Guide for First Nation–Municipal Collaboration on Economic Recovery and Resilience

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INTRODUCTION

Disasters have increased in both frequency and intensity in recent years (UNDRR, 2015; FPT Ministers, 2017). In Canada, natural disasters and the economic impacts of COVID-19 have thrust emergency preparedness and economic recovery onto the radars of governments. Disasters pose significant challenges for First Nations and municipalities, as these communities often lack the fiscal and human capacity for effective preparedness, response, and recovery. Within this context, there are many advantages to working together across jurisdictions, to leverage resources, reduce duplication of services, and ensure coordinated emergency preparedness and economic recovery plans. Coordinated emergency planning between First Nations and municipalities is not yet standard practice, however.

This guide is for elected officials and staff of First Nations and municipalities who want to enhance their emergency preparedness and economic resilience. It is meant to be used alongside *Stronger Together: A Toolkit for First Nations–Municipal Community Economic Development Partnerships* (hereinafter "*Stronger Together Toolkit*"), and other resources listed at the end of this guide, to support First Nations and municipalities to collaborate on emergency management: preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters of any kind.

There are many reasons for First Nations and municipalities to collaborate on emergency management and economic resilience:

- improved outcomes in regional recovery by having diverse and representative voices at the table
- cost savings, resource sharing, and more efficient service delivery

- greater health and wellness outcomes for all, including the most vulnerable
- increased ability to access stimulus funding from other orders of government
- increased community resilience and capacity to respond together in future emergencies

This guide is a framework for collaborative emergency management and includes an examination of similarities and differences between First Nation and municipal jurisdictions. It offers concrete recommendations and tools for building your own First Nation–municipal partnerships and enhancing shared economic resilience. It presents potential models by examining communities who have been successful in their emergency management collaboration. By following the steps in this guide and the highlighted case studies, you can enhance your economic resilience.

Definitions: Emergency Management and Economic Resilience

The overarching goal of First Nation–municipal collaboration on emergency management is increasing regional economic resilience. Resilience is defined as "the capacity of a system, community or society to adapt to disturbances resulting from hazards by persevering, recuperating or changing to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning. Resilience minimizes vulnerability, dependence, and susceptibility by creating or strengthening social and physical capacity in the human and built environment to cope with, adapt to, respond to, and recover and learn from disasters" (FPT Ministers, 2017). Economic resil-

FIGURE 1
Emergency Management Continuum

* SEMP = Strategic Emergency Management Plan

Source: Hackman-Carty, 2019.
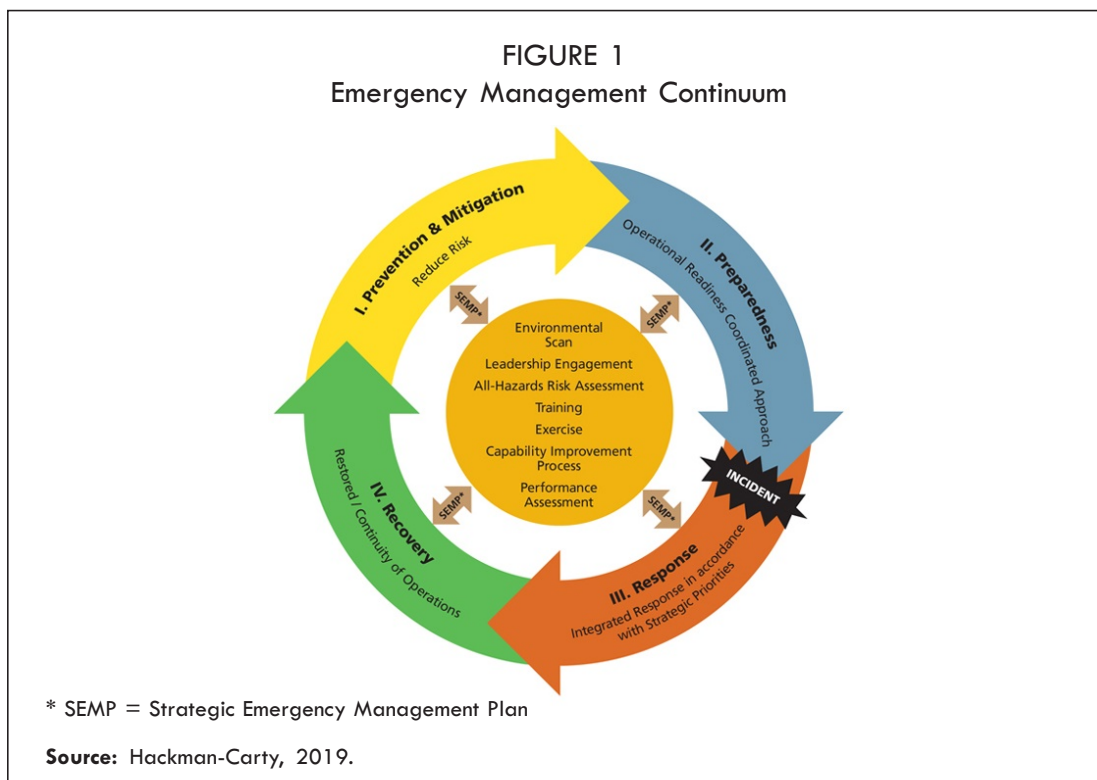
ience increases as communities build capacity along the four stages of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

- **Mitigation** — Actions taken to prevent or reduce the consequences of an emergency. Mitigation activities consist of identifying vulnerabilities and taking proactive measures to diminish the impact of potential emergencies.
- **Preparedness** — Actions taken to prepare for effective emergency response. Preparedness activities consist of planning for response and recovery during emergencies, as well as training and exercising emergency management plans.
- **Response** — Actions taken immediately before, during, or after an emergency to manage consequences and minimize impacts. Response activities may include emergency public communication, medical assistance, and evacuations.
- **Recovery** — Actions taken after an emergency to restore a community to its pre-emergency condition. Recovery measures start during response and reduce future community vulnerabilities while improving planning for these events (FPT Ministers, 2017).

