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Athabasca Tribal Council, Athabasca River Métis, and Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre release the results of their project: *Rebuilding Resilient Indigenous Communities – Assessing the Indigenous Impacts of the Horse River Wildfire*

PRESS RELEASE

for immediate release

More than two years after the devastating 2016 Horse River Wildfire, the Indigenous communities of the RMWB are prepared to release the results of a major research project into the impacts of the wildfire on the region's Indigenous communities. The project is the first Indigenous-controlled disaster study to bring together First Nations and Métis from an entire region. The project included 10 focus groups, 40 interviews, survey with more than 600 responses, and a video. The purpose of the study was to make sure that Indigenous impacts, concerns, and recommendations are heard by governments and to provide foundation for improved collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments in disaster management.

The Project will be launched at Keyano College 30 October 2018, 1:00-3:00 pm.

The research project has several key findings including:

- **Lives Affected, Voices Least Heard:** Indigenous peoples lost homes and their communities took in thousands of evacuees. Indigenous governments were left out of the emergency response, re-entry and recovery planning from the outset;
- **Recovery is an Ongoing Process:** Though the Horse River Wildfire happened more than two years ago, Indigenous community members are still recovering, by finding support and strength in their communities and cultures throughout the region;
- **Disaster Management and Recovery Planning Through Reconciliation:** Emergency response and disaster management require a fundamental reorganization that recognizes Indigenous governments as equal partners and empowers Indigenous communities to work together with all levels of government to ensure Indigenous communities are properly prepared and supported in times of disaster.

Chief Allen Adam, Chairman of the Athabasca Tribal Council Board notes that “this research sets the table for a full discussion about disaster management that includes Indigenous governments as equal partners, we can't let what happened in 2016 happen again.”

Ron Quintal, President of the Fort McKay Métis adds that: “this project is important because so many of our stories have yet to be heard, we're glad that this research is finally complete, and we hope that by telling our stories, our community's recovery will be possible, and that we will be able to use those stories to build better, more inclusive disaster management programs.”

Connie Mercredi, Executive Director of the Friendship Centre, “the Friendship Centre was the Indigenous meeting point after we returned from the wildfire. The support, coordination, and engagement just wasn't there. This report lays out the framework for designing disaster management plans that include all the region's peoples.”

The research was funded by the Canadian Red Cross and will be publicly available at www.atcfn.ca on the project launch date. Key participants in the research project will be available at a media scrum after the project launch. For interested media unable to attend the launch in person, the event will be live streamed at www.atcfn.ca and a phone interview may be arranged by contacting the number below.

For more information or to arrange for a media interview, please contact:

Chief Allan Adam
President, Athabasca Tribal Council
Chief Athabasca Chipewyan
First Nation
780- 713- 1220

President Ron Quintal
President, Fort McKay Métis
780- 828- 4401

Executive Director Connie Mercredi
Executive Director
Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre
780- 743- 8555

Dr. Timothy Clark
Willow Springs Strategic
Solutions, Report Author
587-890-6325