

FIRST NATIONS WILDFIRE EVACUATION Partnership

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INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal leaders have pointed out that Aboriginal people suffer more during evacuations than non-Aboriginal residents, and have called for improved emergency services. During the summer 2011 wildfires, Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said:

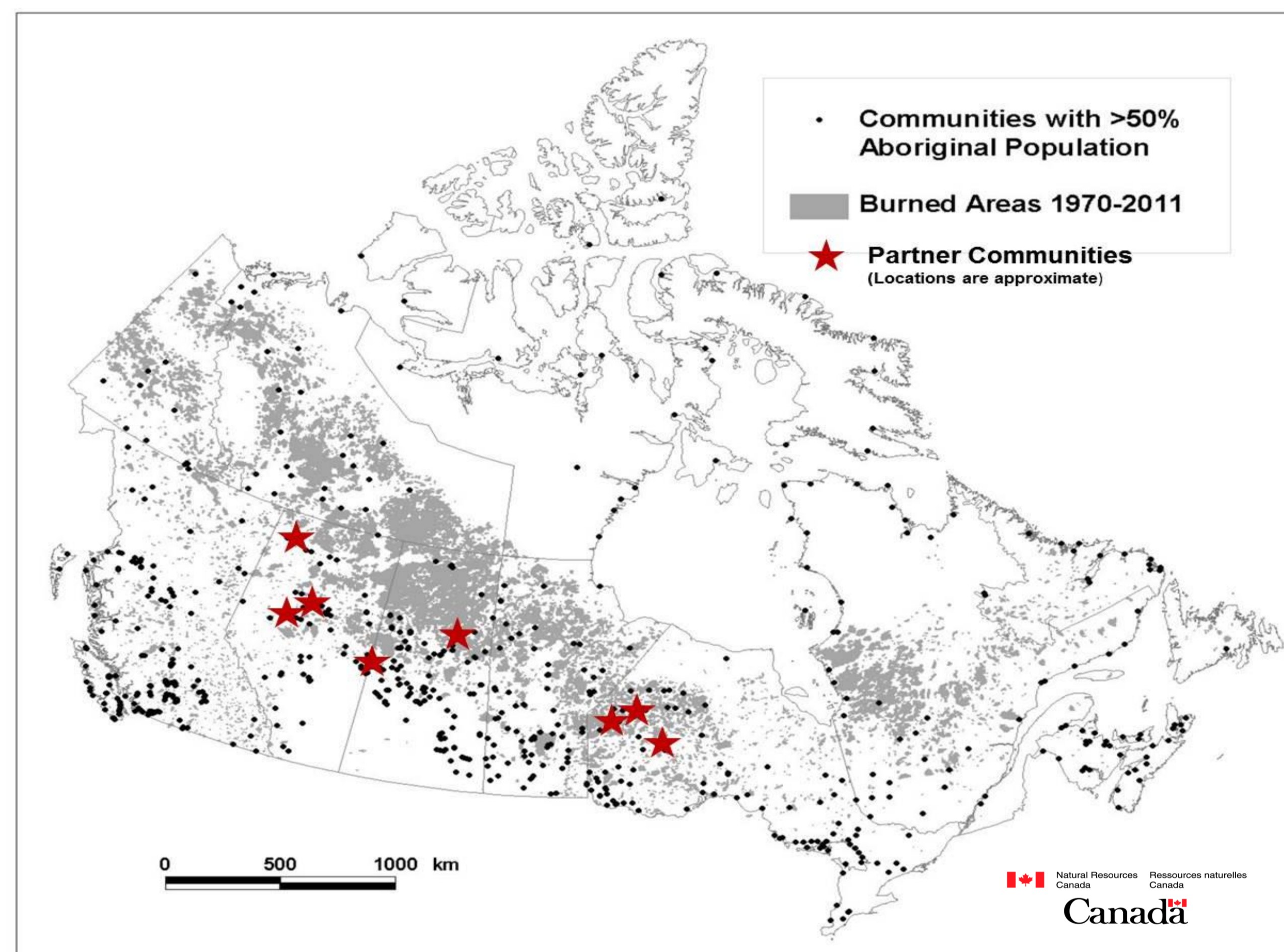
"Too many of our people are already vulnerable and when disasters or emergencies strike, we are hit hardest. The reality is that First Nation citizens and communities are affected by these emergency events to a greater extent because of remoteness, lack of critical security infrastructure, resources, and capacity. We need action on a number of fronts, including efforts by all governments to work with First Nations on effective coordination and delivery of emergency services in the short and long term."

<http://www.afn.ca/index.php/en/news-media/latest-news/afn-supports-calls-for-action-and-effective-emergency-response-to-fire>

THE PARTNERSHIP

This partnership brings together researchers, Aboriginal communities in Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta that were evacuated due to recent wildfires, and agencies responsible for conducting or providing support during these evacuations.

COMMUNITIES



RESEARCH GOAL

This partnership is examining how Aboriginal residents and communities have been affected by wildfire evacuations and identifying ways to reduce negative impacts of wildfire evacuations on Aboriginal people.

The objectives of this research are to:

1. Document how Aboriginal residents and communities were affected by recent wildfire evacuations;
2. Identify characteristics of the wildfire evacuation that influenced how residents were positively and negatively affected by the evacuations;
3. Identify what characteristics of individuals, their social context, and the Aboriginal communities affected how residents were positively and negatively affected by the wildfire evacuations; and
4. Identify ways to reduce the negative impacts of wildfire evacuations on Aboriginal people

CURRENT STAGE

A qualitative approach is being used to achieve the aim of understanding people's wildfire evacuation experiences. Research has been carried out with one community. Three communities participated in research this past year (Mishkeegogamang Ojibway First Nation, Whitefish Lake First Nation, and Dene Tha' First Nation). In 2015, research will take place with four other communities (Onion Lake Cree Nation, Lac La Ronge Indian Band (Stanley Mission reserve), Driftpile Cree Nation, Sandy Lake First Nation and Deer Lake First Nation). The research is guided by a community advisory committee in each community, and community research assistants have/will be trained in each community to assist with the research. The researchers, two graduate students and the community research assistants are interviewing residents in each community who were evacuated during recent wildfires.

CONTACT DETAILS

<http://www.eas.ualberta.ca/awe/>

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