This guide will place emphasis on building regional economic resilience through collaboration on the preparedness, response, and recovery stages.

The Jurisdictional Gap in First Nation and Municipal Emergency Management

In Canada, federal, provincial, territorial, First Nation, and municipal governments all have unique emergency management responsibilities. First Nations and municipalities share commonalities and key differences in their responsibilities. They have direct accountability to their citizens, and are best equipped to understand the strengths and needs of their communities and to design effective emergency management plans (Henstra, n.d.). At the same time, First Nations and municipalities share similar fiscal, human, and technical capacity challenges in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies. A table listing similarities and differences between First Nation and municipal emergency management jurisdiction can be found in Appendix 1.

Despite common responsibilities and challenges, a jurisdictional gap remains between First Nations and municipalities because emergency management services and supports are provided to First Nations by the federal government and to municipalities by provincial and territorial governments. At times, these two levels of government are unable to effectively coordinate during emergencies, leaving communities and individuals underserved in their moments of need. To address this challenge, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) has signed agreements with Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario, and MOUs with British Columbia and Nova Scotia. ISC is negotiating with the remaining provinces and territories to conclude agreements for the delivery of on-reserve emergency management services (Collier, 2015). While federal, provincial, and territorial governments attempt to address this gap, the reality reflects significant barriers to effective emergency response and recovery.

This jurisdictional gap can create communication failures during crises. During the 2011 wildfires, Sawridge First Nation Chief Roland Twinn received the initial evacuation notice, but no further communication from the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA). He was forced to go to the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) and demand that

his community be included in the emergency response. This oversight was a result of Sawridge First Nation falling through the jurisdictional gap between federal and provincial governments. The strong relationships built at the local level between Sawridge, the Town of Slave Lake, and the MD of Lesser Slave River since the 2011 wildfires reduce the likelihood of this kind of oversight happening again. AEMA has also doubled the number of staff dedicated to supporting First Nations in emergencies since those wildfires. In Alberta, Métis settlements are also affected by the jurisdictional gap, as was seen in the Rural Municipality of Wood Buffalo's response to the 2016 wildfires (Clark, 2018), and again with more than a dozen homes in the Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement lost during the 2019 Chuckegg Creek wildfire.

The jurisdictional gap can lead to disjointed regional planning and recovery initiatives, as happened in the aftermath of severe flooding in Nuxalk territory in 2010 and wildfires in 2017. British Columbia and the Central Coast Regional District led the recovery efforts, including rebuilding critical infrastructure, such as roads. The Nuxalk Nation were not included in conversations about recovery; again, the result was a jurisdictional gap that created communication barriers between neighbouring communities. Since then, these communities have established a model for joint planning, highlighted in the case study below.

Differing standards for emergency preparedness, unclear funding criteria, and service duplication also result from the jurisdictional gap. COVID-19 funding and supports are one example, as some First Nations expressed frustration regarding unclear eligibility criteria. Many on-reserve First Nation businesses were initially unable to access the Canada Emergency Business Account, as only taxable income was counted toward payroll eligibility (Bull, 2020). The federal government later amended this eligibility requirement and provided additional funding to address this gap, but the initial impact and time lost for those businesses remained. Addressing this gap is critical for effective local emergency preparedness, which can result in significant cost savings and improved community wellness during emergencies. For municipalities to fully recover after an emergency, neighbouring First Nations must also have recovered, and vice versa.

Emergencies are often cross-jurisdictional, so responses must be as well. Promising trends are emerging. In 2019, the First Nations Leadership Council (First Nations Summit, British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, and the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs), the Government of British Columbia, and ISC signed an MOU to formalize roles and responsibilities for on-reserve emergency management support. This MOU also creates a shared table for coordinating emergency management services and supports. While the impacts of this MOU have yet to be seen, it establishes a model for agreements with and between First Nations and other provinces and territories. Examples such as the disagreement around consultation between British Columbia and several First Nations regarding Phase III of the COVID-19 re-opening strategy further highlight the importance of formal and proactive efforts to bridge the jurisdictional gap and create strong partnerships between First Nations and municipalities (Sterritt, 2020).

FIRST NATION–MUNICIPAL COLLABORATION ACROSS THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CONTINUUM

A fuller spectrum of inclusion will increase the strength of the economic response overall. The companies that are able to understand that and understand economic

development as a process having everyone at the table, will be able to construct more appropriate responses in the short term.

