



**CANADIAN
RED CROSS
CROIX-ROUGE
CANADIENNE**

**BRINGING RELIEF.
INSPIRING HOPE.**

**CANADIAN RED CROSS RESPONSE TO THE
2011 NORTHERN ALBERTA WILDFIRES**

A MESSAGE FROM THE PROVINCIAL DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

One year has passed since wildfires swept through northern Alberta, devastating homes and livelihoods. While much has changed over this year, some images do not fade.

Like the ones of plumes of smoke rising over the Town of Slave Lake. Or of entire neighbourhoods being engulfed in flames.

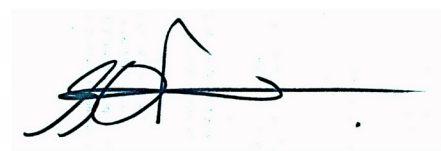
At the same time, I saw Red Crossers from across Canada come to help people they did not know. They came and registered more than 16,000 people who had been evacuated to towns across the region ensuring people had food, water, clothes and shelter.

Since the disaster struck, Canadian Red Cross has provided assistance to families, individuals and community groups on their long road to recovery. We have helped thousands of people with housing, food, household goods, medical, school, occupational supplies, and more.

Many who were affected face new challenges as they rebuild their homes and lives. To continue fostering a strong and thriving community, Red Cross is working with partners to address health and safety concerns, and better prepare for future emergencies.

We are sincerely grateful for all who volunteered, gave, encouraged, and followed our mission and work. To date, we have received over \$5 million in donations and countless volunteer hours to provide aid and support to area residents.

I hope the subsequent pages display even a portion of the pride I have in working with community leadership, residents, volunteers and donors over this past year. And I commit to you all that Canadian Red Cross will be here long into the future.



Steve Armstrong
Provincial Director, Alberta
Canadian Red Cross



MISSION

The Canadian Red Cross mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity in Canada and around the world.

VISION

The Canadian Red Cross is the leading humanitarian organization through which people voluntarily demonstrate their caring for others in need.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Humanity
Impartiality
Neutrality
Independence
Voluntary Service
Unity
Universality

STATE OF EMERGENCY

RED CROSS NETWORK IN ACTION



Disaster can often strike without warning. Saturday, May 14, 2011, a beautiful spring day in northern Alberta, proved to be one of those days. While the fire that appeared near Slave Lake was not considered a threat to the town at first, the situation quickly worsened due to high winds and dry conditions.

And by the next day, **everything had changed.**

It has now been one year since Alberta's largest disaster in history which forced the evacuation of 15,000 people from the Town of Slave Lake and surrounding First Nations communities. The fires ravaged the region, destroying hundreds of homes and businesses. It left thousands homeless and caused an estimated \$1.8 billion in total damages, making this the second costliest disaster in Canadian history.

Here's a snapshot of how Red Cross responded during the state of emergency:

MAY 15-16



= 250 affected persons registered



= 10 Red Cross volunteers and staff respond

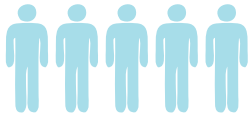
Red Cross receives a call from the Government of Alberta to respond to the growing fire situation in the MD of Lesser Slave Lake.

Massive wildfires spread across parts of central and north-central Alberta and a state of emergency is declared for the Town of Slave Lake.

Red Cross Disaster Management Team called to action.

Wildfires cause significant damage and force the evacuation of 15,000 people from dozens of communities including Slave Lake and surrounding First Nations communities.

Edmonton team sets up an emergency shelter and reception centre in Westlock and ships hundreds

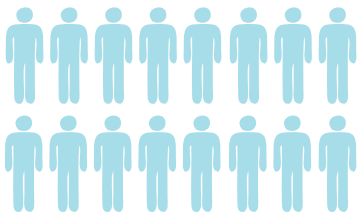


= 1,156 affected persons registered



= 46 Red Cross volunteers and staff respond

MAY 17-18



= 4,062 affected persons registered



= 47 Red Cross volunteers and staff respond

of cots, blankets, personal hygiene kits and other supplies. Grande Prairie Red Cross office sends the same to the Town of High Prairie.

More evacuation centres are established in Edmonton, Westlock, Athabasca and High Prairie.

Government informs Red Cross that the town of Slave Lake is approximately 95% evacuated and evacuees are headed to the various shelters.

Staff and volunteers mobilize to support the massive disaster response with supplies sent from Red Cross centres across Canada.

Volunteers from across the province and senior volunteers from Newfoundland to British Columbia deploy to Alberta.

Red Cross begins accepting donations from the public.

All Red Cross volunteers in Alberta on standby are deployed, supplies are sent and call centre staffed.

Red Cross works with the government to support evacuees with needs assessments, registering and finding hotel accommodations.

