

First Nations Housing & Infrastructure Network

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Newsletter

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Supporting fire departments crucial to community safety

Kingsclear First Nation is located approximately fifteen kilometers away from the capital city of Fredericton, New Brunswick. The community runs adjacent to the Saint John River or better known as Wolastoq which translates to mean beautiful, bountiful river. The First Nations community has a population of approximately 700 on-reserve residents.

Douglas Charles Paul is a community member and a young man with a great purpose. He's a volunteer Deputy Chief firefighter and we asked him to discuss his vital role in his community.



Doug Paul, volunteer Fire Chief for Kingsclear First Nation. Doug and his team recently assisted with the Perth Andover flood that took place on March 23rd, 2012.

Tell us a bit about yourself

My name is Doug Paul, originally from Kingsclear First Nation but I've lived all over the United States and Canada so I moved around a bit. I've been a volunteer firefighter for 15 years and a medical responder for 12 out of those 15 years.

How did you get involved in Emergency services?

I always wanted to be a police officer like my father but I think the big thing that motivated me was when I was young in the United States in Bangor and I just happened to be walking by this big house fire. It was like a movie scene, when they brought a little girl out of the burning house, they did cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on her and were able to bring her back to life. I've always helped people so witnessing this moment impacted me greatly; this was a life changing event for me.

When did you start to take training?

I was 17 years old and back then, St. John Ambulance used to offer the Emergency Medical Technician Training program and I took that and at that time we weren't classified as paramedics because it was lower level training. I couldn't get work because I wasn't old enough so I came home to Kingsclear and my uncle Gary was the Deputy Fire Chief at the time. I didn't know we had a fire department and so I volunteered. My uncle told me that to be a firefighter required level 1 training and it was offered through the New Brunswick Community College so I took the initiative and jumped on board with our fire department. I learned all the equipment, the truck, the pumps, radio communications and how to use foam. Most of my work was with grassfires and garbage fires. I took my level one firefighter through Fire Training Associates. There's a lot

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Supporting fire departments crucial to community safety

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more to it than there used to be.

How did you progress?

I was going to take the paramedic program in Nova Scotia but when my grandmother passed away I came home. I did take the medical first responder a while ago but you have to always keep training. I took Level one firefighting and that's 85 hours of training. The Medical First Responder takes 40 hours of training. To maintain your firefighter status you have to do 200 hours of training with the Fire Marshall's office every year. I have at least 1000 hours of training and it's always continuous. You're always learning.

For a few years, we didn't have firefighter services in the community; now we have our own fire truck and we have 21 firefighters that are all volunteers, including me. Firefighting's a science and there's a lot more to it. It's not about grabbing a hose to put out the fire. The training books doubled in size and every time a standard changes you have to relearn it. There's what's known as Rapid Intervention Training (RIT) and you learn more advanced firefighting saving skills than you do with your level one training. The RIT training runs for four days. I have valuable life saving training coming into our community and I'm currently trying to have the firefighters be the first responders in the community because it takes the ambulance 27 minutes to get to our community.

What do you like about what you do?

Well it's not the pay (he laughs). Like my grandfather, I always liked helping out. I enjoy helping people. I took firefighters to Perth Andover yesterday to show them how to do salvage and overhaul training because of their flood. Six of us went up. (At the time of this interview, Perth Andover was experiencing a major emergency with the flooding of the St. John River.) The town called for help and we did everything we could to help out. It's all about helping the community and as First Nations people, we're taught to be helpers.

To be helping another community, it's not for a pat on the back or recognition in the news and that's what I tell my crew. One woman who experienced the flood disaster explained yesterday how thankful she was that we came a long way to assist and she started crying. It's tough. That woman told us that we should be wearing

wings. We were in Tobique for 10 hours and we're going back to do it again and that's what keeps me going. We do it because we're there to help and it's that stuff that keeps me going but it can be hard.

Do you and your team get debriefings?

Yes and you try to keep it professional but it's hard. The flood victims lost everything and that's the hard part. Some businesses lost everything and I take it kind of personally because we're only human. My first accident still haunts me to this day from 15 years ago. A fellow firefighter called the accident in and I was listening to the radio and I heard the call come into Kingsclear. We got to the scene before everyone else did and this six year old girl went through the windshield of a car. She died in our arms crying for her mother. I had a mental breakdown. But now, when I do first aid, I don't see them as a person anymore. I can do it so I can switch it off. But I have to talk to someone afterwards. Those are the down falls. Thankfully, we get debriefings in the community and the support mechanisms are all in place.