— Carol Anne Hilton, CEO, Indigenomics

What follows is a framework for collaborating on emergency management and enhancing economic resilience. Technical best practices in emergency management and economic recovery already exist, are consistent across disaster types (L. Hackman-Carty, personal interview, June 15, 2020), and will be referenced throughout this guide. The added value of the information below is tailoring these best practices to the context of First Nation–municipal collaboration, across the jurisdictional gap. The foundation of effective First Nation–municipal collaboration, on emergency management or anything else, is respectful and informed relationships between community members, elected officials, and staff.

Preparedness: Building Relationships and Planning Together Before an Emergency

The ideal time to begin collaborating on emergency management and enhancing economic resilience is before a disaster occurs. Preparation can positively affect community resilience, speeding up recovery, minimizing damage, and reducing the negative physical and mental health impacts on citizens. Effective joint planning requires open and respectful relationships and learning about the similarities and differences between jurisdictions. The best practices below are informed by Cando and FCM's *Stronger Together Toolkit* (Bamford, Breedon, Lindberg, Patterson & Winstanley, 2015).

■ Build Relationships and Shared Understanding

Every practitioner interviewed for this guide emphasized that strong relationships between communities, elected officials, and staff are necessary for successful joint emergency management planning. Relationships must be open, honest, and respectful; they cannot be transactional, rushed, or skipped. Reach out to your neighbours through a call or visit to begin dialogue. Establish an informal team of champions who are committed to collaboration and build support within your councils and staff for working together.

To succeed in building a long-term partnership, you must invest in learning about the history, cultures, governance structures, protocols, and emergency management jurisdiction of the neighbouring community. It is critical to understand how your communities are similar and different, and why. For an overview of the similarities and differences between First Nations and municipalities in emergency management, see Appendix 1 in this guide.

Invite councils and senior staff together and use Chapter Two and Appendix B of the *Stronger Together Toolkit* for exercises on building respectful relationships. See also Cando and FCM's *First Nation and Municipal Economic Development Organizations* guide for detailed information on how communities manage economic development (FCM & Cando, n.d. *b*). Be patient and committed to this process with an open mind and heart. Ask questions, and don't wait for permission to reach out. It takes time and effort to build trusting relationships across cultures and within the context of a challenging colonial history.

■ Establish a Shared Emergency Management Table

Formalize your partnership by creating an emergency management working group, committee, or task force made up of elected officials and senior staff from each community,

as well as other stakeholders, such as federal and provincial emergency management agencies, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, health authorities, and nonprofits as required. Your table will be the bridge between your communities, emergency managers, governments, and the business community. With a view to long-term collaboration, this table should develop and ratify through councils a terms of reference that clarifies mandate, governance, and decision-making processes. The consensus decision-making model exercised by the Lesser Slave River Tri-Council is a best practice. More details on this model can be found on page 115 of the *Stronger Together Toolkit*. See Cando and FCM's *Creating a Joint Working Group for First Nation–Municipal Partnership* for best practices in establishing and managing a shared table and for a terms of reference template.

■ Share and Develop Plans and a Vision

Sharing information, including existing emergency management plans, risk hazard analyses, and community strengths and vulnerabilities is an important first step in aligning preparedness measures and developing regional resilience. An understanding of each community's respective jurisdictions, access to funding and resources and governance structures is critical at this stage, as it will identify gaps that joint planning can fill. Use Tool #8 from the *Stronger Together Toolkit* to develop a shared vision for regional economic resilience. With a shared vision in place, a best practice, pioneered by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the United States, is to have a Disaster Resilience Framework that addresses each of the six recovery support functions, one of which is economic (FEMA, n.d.; Hackman-Carty, n.d.). Ensure that all partners' voices are heard in developing these and that vulnerable populations are considered. See the Economic Developers of Alberta's *Community Toolkit for Economic Recovery and Resiliency (CTERR)*, Chapter VIII, for detailed descriptions of these tools and processes (Hackman-Carty, 2019).

■ Increase Capacity

Capacity shortages are a primary barrier to effective emergency management, response, and recovery within both First Nations and municipalities (Samuel Schooner, personal interview, June 11, 2020). Both the Nuxalk–Central Coast Regional District and the Sawridge–Slave Lake–MD of Lesser Slave River partnerships (detailed in case studies below) have hired and co-managed a staff person to lead their joint emergency management activities. Both emphasized how instrumental the additional capacity was in actualizing their shared goals. Begin a conversation with both federal and provincial/territorial governments to explore funding options for this position. If resources are not available to hire an additional staff person, communities can follow the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC)'s example of delegating internal staff resources from each community to lead on joint economic recovery initiatives (detailed in the case study on page 11).

Case Study on Nuxalk Nation–Central Coast Regional District (CCRD)–Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC) Partnership

During the B.C. wildfires in 2017, the CCRD and Nuxalk Nation partnered informally on response and recovery; this experience highlighted the need to address the jurisdictional gaps impeding their ability to effectively prepare for and respond to disasters together. The

primary issue was communication barriers between EMBC and Nuxalk, which impacted Nuxalk's ability to contribute to response and recovery activities. As a first step, Nuxalk and CCRD began to address challenges in their shared past and develop honest and respectful relationships between councils and staff.