The Edmonton Call Centre successfully transitions to the Red Cross Call Centre in B.C.

Red Cross workers support each of the reception centres and work endlessly to register affected persons, distribute supplies and identify significant gaps.





MAY 19-20

Red Cross field teams transition shelters into nine service centres where they continue to help displaced residents find interim shelter and transportation. Service centres include Edmonton, Westlock, Athabasca, Grande Prairie, High Prairie, Peace River, Valleyview, Wabasca and Smith.



Nine evacuation centres across northern and central Alberta were operated by Red Cross to shelter more than 15,000 evacuees.

Outreach efforts continue through local media and to seven First Nations groups evacuated by the fire.

MAY 21-24



= 8,414 affected persons registered



= 223 Red Cross volunteers and staff respond

Red Cross relief efforts continue as local media and businesses are engaged.

Red Cross prepares to support government in the transition of people back into Slave Lake as many Reception Centres close.

Volunteers delivering children's supplies



Sharon Green (left) and Janet Parks at Centennial Daycare

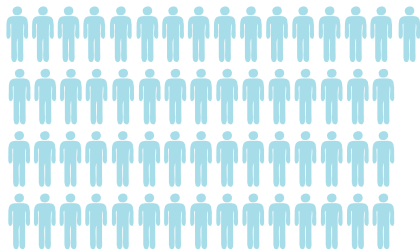


“The Red Cross was a **significant moral support for us**. They helped us out right away with baby food, formula, diapers, toys, other supplies and funding. When the daycare’s industrial dishwasher broke down, **Red Cross purchased a new one.**”

Red Cross also put on a workshop recently as the first year of the wildfires approaches, giving the daycare staff valuable tools to help themselves and the children. “They told us what to expect, what kind of emotions we might experience. **It was very helpful.**”

~ Sharon Green, Centennial Daycare Director

MAY 25-31



= 15,167 affected persons registered



= 165 Red Cross volunteers and staff respond

Red Cross personnel deploy to Slave Lake to help affected residents with re-entry, find comfortable interim accommodation until they can return home. Workers also support the call centre, distribute clean-up kits, recovery guides, bottled water, personal hygiene kits, colouring books and other supplies.

Residents return to Slave Lake.

Red Cross prepares to enter recovery phase.

JUNE 1-5



= 15,792 affected persons registered



= 28 Red Cross volunteers and staff respond

Slave Lake state of local emergency ends June 1st.

Red Cross conducts client needs assessments and helps with vouchers.

Fridge replacement program in progress.

Transition from relief to recovery operation.

THE PATH TO RECOVERY

HOW WE'RE HELPING

The Canadian Red Cross knows that it will take years to rebuild and reconstruct the lives that have been touched by this disaster and has committed to providing long-term assistance to affected communities.

When it comes to long-term recovery, Red Cross draws on extensive experience working with individuals and families impacted by disaster and builds on individual and community resilience.

During the initial phase of the disaster recovery program, Red Cross provided approximately \$10,000 per day in direct aid. This took different forms depending on the need and situation, but our main goal was to meet people's immediate needs for safety and comfort, and then expedite their return to normal daily activities.

Here is a closer look at the core recovery services Red Cross provided:



SHELTER, FOOD & CLOTHING

We attempt to meet urgent needs of people affected by the disaster through one-on-one casework. We would often provide support in the form of food, clothing, shelter, rent, damage deposits, mortgage and essential utility payments.



HOUSEHOLD GOODS

The power outage over a period of days meant that many people's food and fridges were unsafe and unusable. Red Cross gave 75 fridges to affected residents and coolers to hunters to store their meat, among other essential household goods.



CLEAN-UP KITS

We supplied and distributed clean-up kits to help people with the task of cleaning their smoke-damaged homes.



SCHOOL SUPPLIES

As fall arrived, Red Cross helped children going back to school with school supplies and winter clothing.



OCCUPATIONAL SUPPLIES

We helped people who had lost their occupational gear get back to work by supplying them with hard hats, steel-toed boots, fireproof coveralls and similar goods.

When Wade Horton left to for work the day of the northern Alberta wildfires evacuation, he had a home and an office. By the end of the day, both had been destroyed.

As an Alberta Fire and Wildlife officer, he was helping out that day with fire area security and was pulled in to help with the evacuation. His family fled to safety and stayed with family members for two months.

Wade, his wife and two teenage children **lost everything**. As a volunteer with the Slave Lake Search and Rescue team, he had also lost his survival equipment.

“Red Cross was great about checking in with our family to see how we were doing and how they could help, as they knew we didn’t have enough insurance. They found me trying to put together my own survival kit, and asked what they could do to help.”

“The local office has been very helpful and supportive. We’re still living in government housing, but it’s short-term and we’re making do. It’s actually been a positive experience for us and my kids have learned a lot about what’s important, and what’s not.”