What would you tell anyone that wants to be a firefighter?

When they come in, I tell them we do get criticisms and we get a lot of questions about where we're going and why. We have mutual aid agreements so we help in other community's, too. We have one community member who is in training now. We have 21 volunteers but eight of the 21 volunteers have level two training. We work with the Capital District Fire Fighters Association and the Atlantic Aboriginal Firefighters Association by Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development Canada (AANDC.)

How can the readers support their local firefighters?

I'm trying to push the importance of this to leadership and the public to support fire departments because as a firefighter, you don't just provide support in your own community; you provide support in other communities as well and we always need newer equipment and training. There's a professional understanding with other fire departments. When Fredericton had the big flood in 2008, we had firefighters from other provinces come in to assist. In the end, it's all about helping each other.

Training in Emergency Preparedness

First Nations face many challenges when responding to emergency events impacting the community. Such challenges include but are not limited to lack of resources, lack of expertise in emergency management, inadequate infrastructure, and geographic location as well as lack of comprehensive emergency preparedness and response plans which are inclusive, culturally appropriate and sustainable.

Furthermore, timely, efficient and effective response during an emergency event can minimize health impacts including saving lives, minimize the risk of infrastructure damage and reduce the economic impact on a community. Building emergency management capacity leads to healthier and safer communities.

Recently, the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs held a five day training session in emergency preparedness (March 19th to March 23rd, 2012). The following courses were delivered by Michael Murray and Barry Manuel of Kildoon Emergency Management Consulting and Training during the five day session:

- Incident Command System (ICS 100 & 200) - is a standardized on scene emergency management system specifically designed to allow users to adopt and integrate an organization structure equal to the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries;
- Introduction to Emergency Management - introduces participants to the fundamentals of emergency planning as an integrated approach, surveying how the resources and capabilities of all functions at all levels can be networked together in all phases for all hazards;
- Business Continuity Planning and Awareness - The course provides an overview of what Business Continuity Planning is in the framework of current emergency management practices, key elements of any BCP plan, identification of essential services within the organization and an awareness of the inter-dependencies in the provision of these services; and
- Introduction to All-Hazards Emergency Planning - This course will describe a simple framework which allows administrators and responders to help to ensure coordination, communication, and cooperation in times of crisis. Participants will be exposed to fundamental all-hazard plan components and the roles they play in an effective emergency program.

Wendall Nicholas, who sits on the Wabanaki Disability Council, presented on “Disability, Natural Disasters and Emergency Situations” with the participants. Mr. Nicholas discussed the rights of disabled people when looking at the issue of emergency management in First Nations communities. While different populations may face similar risks of exposure to the negative effects of environmental and man-made disasters, their actual vulnerability is dependent on their socio-economic conditions, civic and social empowerment and access to mitigation and relief resources.

Individuals with disabilities are disproportionately affected



Congratulations to the First Nations participants who attended the five day Emergency Management Training held March 19 to the 23 at our Atlantic Policy Congress office in Cole Harbour, NS.

in disaster, emergency and conflict situations due to: Inaccessible evacuation, response (including shelters, camps, food distribution) and recovery efforts.

The prevalence of disabilities within the First Nations population is 30% when compared to 15% in Canada and this needs to be seriously considered in every First Nations emergency response plan.

An All Hazards Approach to emergency management is important in terms of being well prepared in an event of a disaster. All Hazards planning looks at what is called the four pillars of emergency management which are; prevention and mitigation involves identifying potential risks and vulnerabilities and preparing a response around them. Preparedness increases the chances of being able to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies. Also, preparedness ensures that proper capacity is there when needed. Response refers to what actions you take during or after the emergency event in terms of managing the emergency. Finally, the fourth pillar of emergency management is recovery, which means what actions are taken to restore or rebuild after the emergency.

Matilda Ramjattan, Mi’kmaq Health Emergency Management Coordinator, Mi’kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island, gave a presentation on “Steps to All Hazards Planning in

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Community Resilience in the

Tobique First Nation is a Maliseet community with a population of approximately 1800 people that's located at the confluence of the St. John and Tobique Rivers, in northwestern New Brunswick. On March 23rd, 2012, ice jams caused severe extensive flooding along the St. John River that initially put 50 people out of their homes for safety reasons. APC staff had the opportunity to sit down and talk with some of the relief coordinators, Tina Martin, Councilor for Tobique, David Perley, Assistant Emergency Management Coordinator and Jason Moulton, Fire Chief about how Tobique First Nation came together in the face of disaster. Tobique is still involved in the relief efforts everyday. Jason Moulton has been a firefighter since 1997 and became the lead fire chief since 2001. Jason comes with training on Emergency Management, Level one and two firefighting and First Responders training.