With a commitment to collaborate, they began discussions with EMBC about coordinating emergency preparedness planning. In March 2019, they signed BC's first Memorandum of Understanding to "lead and co-ordinate emergency management planning by addressing any emergency preparedness, response, recovery or mitigation gaps that have impacts beyond a single jurisdiction, providing oversight on high-level emergency management issues, and acting as a vehicle to bring other relevant stakeholders, provincial ministries, federal departments, and Indigenous communities together to collaborate on emergency management initiatives" (Thompson, 2019). Their MOU will be implemented by an emergency coordinator, who will be accountable to a joint steering committee of representatives from each of the three signatories.

These partners have also begun to advocate for policy changes regarding the federal funding gap to First Nations for emergency management, critical for addressing governance and capacity challenges. This partnership has established a model for other regions to emulate in proactively addressing the jurisdictional gap between First Nations and municipalities and increasing regional resilience to future emergencies. Samuel Schooner, Chair of the CCRD, stressed the importance of the strengthened relationships and his confidence that this partnership will evolve into collaboration in other areas of shared interest.

Response: Collaborating on Immediate Economic Relief after an Emergency

Emergencies create challenging circumstances for all communities, with capacity and resources shortages created in the moment they are needed most. In these moments, it is understandable that communities look inward and focus efforts on their citizens; however, responding to emergencies collaboratively creates benefits for both governments and citizens, with both First Nation and municipal voices around the table. These benefits include consistent and clear internal and external communications; inclusive needs assessments that respond to all, including the most vulnerable; and efficient response actions that avoid duplication or conflict. The Economic Developers of Alberta have created Canada's most comprehensive guide on best practices in economic recovery and resiliency. The information below provides a brief overview of the content of this guide, adapted to the context of First Nation–municipal collaboration.

■ Connect and Convene

In an emergency, connect with your neighbours as soon as possible. Ask how the disaster is affecting their community and what their immediate needs are, and offer support where possible. If coordinated emergency management plans exist, implement them. If no shared plans exist, convene a table with decision-makers from each community and establish how you will collaborate during the emergency. Ensure that all First Nations and municipalities in the region are included in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), have roles within the Incident Command System (ICS), and are integrated in all lines of communications. Keep the jurisdictional gap between federal and provincial/territorial governments in mind because your communities may not be operating with the same supports or resources. If possible,

assemble a technical team of experts to guide your response and recovery actions. These experts may include third-party organizations, such as the Red Cross or the Samaritan Purse, who provide first-responder expertise.

■ Communicate

Frequent and open communication among partners was identified as essential by practitioners. If a crisis communications plan does not exist, develop one together immediately to align internal and external communications throughout the emergency. Effective intergovernmental communication is necessary to avoid duplication of services and to coordinate response actions. When developing this plan, keep in mind that elected officials have two audiences for their communications during a disaster: citizens and businesses. It is important to have a plan that speaks to both. Clear and consistent communications with the public provides stability to business and industry, which can lessen the economic impact of a disaster. Consistent communication can also lessen anxiety for citizens who may access services in multiple jurisdictions. Both First Nation and municipal voices must be involved in developing protocols, as each community will advocate for their needs and understand how best to communicate with their citizens and economic actors.

Be conscious that roles and responsibilities in First Nations and municipalities often differ significantly. In the Chuckegg Creek wildfire, the Chief of Dene Tha' First Nation was responsible for a much greater volume of communications and decision-making than the Mayor of High Level, and with less administrative support. Remote communities often have additional barriers, such as limited access to Internet and telecommunications. Factor these differences into shared crisis communications plans. See Chapter VI of the *CTERR* (Hackman-Carty, 2019) for more guidance.

■ Assess Economic Needs

Assessing the needs of businesses and industry is a foundational first step to determining an appropriate response. Economic impact assessments should be conducted with businesses, industries, and community organizations (EMBC, 2019, p. 29). Partners must coordinate these assessments and share data so the resulting action plans address each community's unique needs. Having both First Nation and municipal voices around the table will ensure these consultations are done in a culturally aware way and reach all businesses in the region. See Chapter V of the *CTERR* (Hackman-Carty, 2019) for more guidance.

■ Action Plan

Based on results from economic impact assessments, develop an immediate action plan addressing the short-term needs of businesses and industry. Possible actions include developing a business recovery centre; providing grants, loans, and other short-term financing needs; creating a hotline and web portal for businesses to access information; supporting business continuity planning; and delivering business recovery workshops.

In responding to economic or public health concerns, First Nations and municipalities have different supports that they can provide to their communities. In the case of COVID-19, municipalities could offer utility bill and property tax relief to residents and businesses. First Nations, on the other hand, were able to use bylaws to restrict access to their communities to a greater degree than municipalities, addressing their public health concerns. Though many jurisdictional needs are similar, it can be beneficial to all economic actors to coordinate response plans to leverage the unique capacities of First Nations and municipalities.

This ensures that the needs of businesses in the region are addressed, reducing economic impact and hastening recovery. See Chapters III and IV of the *CTERR* (Hackman-Carty, 2019) for more details and the list of financial resources available to communities during COVID-19.

Case Study: Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC) COVID-19 Regional Economic Recovery Task Force & Regional Response Action Team

The COEDC has provided economic development services to regional municipalities and the Westbank First Nation for over 15 years, which has cultivated a culture of economic development collaboration. In quick response to COVID-19, the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO), Kelowna, West Kelowna, Lake Country, Peachland, and Westbank First Nation leveraged this existing partnership to coordinate their economic response and recovery.

