



JOINT NEWS RELEASE

Cree Nation and Ontario fire departments unite to strengthen fire safety

Program aims to strengthen fire prevention through mentorship and hands-on training

For immediate release (Jan. 31, 2025) – The Fire Prevention Officer (FPO) Mentorship Program was officially launched today in Orillia, Ont., bringing together fire services from across Ontario and the Cree Nation communities of Northern Québec.

The FPO Mentorship Program, the first of its kind in Canada, will see 10 FPOs from the Cree Nations of Northern Québec travelling to Southern Ontario to work in conjunction with 11 fire departments to gain experience in establishing their own programs at home. The program will see each FPO partner with an Ontario fire department for one month and will allow them to bring back valuable fire safety knowledge and experience to their community.

The program was created in partnership with the Emergency Management Group Inc., Waswanay Consulting Inc., Ontario fire departments and the Grand Council of Crees (Eeyou Istchee).

The Ontario fire departments participating are:

- Kawartha Lakes Fire Rescue Service
- King Fire & Emergency Services
- Kingston Fire and Rescue
- Kitchener Fire Department
- Oakville Fire Department
- Orillia Fire Department
- Rama Fire Rescue Service
- Richmond Hill Fire and Emergency Services
- Sarnia Fire Rescue Services
- St. Catharines Fire Services
- Windsor Fire & Rescue Services

About the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)/Cree Nation Government:

Our land—Eeyou Istchee—which means the People’s Land, comprises over three hundred “traplins,” or traditional family hunting and trapping grounds. Our traditional territory, an area of over 400,000 square kilometres, or two-thirds the size of France, is located primarily in northern Quebec and includes the lands on the eastern shore of James Bay and south-eastern Hudson Bay, as well as the lakes and rivers that drain into them.

Quotes:

Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty, Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)/Cree Nation Government:

"Fire prevention is so vital for our communities, especially with the unique challenges we face. This mentorship program will give our Fire Prevention Officers the knowledge and support needed to better protect our communities and build a safer future for all in Eeyou Istchee."



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Chief Ted Williams, Chippewas of Rama First Nation:

"The Fire Prevention Officer Mentorship Program highlights the strength of collaboration in enhancing fire safety. By bringing together fire services from Ontario and the Cree Nation communities of Northern Québec, this initiative equips officers with vital skills and knowledge to safeguard their communities, while fostering meaningful connections that will have a lasting impact."

Mayor Don McIsaac, City of Orillia:

"Orillia is honoured to be a part of this vital initiative, contributing to the safety and resilience of our Cree Nation partners while building lasting relationships. Fire prevention is a shared responsibility and this mentorship program is a powerful example of how collaboration strengthens community safety."

Michelle Vandevord, Executive Director, National Indigenous Fire Safety Council:

"The National Indigenous Fire Safety Council (NIFSC) commends the Cree Nation and Ontario fire departments for their collaboration in the Fire Prevention Officer Mentorship Program. By providing the Cree Nations with the tools and knowledge to develop Fire Prevention Programs and Community Risk Reduction Outreach Programs, we can help ensure that these communities are better prepared to prevent fires and protect their residents. We extend our deepest gratitude to all stakeholders, organizers, and participants who contributed to the success of this program. Collaborative efforts like these are fundamental in advancing our shared mission of fire safety for all Indigenous communities."

Deputy Fire Chief Rob Grimwood, President, Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs:

"The Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC) commends the Grand Council of Crees (Eeyou Istchee) Cree Nation Government and the participating Ontario Fire Departments providing their time and mentorship for Fire Prevention Officers to learn here in Ontario and take back to their communities. It is with fire protection education and training, fire prevention initiatives, that one can prevent fires and tragedies."

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Photo Cutline: The Fire Prevention Officer (FPO) Mentorship Program was officially launched today in Orillia, Ont., bringing together fire services from across Ontario and the Cree Nation communities of Northern Québec. The program will see each FPO partner with an Ontario fire department for one month and will allow them to bring back valuable fire safety knowledge and experience to their community.

Attachment: [Backgrounder - About the Grand Council of the Crees \(Eeyou Istchee\)/Cree Nation Government](#)



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About the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)/Cree Nation Government

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In addition, our traditional territory includes lands which we have historically occupied in Ontario, across the Ontario-Quebec border. Each of our Cree First Nation community is administered independently through their local governments, and at the same time, each elected Chief sits on the Board of Directors of the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) and the Council of the Cree Nation Government to address common Cree Nation issues.

The Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee) is the political body that represents the over 20,000 Crees or Eeyouch/Eenouch. The Board/Council is constituted of twenty (20) members including: the Grand Chief and Deputy-Grand Chief elected at large by the Eeyouch, the Chiefs elected by each of the nine (9) communities incorporated into our Treaty—the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement*, and one (1) other representative elected by each community.

The Cree Nation Government exercises governmental and administrative functions on behalf of the Cree Nation. Both have identical membership, board of directors, governing structures and are managed and operated as one. The tenth Cree First Nation, Washaw Sibi, is in the process of establishing its own community and will eventually become part of the Treaty. The eleventh Cree First Nation is MoCreebec, whose members reside on the Ontario side of James Bay and maintain a unique affiliation with the other Eeyou First Nations.

Fire Protection in Eeyou Istchee

Fire protection is an assumed federal obligation pursuant to both the New Relationship Agreement with Canada and the Paix des Braves with Quebec. As a result, community fire protection initiatives are supported by financial allocations from both the federal and provincial governments. Funding from all sources is required annually to meet new and evolving operational needs.

The Cree Nation Government’s Department of Capital Works and Services (CWS) oversees community fire protection in Eeyou Istchee. The Fire Protection team is comprised of the Fire Marshal, Fire Prevention Officer and Fire Protection Administrator. The CWS Fire Protection and Prevention Unit is responsible for the following:

- firefighters’ training, equipment purchases, assistance to local fire departments
- fire prevention training, fire inspections, fire investigations, and public education programs