Please describe the flood disaster of March 23rd that Tobique had to endure and the evacuation process.

The flood took place on 23rd and a disaster wasn't called till Friday at 11:30 p.m in Perth Andover, the neighbouring town. Tobique First Nation called the disaster at 9:30 p.m. It was there that our Chief, Stewart Paul called the meeting at the request of me, Tobique's Fire Chief. Our first step was to make sure to evacuate areas we knew would flood in the community. Everyone cooperated yet there were worries about leaving their belongings. But the water kept rising and we immediately communicated with the Department of Transportation and we started evacuating that day. Perth evacuated all of the kids from the schools. There were six families that were evacuated right off our community and were transported to Grand Falls to a hotel, 40 minutes away. We had to travel the long way around to the town of Perth because route 105, our main road, was closed. The only convenience we ever had was the road connecting the community and town.

Were you as Fire Chief the main contact person?

Yes I was the main person to contact for the disaster, everything went through me and the calls and texts from everyone were non-stop. When I (Jason) met with Chief and Council, I gathered all my people together. I

put two people on river watch and those who watched the homes so people could feel safe about their belongings. We carried that on for a week. Our team consisted of four people on during the most critical nights



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Did the community incur a lot of damage from the flood David?

In assisting our lead Emergency Management Coordinator, Councilor Brenda Perley, I'm busy doing daily damage assessments and assisting the people that are in hotels. We were told by AANDC that we have up until the end of April this year to pay all the bills, the accommodations and many other things. The adjuster for the damage still hasn't come to our community yet and we're still waiting. All of these issues will go well beyond April for costs. People will be in hotels longer than April as the owner of the five units will not be rebuilding the trailers again. I (Jason) also had to take pictures for Aboriginal Affairs & Northern Development Canada (AANDC) and I did a lot of emailing of these pictures for the estimates. While AANDC wanted the pictures on the day it happened, it wouldn't have fully assessed all of the damage.

What do you all feel were some of the lessons learned based on this disaster? What could have been done and handled better?

Face of Disaster for Tobique

I (Jason) called Red Cross at 8pm on March 23rd and they returned my call two hours later. We asked for supplies and Red Cross said they already had a relief center in Perth and that they were already set up in Perth. Our community, however, was cut off from the town as the road was closed so we couldn't access the relief center. Therefore we were cut off from crucial services and these needs to be addressed. There is a lack of awareness regarding jurisdictions and based on this disaster, Red Cross, AANDC and our First Nations people need to sit down and talk about what can be improved. I initially called the (800) number AANDC has for emergencies and even they said they didn't know what they could do for us so that needs to be looked at. Despite everything that's happened, Red Cross and AANDC should have called to see if there was anything else they could do and this needs to change for future emergencies in First Nations communities. We did ask Red Cross for training prior to this disaster so we still need to work with them to ensure we get this training. We all need to work together to ensure communications and services improves for the benefit of everyone's safety with potential future incidents.

There were three levels of damage inspections by different groups that conflicted with each other. Everyone agreed that in the future, there should be one authority making the call on the damage to ensure it's accurate, fair and thorough. Having all of the right proper equipment, more fire trucks, storage facilities, training and resources is also needed so as not to endanger the volunteers and workers. For example, our team had to rescue a woman with a canoe as her house was being rapidly surrounded by water and this can't happen again. We need a rescue boat and training in water rescue.

How did you all feel about how the community pulled together in this situation? What do you feel worked well in handling this disaster?

We already had our Emergency Management plan in place and we were able to work with what little we had. Our community and Chief and Council really came and worked together and many people wanted to work together as a team. We have non-natives living on the reserve and they were treated the same as anyone else.

Our community also ensured that our social assistance people received some money for their essential items. Tobique has 14 volunteers and we train every week. Our relief centre and our meals are in the church basement daily and we have a driver that picks up the members that are in the Grand Falls hotel to bring them to the community and back. We need to be mindful of post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and vicarious trauma in our community. The community health centre, Neqotkuk Health Services, is providing trauma care to people that are still evacuated, the emergency responders and community members affected by the flood.

Tobique is no longer on the boil water advisory as we were before. We extended the use of our health center facility since it's already set up for doctors. Now the surgeon and general practitioner from Perth are working here in the meantime as our facility really impressed them.