The Regional Economic Recovery Task Force (RERTF) comprises the head elected official from each participating community and has two goals: to coordinate advocacy for recovery resources to federal and provincial governments and to coordinate the development of an economic recovery strategy. The RERTF receives institutional support from both COEDC staff and the Regional Response Action Team (RRAT), a team of senior economic

FIGURE 2
Regional Coordination in Central Okanagan
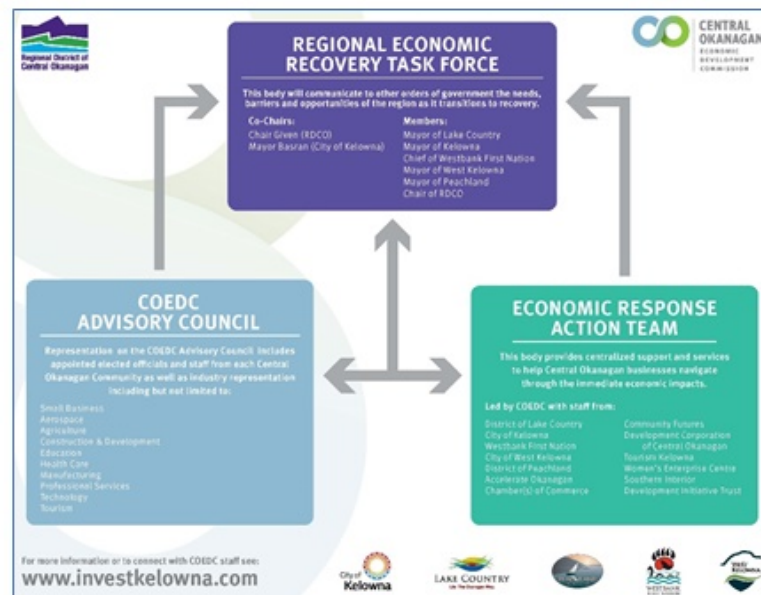
Source: Griffiths, 2020.

development staff from the communities and other key stakeholders (for more details, see their Terms of Reference (COEDC, 2020)). The RRAT's primary objective is to support business and industry in weathering the storm of COVID-19. Together, the RERTF and RRAT are able to focus on "measures for a coordinated short-term response, medium-term recovery and long-term resilience-building activities" (COEDC, 2020).

The communities have moved quickly in conducting roundtables with business and industry and are providing succinct and accessible summaries of the economic impacts and forecast by sector (COEDC, 2021). Regional coordination has allowed each partner to focus on their community's needs, share resources, avoid duplication of services, and contribute to regional recovery. According to those involved, the speed and effectiveness of the joint response would not have been possible without the existing relationships developed over the previous 15 years. These communities have been able to act quickly, leveraging existing relationships and structures to coordinate an effective response and recovery plan and prepare themselves to access future stimulus funding.

Recovery: The New Way of Doing Business — Collaborating on Medium- and Long-Term Recovery

It can be challenging for councils to prioritize emergency management in stable times while managing competing priorities. Public support for emergency preparedness and economic resilience is greatest following a disaster, so this is an ideal time to invest in joint emergency management. It is also an opportunity to strengthen your First Nation–municipal partnership for the long term. Collaborating on medium- and long-term economic recovery can result in enhanced economic outcomes for all partners, through efficient service delivery, increased access to stimulus funding, and coordinated regional planning. Formalizing your partnership can lead to collaboration in other areas, resulting in additional community benefits. Planning together should become the new way of doing business in your region. The Town of Slave Lake's Mayor Tyler Warman says, "create a box that someone else would actually have to destroy for the partnership to fail" (Mayor Tyler Warman, Town of Slave Lake, personal interview, June 11, 2020). The following best practices in preparing for long-term collaboration on emergency management and economic recovery are informed by the *Stronger Together Toolkit*.

■ Review and Strengthen Your Partnership

The recovery phase is the ideal time to review and strengthen your partnership. Conduct a joint debrief of your shared disaster response. What worked? What didn't? What could be improved? Review all aspects of your partnership, including emergency preparedness, response, recovery plans and strategies, joint communication protocols, and the structure of your shared table. Adapt and improve where necessary. Ensure your economic recovery strategy remains applicable in the post-disaster context. This is also the chance to connect recovery strategies with other stages of the emergency management continuum, such as detailing mitigation initiatives. Taking this opportunity to improve your capacity in all four stages will build greater economic resilience. See Chapter VIII of the *CTERR* (Hackman-Carty, 2019) for detailed descriptions of economic recovery strategic planning processes.

If the recent disaster was your first time collaborating, then this is your opportunity to formalize your partnership. Communities with a shared table should take care to communi-

cate clearly about how to postpone or continue managing the partnership's pre-disaster priorities. Communities may move through response and recovery stages at different speeds. If not already present, include guidance for emergency situations within the shared table's terms of reference.

■ Re-envision the Regional Economy

Long-term economic recovery creates an opportunity to reflect on how the regional economy can be built better. Create opportunities with your partners and external economic stakeholders to explore new shared priorities, inclusive procurement opportunities within adapted supply chains, inclusive and representative employment initiatives, upgrades to critical infrastructure and service agreements, and strategies for economic diversification. Align your shared approach to economic recovery: do your communities want to build back with mitigation as a priority, or is a quick recovery more important? See Chapter XI of the *CTERR* (Hackman-Carty, 2019) for a detailed description of economic diversification strategies.