~ Wade Horton, Slave Lake resident





MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

In recognition of the emotional toll that a devastating event can have on residents, we delivered workshops on how to cope with stress with specialists from the American Red Cross as well as Slave Lake Victim Services. We have also been delivering RespectED: Violence and Abuse Prevention programs that promote healthy relationships and safe communities in schools and throughout the community.



ABORIGINAL OUTREACH

With the fires causing mass destruction across the region, many Aboriginal people in affected communities were unable to get to the Red Cross Slave Lake office to access support. Instead, Red Cross staff and volunteers went to them to determine residents' needs and provide help. Our teams went to 20 Aboriginal communities providing support in the form of fridges, vouchers for food, clothing and gas. We are also developing a First Nations Disaster Preparedness and Response plan in collaboration with a local band and are recruiting local members to become part of the Canadian Red Cross Personal Disaster Assistance Team.

As well, Red Cross has been training members in first aid and developing their capacity to respond to abuse and violence through our RespectED programs and our Aboriginal specific workshop.



“With the Red Cross there, **we never felt alone**. They were able to provide help right off the bat,” says Mayor Pillay-Kinnee. “They were instrumental when we returned as well, assessing immediate needs and filling them.”

“**Red Cross was a leader in understanding us**, they took the time to get to know Slave Lake as a community and our unique needs. They have been a **great support** to me as a leader and it’s been valuable for me to have that relationship with them.”

~ Slave Lake Mayor
Karina Pillay-Kinnee



ADVOCACY

Often times, a phone call to a utility company can seem daunting when there are so many steps people need to take to get their lives back on track following a disaster.

Red Cross caseworkers take time to listen, help come up with a plan and may advocate on behalf of clients to help them get through a difficult period.



COMMUNITY PROJECTS

While direct service assistance for individuals and families affected by the fires has been the main priority for Red Cross, we also work to identify unmet community needs and provide appropriate support. In partnership with local governments, organizations, and community groups, the Red Cross is committed to building capacity in the overall community through select community programs and projects.

We have supported a wide range of projects including purchasing a new dishwasher for the daycare, turkeys for Thanksgiving at the Friendship Centre, uniforms for the Girl Guides, winter clothing for homeless teens, family fun nights, first aid kits, school hot lunch program and much more.



Sandy Sargeant is grateful for the Red Cross in the wake of the disaster. After the wildfires, enrollment at the school dropped by half, severely impacting their budget. The Red Cross provided funding to keep their hot lunch program running.

“Without the Red Cross, we wouldn’t have had the money to provide hot lunches.”

~ Sandy Sargeant, Principal, Koinoinia Christian School

ALL HANDS ON DECK

RED CROSSERS RESPOND TO CALL

With images of the fires devastating northern Alberta playing out on the news, Red Cross volunteers from across Canada responded immediately. **More than 360 highly trained volunteers and staff** gave their time, energy and expertise to help residents get back on their feet. To date, more than **58,000 hours** have been invested in this response.

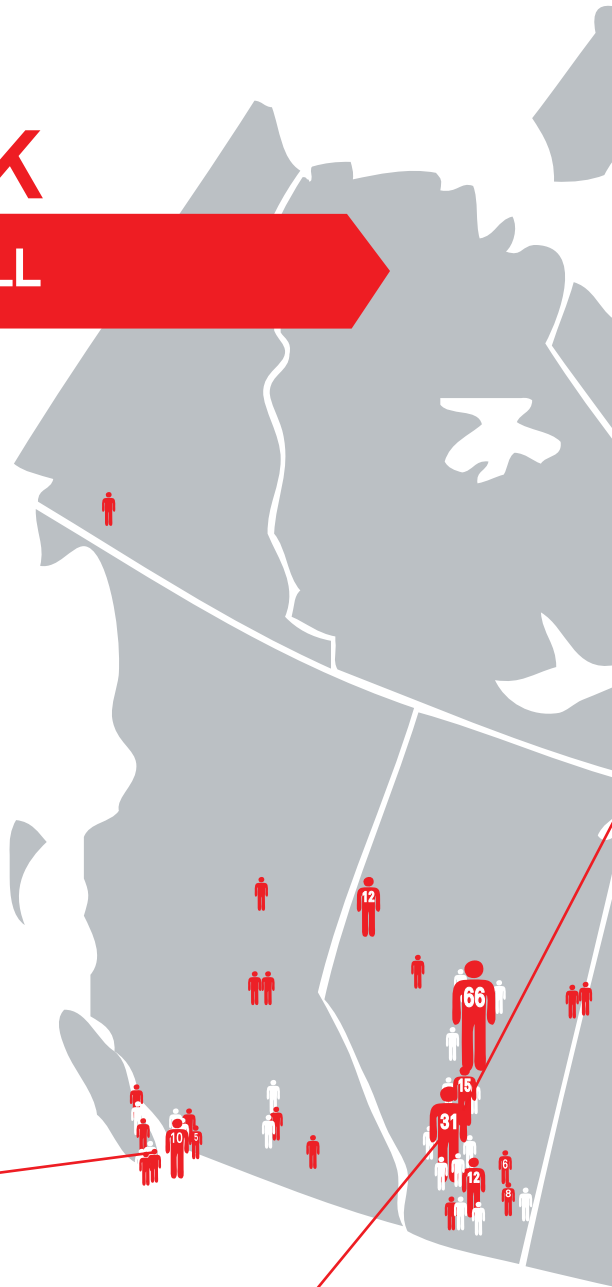
Read more stories about the Red Cross volunteers who responded to this disaster at www.redcross.ca/slavelake.