The response from other First Nations communities was awesome and there was a great outpouring of support. Resources arrived from the Cape Breton Regional Police Force, Madawaska First Nation, Metepenagiag First Nation, Ontario, Yarmouth, Indian Brook First Nation, Elsipogtog First Nation, St. Mary's First Nation and the City of Fredericton. Whatever resources were extra's, we paid it forward to Elsipogtog and Woodstock First Nation for their recent home fires and the town of Perth. We're very impressed with our community support through all of this and we will be holding a community feast to thank our firefighters, relief workers, volunteers and give thanks that there was no one fatalities as a result of the flood.

What should other First Nations communities do in order to prepare for potential disasters?

All First Nations communities need to have their Emergency Management plans in place and include floods in their plans. Although there has been a lot of damage and five families that lost pretty much everything, our community is working hard to ensure that a structure is in place to put people back into homes. Our community had to really come together in this time as we've proven to be very reliable in the face of disaster and we're very proud of that.

Lennox Island completes Emergency Response Plan for Water Treatment Facility

Lennox Island First Nations is a Mi'kmaq community situated on the northwest coast of Prince Edward Island with approximately 450 residents. Lennox Island like many of our First Nation communities, is a warm and welcoming community surrounded by Malpeque Bay's natural beauty and hardworking people.

The Chief and Council of Lennox Island recently signed a band council resolution in support of an emergency response plan (ERP) for their water distribution and water treatment facility. As part of the ERP, the water operator, Travis Dymant will have full authority to implement the plan.

Providing safe drinking water is a big responsibility and "many communities across the country face many challenges so we want to make sure we support our water operator" said Chief Darlene Bernard.

As a water operator, Travis explained that "our job as water operators cover a wide variety of tasks and in our absence during an emergency, it is towards a community's advantage to have an emergency response plan". This means that an ERP should cover all the risks and actions on how to resolve the issues is well documented so that anyone can carry out the response.

Basically, an ERP helps the water operator to prepare for hazards that have been identified through the risk analysis. Councillor Debbie Bernard said "we want to make sure we are prepared because this will ensure health and safety of our community members".

There are lots of potential emergency situations that either could make water unsafe or prevent the flow of water to your tap. In his plan, Travis identified a list of potential issues such as power failure, chlorination system failure, well pump failure, water main breaks and contamination of water shed just to name a few.

The emergency planning process helps to identify what could potentially pose a threat to a drinking water facility. It is one of the lessons learned from a major emergency event that hit Prince Edward Island in 2008 during an ice storm. The community was without power for 52 hours (2 ½ days) as a result of the storm. During that time, the community had limited access to water for drinking, cooking and bathing.

Currently, Lennox Island has a new water treatment facility and a water tower that could provide water for up to one week if the power went out again. They are also equipped with back-up generators to power up and keep the plant running. In essence, Lennox Island First Nation will be able to provide safe drinking water to their community members because they have a good plan, an excellent water facility and hardworking water operators.

An emergency response plan is part of a requirement in the Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations communities (for more information on the protocols visit <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca>.)



(L-R) Debbie Bernard, Councillor, Travis Dymant, Water and Wastewater Operator and Chief Darlene Bernard of Lennox Island First Nations.

Training in Emergency Preparedness

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Atlantic First Nations communities. She provided a step by step approach when preparing a plan which included the importance of getting the support from Chief and Council and having a team to help with preparing a comprehensive plan. Another important step is building relationships with your neighbouring communities to figure out ways you can help each other when needed during a disaster. It will also be

important to build relationships with provincial emergency management organizations and organizations such as the Red Cross.

The final step will definitely be to keep your plan updated on an annual basis when it comes to your emergency contacts.

Using technology during a disaster

We rely on technology more and more to keep in touch with our family, friends, and colleagues with a click of a button.

But what happens in the event of a major emergency? Suddenly these tools can become vital in helping you and your family deal get in touch and stay informed. So here are some tips on the use of technology in an emergency:

- If possible, use non-voice channels like text messaging, email or social media. These use less bandwidth than voice communications and may work even when phone service doesn't;
- If you must use a phone, keep your conversation brief and convey only vital information to emergency personnel and/or family. This will also conserve your phone's battery;
- Unable to complete a call? Wait 10 seconds before redialing to help reduce network congestion. Note, cordless phones rely on electricity and will not work during a power outage. If you have a landline, keep at least one corded phone in your home;

- Keep extra batteries or a charger for your mobile device in your emergency kit. Consider getting a solar-powered, crank, or vehicle phone charger. If you don't have a cell phone, keep a prepaid phone card in your emergency kit;
- Keep your contacts up to date on your phone, email and other channels. This will make it easier to reach important contacts, such as friends, family, neighbours, child's school, or insurance agent;
- If you have a smartphone, save your safe meeting location(s) on its mapping application; and
- Conserve your smartphone's battery by reducing the screen's brightness, placing your phone in airplane mode, and closing apps you are not using. You never know how long a power outage will last!

