- > Implementation of an IFMO.
- > Provide policy advice to ISC, AFN, and regional First Nations leaders.
- > Liaison with AFN and regional First Nations political groups on fire policy.
- > Liaison with other national fire organizations.
- > Provide support to regional and community Emergency Management Services.
- > Provide support to enhance Emergency Medical Service providers for First Nations communities.

National Fire Protection Legislation

First Nations communities remain the only jurisdictions that are not provided with Fire Protection Legislation. AFAC supports the development of a National Fire Protection Legislation developed by First Nations leadership to address the unique requirements of First Nations communities.



for us, by us

AFAC developed the slogan *for us, by us* as the philosophy that guides the project. The term means:

- > First Nations-created organization to serve First Nations communities.
- > First Nations governance structure developed in collaboration with First Nations leadership.
- > New ongoing funding, free of political interference.
- > Fire service careers for Indigenous peoples.
- > An organization accountable to First Nations communities through transparent reporting.

 **Challenges with the Existing First Nations Fire Service**

The dramatic gap between non-FN and FN fire services and community safety can be bridged by the IFMO. This gap includes:

Funding

- > **Formula Funding** – No guarantee that funding is adequate to address the fire service needs and does not prevent funding from being re-directed.
- > **ISC Regional Disparity** – No consistent region-to-region funding, delivery of service, or support for First Nations organizations.

First Nations Fire Service Standards

The lack of standards results in less effective fire service and community protection.

- > **Training** – First Nations fire services continue to be asked to assume responsibility for departments and community safety with limited training and experience to adequately perform their duties and to mitigate community risks in the absence of national standards.
- > **Equipment** – Inadequate funding, expertise, and training that hinders the adoption fire service equipment standards.
- > **Building & Fire Codes** – With the exception of First Nations, all other jurisdictions including provinces, territories, and other federal jurisdictions (military bases, airports, and seaports) have established building and fire codes. These are usually identified through fire protection acts and serve to ensure that infrastructure is built (building codes) and maintained (fire codes) to established standards. Beyond safety, building and fire codes support capital assets meeting their expected lifespan.
- > **Fire Prevention & Education** – No national standards for the delivery of fire prevention or public education.

Firefighter Safety (Occupational Health & Safety)

- > **Worker Protection** – Most First Nations fire services can purchase occupational health and safety coverage from provincial agencies but these agencies will not enforce the regulations.
- > **Incident Reporting and Reviews** – First Nations communities who subscribe to occupational health and safety coverage are only voluntarily encouraged to meet these obligations.

Recruitment & Retention

- > **Volunteer Recruitment** – The majority of First Nations fire service is voluntary, with limited resources to offer paid on call, composite, or honorariums to address

the international decline in volunteerism. Unlike other community-based volunteer opportunities, volunteering in the fire service requires extensive training and certification, time commitments, and elements of personal risk and sacrifice.

Infrastructure Development

- > **New Building Engineering Services** – Centralized services without adequate on-site evaluation of how the development fits within existing community infrastructure are a common problem.
- > **Pre-plan Examination** – Often no verification that fire safety issues are identified/met in the building of new infrastructure.

Inspection, Investigations & Reporting

These serve to protect infrastructure and address failures within the system.

- > **Inspections** – The lack of codes means any inspection would lack enforcement to ensure safety requirements are met.
- > **Investigations** – There is a lack of trained resources to do investigations and/or statutory authority for investigations.
- > **National Fire Incident Reporting** – First Nations do not have the funding and infrastructure to collect fire incident data or the ability to use the data for the research or development of fire prevention programs.

Insurance

- > **Home and Infrastructure Insurance** – Most First Nations communities cannot meet the fire standards for obtaining reasonable and affordable fire insurance.

Municipal Type Service Agreements (MTSA)

- > **MTSA** – Typically only cover fire suppression activity even if the contracted fire departments can provide fire prevention and public education services.

Fire Marshal Office

- > **Indigenous Fire Marshal Office** – Provinces, territories, and the Department of National Defence all have established fire marshal/fire commissioner offices to support community fire safety.