■ Advocate for Resources

"Economic recovery plans and strategies are of no value to the public sector if there is no operational capacity to implement them" (Hackman-Carty, 2019, p. 7). First Nations and municipalities will have different access to federal, provincial, and territorial stimulus funds, and they should explore how to leverage all channels for maximum recovery and stimulus funding. In addition, partnerships should explore other areas of funding, such as local banks, credit unions, alternative lenders, foundations, the Canadian Red Cross, and co-operatives. A coordinated approach to advocacy will ensure all avenues for financing regional recovery are covered and the needs of each community are addressed. For resources available to support communities through COVID-19, see the resources section at the end of the guide.

■ Grow the Partnership Beyond Emergency Management

About partnerships, Reeve Murray Kerik of the MD of Lesser Slave River says, "if you ignore it long enough, it will go away, and you'll be back where you started" (personal interview, June 16, 2020). Partnerships need to be actively invested in and deepened. With a successful joint response and recovery, you may find there are other areas of interest for your communities to collaborate on. Chair of the CCRD Samuel Schooner said of the Nuxalk–CCRD–EMBC emergency management partnership: "The relationships we are building through collaborating on emergency management are important and will likely lead to many other projects and partnerships in the future." The following best practices for growing and deepening your partnership beyond emergency management are informed by the *Stronger Together Toolkit*:

- Convene a joint council-to-council meeting to discuss other shared priorities and set a vision for the partnership in areas of mutual interest. Make these joint council meetings regular to oversee your work and continue updating shared priorities.

- Work together to develop and sign a Friendship Accord or MOU, articulating the spirit of your partnership and shared vision (FCM, n.d.). These signed documents can be publicly displayed and celebrated annually. This is a great way to include new elected officials and staff in the partnership. See Tool #9 in the *Stronger Together Toolkit* for guidance on how to develop a Friendship Accord.

- Set up the partnership for long-term success by developing work plans that aim at concrete outcomes for your shared work. See pages 107–110 of the *Stronger Together Toolkit* for guidance on joint work planning.

- Make your relationship building fun, personal, and informal. Chief Roland Twinn of Sawridge First Nation, Mayor Tyler Warman of the Town of Slave Lake, and Reeve Murray Kerik of the MD of Lesser Slave River developed an annual tradition of taking a canoe trip together where they connect and address outstanding issues in their partnership. See pages 57–59 of the *Stronger Together Toolkit* for more ideas on growing and sustaining a partnership.

Two Case Studies: Sawridge First Nation–Town of Slave Lake–Municipal District of Lesser Slave River Partnership and Dene Tha' First Nation–Town of High Level Partnership

Responding to and recovering from massive wildfires in northern Alberta have created strong partnerships between First Nations and municipalities. Prior to the 2011 wildfires, Sawridge First Nation, the Town of Slave Lake, and the MD of Lesser Slave River did not have a culture of collaboration or partnership. Following the wildfires, the Government of Alberta convened the three communities and encouraged them to create the Slave Lake Regional Tri-Council to jointly manage over $60 million in recovery funds. After struggling to work effectively together, the chief, mayor, and reeve went for dinner and directly addressed the challenges they were facing. They recognized the need to build their relationships to co-manage the economic recovery effectively.

As part of their relationship-building process, the Tri-Council developed a consensus-style decision-making structure that shifted their approach from competition to collaboration (details on page 115 of the *Stronger Together Toolkit*). The elected leadership described the shift as "no longer keeping score", since not all recovery initiatives would benefit everyone equally, and decided to support one another's prosperity. They jointly funded, hired, and managed a staff person to lead the recovery efforts. Nine years after the disaster, the Tri-Council continues to meet, the communities continue to develop an ever-closer relationship, and they feel prepared to capitalize on joint opportunities when they arise. Working together is the new way of doing business, with substantial positive outcomes for each community. Further details of the Town of Slave Lake's experience in the economic recovery can be found in their Wisdom Gained report (NADC, 2013).

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In the summer of 2019, the Chuckegg Creek wildfire forced the evacuation of many communities in northwestern Alberta, including the Dene Tha' First Nation and the Town of High Level. At that time, these communities had already been working together for a year through the CEDI program. With the shared experience and lessons learned from the evacuations, the partnership shifted the focus of their joint work to collaborative emergency management planning.

After identifying key areas for enhancing collaborative preparedness and resilience, this partnership prioritized three initiatives: developing an integrated regional emergency response plan to help address the jurisdictional and capacity gap in future emergencies; co-designing and building a multi-use evacuation/recreation centre that integrates feedback on the cultural needs of Dene Tha' community members and elders; and extending the water line from High Level to Dene Tha's neighbouring community of Bushe River.

Having invested in strengthening their relationship and having diverse and representative voices at the table through their formal joint working group, this partnership was well positioned to collaborate on economic recovery after the wildfires. Continuing to grow the partnership and capacity for joint planning will ensure they are prepared to respond to stimulus funding from other orders of government, and their joint initiatives will result in greater health and wellness outcomes for all.