Remember, in an emergency or to save a life, call 9-1-1 for help. You cannot currently text 9-1-1. If you are not experiencing an emergency, do not call 9-1-1. If your area offers 3-1-1 service or another information system, call that number for non-emergencies.

Emergency Preparedness Week

Emergency Preparedness Week is a national awareness initiative that has taken place annually since 1996. It is a collaborative event undertaken by provincial and territorial emergency management organizations supporting activities at the local level, in concert with Public Safety Canada and partners. EP Week encourages Canadians to take three simple steps to become better prepared to face a range of emergencies:

- Know the risks;
- Make a plan; and
- Get an emergency kit;

The Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs is taking this opportunity to raise awareness around emergency preparedness for families and communities during the Emergency Preparedness Week. The information being provided for this article can be found on the internet at www.getprepared.gc.ca.

There you can find an Emergency Preparedness Week Toolkit which offers ways you can get involved in building a culture of preparedness in your community. Further, resources are available to download including a children's activity booklet and other publications that helps individuals or families to prepare for floods, severe storms, power outages, earthquakes, etc.

The Canadian Red Cross also provides resource materials for parents and educators, tools like "Lets plan for the unexpected" is a great resource for parents to teach children to acquire skills and attitudes to react effectively in case of emergencies.

The tools are available on the internet at <http://www.redcross.ca/expecttheunexpected>.

Facts About Emergency Preparedness

Emergency Preparedness Week 2012 marks the 17th annual event. Here are some interesting facts to mark 17 years of getting better prepared for emergencies.

1. Roughly 5,000 earthquakes are recorded in Canada every year.
2. Canada gets more tornadoes than any other country except the U.S., averaging about 50 tornadoes per year.
3. The worldwide cost of natural disasters has skyrocketed from \$2 billion in the 1980s, to \$27 billion over the past decade.
4. Canada's first billion dollar disaster, the Saguenay flood of 1996, triggered a surge of water, rocks, trees and mud that forced 12,000 residents to evacuate their homes.
5. Some hailstones are the size of peas while others can be as big as baseballs.
6. Approximately 85% of Canadians agree that having an emergency kit is important in ensuring their and their family's safety, yet only four in ten have prepared or bought an emergency kit.
7. In 2011, flooding in Manitoba and Saskatchewan featured the highest water levels and flows in modern history. Over 11,000 residents were displaced from their homes.
8. Ice, branches or power lines can continue to break and fall for several hours after the end of an ice storm.
9. The deadliest heat wave in Canadian history produced temperatures exceeding 44°C in Manitoba and Ontario in 1936. Rail lines and bridge girders twisted, sidewalks buckled, crops wilted and fruit baked on trees.
10. In 2007, the Prairies experienced 410 severe weather events including tornadoes, heavy rain, wind and hail, nearly double the yearly average of 221 events.
11. The coldest temperature reached in North America was -63°C, recorded in Snag, Yukon.
12. The largest landslide in Canada involved 185 million m3 of material and created a 40m deep scar that covered the size of 80 city blocks in 1894 at Saint-Alban, Quebec.
13. Hurricanes are bigger and cause more widespread damage than tornadoes (a very large system can be up to 1,000 kilometres wide).
14. 85% of Canadians agree that having an emergency plan is important in ensuring their and their family's safety, yet on only 40% have prepared one. Complete yours online at www.GetPrepared.ca.
15. One of the most destructive and disruptive storms in Canadian history was the 1998 ice storm in Eastern Canada causing hardship for 4 million people and costing \$3 billion. Power outages lasted for up to 4 weeks.
16. The June 23, 2010 earthquake in Val-des-Bois, Quebec produced the strongest shaking ever experienced in Ottawa and was felt as far away as Kentucky in the United States.
17. Using non-voice communication technology like text messaging, email, or social media instead of telephones takes up less bandwidth and helps reduce network congestion after an emergency.



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Contact us with any ideas for future newsletter articles. We want to hear from you!



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