Gary Carleton
Recovery Supervisor
Duncan, B.C.



Garry Jacobs
Logistics Team Lead
Calgary, Alberta





Doug Bryson
Deputy Operations Manager
St. John's, Newfoundland



Susan Mackenzie
Caseworker
Calgary, Alberta



Ha Lu
Human Resources Supervisor
Ottawa, Ontario



Aaron von Nostrand
Deputy Recovery
Manager & Logistics
Team Lead
Nova Scotia

YOUR DONATION AT WORK

HOW YOUR GIFT IS BEING USED

Donations received for the Red Cross Northern Alberta Wildfire response total **\$5.5 million**. All donations have gone directly to support the Northern Alberta Wildfires relief and recovery operation.

\$770,000 in direct aid for food, clothes, household goods, school supplies, occupational supplies, rent, utilities, mortgage payments, damage deposits, and more

\$2 million for community development projects

\$400,000 for rent and improvements for Slave Lake interim library

\$529,000 for staff and volunteers

\$229,000 for Red Cross Slave Lake office and facility

\$815,000 for transportation and housing of aid workers

\$800,000 to support ongoing recovery operations of the Red Cross in Slave Lake



PREPARING FOR TOMORROW

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

As recovery has progressed, so has our commitment to helping region recover and build resiliency for the future. Here are some highlights of our work:

PERMANENT OFFICE

Red Cross committed to a permanent presence in the region and moved into a new office at the end of last summer. The office acts as the main recovery centre for Red Cross assistance and we will also be rolling out additional services over time.

NORTHERN ALBERTA WILDFIRES COMMUNITY PROJECTS FUND

Recently, Red Cross launched the Northern Alberta Wildfires Community Projects Fund that will provide \$2 million in additional funding to groups in communities impacted by the 2011 northern Alberta wildfires and subsequent flooding. A committee of volunteers, with members of the community, will manage the fund and will use set criteria in selecting proposed projects.

“The scale of this disaster was massive,” said Kate Wood, volunteer chairperson of the committee. “But the response of Canadians across the country was equally as generous. In announcing this fund, Red Cross is continuing to channel that goodwill and help affected communities through this long recovery process.”

Funding may cover community development projects, community events or support in assisting individuals and families impacted by the wildfires. The fund focuses on projects initiated by groups of community members.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Over the past year, the Red Cross continues to build partnerships in the community and with other agencies that are critical to disaster response and preparedness. We are thankful for the support of the community and look forward to building and strengthening new relationships.

LOCAL RED CROSS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

In an effort to build the capacity of the local region to deal with emergencies both large and small, we are recruiting new community-based volunteers. This trained team will help respond to local and regional emergencies with a high level of skill and caring. Find out more about training and a volunteer’s role by getting in touch with us.



“I’m just **happy to be alive**, I lost all my ‘things’ in the fire, but I have everything that is important: my family and a roof over my head.”

~ Slave Lake resident
Vera Scott with
daughter Tyane Toews

THANK YOU

When the wildfires forced thousands from their communities in May 2011, Vera Scott and her family found themselves in the convoy of evacuees leaving town knowing that their home was gone.

But Vera considers herself lucky. Although she had lost her family home and all of their possessions, she had what mattered most. “We knew that all of our kids were safe, as well as the people who we really loved and cared about,” says Vera.

“That night we actually got to put our heads down on a pillow that was ours. It’s something so trivial, but we knew that we had nothing left. And yet we did—we had everything.”

Vera says the experience was quite surreal and it has taken her a long time to comprehend the full magnitude of the disaster. “Now we need to start moving forward.”

Every shelter we opened, every meal we served and every person comforted by the Red Cross is your gift at work. The Canadian Red Cross depends on support such as yours to fulfill our mission to transform lives of crisis into lives of hope. Your donation helps to ensure that no one is left alone in his or her time of need.

Thank you.



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For more information about the Canadian Red Cross and to see your gift at work, please visit redcross.ca/slavelake.