CONCLUSION

This guide has proposed a process for First Nation-municipal collaboration on emergency management and economic resilience. It would be impossible for a single guide to address all of the nuances of governance, jurisdiction, capacity, and relationships that exist between First Nations and municipalities across Canada. However, the steps in this guide — alongside open and honest communication — can support relationships that will increase the economic resilience for all communities. This guide is only a starting point, and the hard work of collaboration is unique in every instance. For more resources to support this journey, please see below.

RESOURCES: FIRST NATION–MUNICIPAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY COLLABORATION

- The Government of British Columbia's *Emergency Management Planning Toolkit for Local Authorities and First Nations* is a thorough guide for developing emergency management plans for local authorities and First Nations. The B.C. Government has also produced resources specifically for First Nations in British Columbia: https://www2.gov.bc.ca

- A comprehensive toolkit for economic recovery and resiliency in the Canadian municipal context is available in the *Economic Developers of Alberta's Community Toolkit for Economic Recovery and Resiliency*: https://www.edaalberta.ca

- The First Nations' Emergency Services Society of British Columbia has detailed resources and templates for building the emergency management capacity of First Nations: https://www.fness.bc.ca

- The largest international archive of information about economic recovery, as well as templates, tools, and guidance is the International Economic Development Council's website: restoreyoureconomy.org.

- The Justice Institute of British Columbia has produced a toolkit on disaster resilience informed by *Indigenous Traditional Knowledge: Aboriginal Disaster Resilience and Traditional Knowledge*: https://cdrp.jibc.ca/resilience-knowledge-sharing-toolkit/

- For a detailed analysis of lessons learned and recommendations for economic recovery, see the report from the Rural Municipality of Wood Buffalo (KPMG, 2017). Another report about the same wildfire, *Rebuilding Resilient Indigenous Communities in the RMWB: Final Report*, highlights the experience of First Nations and Métis settlements,

- providing recommendations that address the jurisdictional gap in emergency management: http://atcfn.ca
- For an overview of on-reserve emergency management, see the Library of Parliament's *Emergency Management on First Nations Reserves* (Background Paper): https://lop.parl.ca
- Cando and FCM have compiled lists of resources available for both First Nations and municipalities in responding to COVID-19: http://www.edo.ca/cedi/financial-resources-table/financial-resources-covid-19.
- Cando (https://www.edo.ca) and FCM (https://www.fcm.ca) have many other resources on First Nation–municipal collaboration, including the *Stronger Together Toolkit*.

- Samuel Schooner, Chair of the Central Coast Regional District and Councillor for Nuxalk Nation, BC
- Chief Roland Twinn, Sawridge First Nation, AB
- Mayor Tyler Warman, Town of Slave Lake, AB

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APPENDIX 1
Overview of Similarities and Differences in Emergency Management for On-Reserve First Nations and Municipalities

For an overview of on-reserve emergency management, see the Library of Parliament's Emergency Management on First Nations Reserves (Background Paper). For an overview of the emergency management roles of local, provincial/territorial, and federal governments, see Chapter VII of the Community Toolkit for Economic Recovery and Resiliency.

Many nuances and complexities are created by the different jurisdictions and governance structures of local governments, as well as the unique circumstances of First Nations that are self-governing, operate under the *Indian Act*, within Treaty or on unceded territory. The table below speaks specifically about on-reserve emergency management. First Nations and municipalities who are interested in collaborating on emergency management should spend time sharing and learning about one another's unique jurisdiction and governance structures.

	Emergency management jurisdiction and relationship with federal/provincial/territorial governments
First Nations	The federal government has primary responsibility for on-reserve emergency management, since Section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867 provides that the federal government has exclusive legislative authority over "Indians, and Lands reserved for the Indians."[1]
	Only Indigenous Services Canada and Health Canada have mandated responsibilities to First Nations in emergencies. Indigenous Services Canada's National Emergency Management Plan states that ISC is responsible for ensuring that First Nations have access to emergency management services comparable to those available to provincial residents.[2] ISC does so by working with the relevant provincial/territorial government, as well as third-party actors, reimbursing expenses used to support First Nations during emergencies. In reality, communication and jurisdictional barriers mean that this standard is not always met.
	Health Canada supports First Nations to plan for responding to pandemics and other public health emergencies.
Municipalities	Provincial and territorial governments are responsible for emergency management within their jurisdictions. Municipal emergency management responsibilities are largely determined by provincial/territorial policy.
	Each province/territory provides mandates and guidance for municipalities to develop emergency management plans and training exercises. They also provide funding to support the development and implementation of these plans.
	Municipalities are responsible for requesting support from provincial/territorial governments during a disaster. The provincial/territorial government will then request additional support from the federal government if the response is beyond their capacity.

Governance in emergency management

First Nations   The Chief of a First Nation is the primary decision-maker during an emergency. First Nations can declare a State of Emergency through a council resolution.

During COVID-19, many First Nations used Indian Act bylaws to enforce restrictions on movement to and from their reserves. This power comes from s. 81(1)(a) of the Indian Act, which empowers band councils to make bylaws "to provide for the health of residents on the reserve and to prevent the spreading of contagious and infectious diseases". These bylaws offer a greater ability to control movement than municipal counterparts have; however, there remains a challenge around enforceability of these bylaws.[3]

Self-governing First Nations or those that have opted out of the Indian Act have legislative and governance tools to also restrict movement on their land, but not through the Indian Act.

Municipalities   Municipalities can declare a State of Emergency through a council resolution, which offers the mayor/reeve/warden the ability to do anything that is not contrary to law in enacting their emergency management plan. This could include:

- Mandating social distancing and face masks and closures of municipally owned spaces such as parks
- Restricting business operations
- Closures of premises

Unlike First Nations, there is a clear procedure and funding available for enforcing municipal bylaws.

Access to financial resources for emergency management and recovery

First Nations   First Nations are generally lacking appropriate resources for emergency management, particularly for prevention and mitigation. Between 2009–2010 and 2012–2013, approximately 63% of funds from the Emergency Management Assistance Program[4] were spent on response and recovery, while only 1% was spent on prevention and mitigation, though that is changing.[5]

During and after a disaster, First Nations must rely on funding from the federal government (in some cases provincial/territorial governments also provide funding streams, but this is not the norm). These funds are often designated for specific purposes and do not provide much flexibility to meet the needs of post-disaster recovery. Funds often have strict reporting requirements that can be difficult for communities struggling with capacity shortages.

Additionally, there can be a lack of clarity in which funds First Nations are able to access. In the case of COVID-19, for example, First Nation businesses were unable to access the Canada Emergency Business Account, as they are fully owned by a First Nation and required income tax assessments, which on-reserve businesses do not file.[6]

First Nations are generally unable to go into debt to finance response and recovery initiatives. Since First Nations' revenues often come from owning businesses, the economic impact of business closures during disasters may have a disproportionately higher impact on First Nations than municipalities.

Municipalities   Municipalities are generally lacking appropriate resources for emergency management. When response and recovery needs of a disaster exceed municipal capacity, provincial/territorial governments will assist.

Municipalities have a wider range of financial tools to respond to emergencies than do First Nations. For example, municipalities have own-source revenues from property taxes that offer greater flexibility than grant funding from provincial/territorial/federal governments.

Municipalities can also use these revenue sources to support businesses and residents during an emergency, for example, by deferring property taxes or utility bills during COVID-19.

Municipalities are also generally unable to go into debt to finance emergency management expenses.

Infrastructure and human capacity challenges during an emergency

First Nations	"For some First Nations communities living on reserves, managing and recovering from emergencies is made particularly challenging by socio-economic conditions, geographic location, and the frequency with which these events occur."[7] In general, many First Nations experience staff and fiscal capacity shortages that are accentuated during disasters. Many rural First Nations do not have basic infrastructure necessary to respond to disasters. This can range from mitigation infrastructure to prevent or reduce the impacts of flooding, to having fire hydrants to fight wildfires. Some examples of the impacts of inadequate infrastructure: • In the case of COVID-19, the lack of broadband infrastructure in many First Nation communities resulted in greater obstacles to residents and businesses than experienced in communities with consistent access to Internet. • Lack of fire hydrants and other infrastructure creates challenges for First Nations to properly access insurance for buildings and other infrastructure. • Inadequate and overcrowded housing during COVID-19 increases vulnerability. • Limited access to health and emergency services increases vulnerability. • Disrupted supply chains and restricted movement increases food insecurity.
Municipalities	In general, many municipalities experience staff and fiscal capacity shortages that are accentuated during disasters. Smaller rural municipalities struggle to properly resource emergency management, and face infrastructure challenges such as broadband connection issues, which has created additional challenges during COVID-19.[8] The direct relationship with provincial/territorial governments results in simpler and more structured supports during disasters, such as provincially run EOCs.

Responsibilities to business/industry and citizens during and emergency

First Nations	First Nations and municipalities have similar responsibilities to their business and industrial sectors. Economic development officials are the primary bridge between the private sector and governments and are responsible for supporting businesses and industry through disasters and into recovery. First Nations have additional direct responsibilities for the health and well-being of their citizens through the operation of health authorities. In many cases, First Nations are responsible for managing their on-reserve health facilities, while this is not the case for municipalities. In addition, the complex health demographics in some First Nation communities require increased attention during health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the need to focus on health outcomes, First Nations have in many cases decided to delay the re-opening of their communities compared to the broader municipal timelines, which are based on provincial and territorial re-opening strategies.
Municipalities	Municipalities and First Nations have similar responsibilities to their business and industrial sectors. Economic development officials are the primary bridge between the private sector and governments and are responsible for supporting businesses and industry through disasters and into recovery. Municipalities are not directly responsible for the health outcomes of their citizens, which is instead managed provincially through hospitals and health authorities. Similarly, municipalities were able to follow the lead of the provincial and territorial re-opening strategies, focusing efforts on economic recovery, rather than directly on the health outcomes of their citizens.

NOTES

1. Collier, 2015, p. 2.
2. Indigenous Services Canada, Emergency management. https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1309369889599/1535119888656.
3. Nick Sowsun, "Solving the Indian Act by-law enforcement issue: Prosecution of Indian Act by-laws", *Olthuis Kleer Townshend LLP (OKT)*. https://www.oktlaw.com/solving-the-indian-act-by-law-enforcement-issue-prosecution-of-indian-act-by-laws/

4. Indigenous Services Canada, *Emergency Management Assistance Program*, https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1534954090122/1535120506707
5. Collier, 2015, p. 8.
6. See Canadian Chamber of Commerce, n.d.
7. Collier, 2015, p. 1.
8. FCM, 2014.