



**PREPARING  
OUR HOME:**  
Stanley Mission  
Saskatchewan





Preparing our Home is a community-based resilience planning program. The program enables Indigenous youth to reach their potential in becoming emergency preparedness leaders in their communities.

preparingourhome.ca

“The Preparing Our Home program shows the youth that their ideas are valuable and that it is also their job to protect and help manage their lands. It is very powerful to watch a room full of young minds work to solve problems that no one had ever asked them about before. The youth also learned from each other by sharing their experiences of emergencies that had happened in their communities.

The Preparing Our Home program gave us a bigger platform to help forward emergency management best practices in our communities. It is in a lot of cases what the youth needed to help create real change at home. To have someone believe in their ideas and to have a contact with the knowledge to back up their dreams can go a very long way.

I hold the Preparing Our Home program in very high regard as collectively it is creating real change in our First Nation Communities across Canada by giving our youth the power to use their voices about real issues”.

Michelle Vandevord/Manager  
Saskatchewan First Nations Emergency Management

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# PREPARING OUR HOME

## INTRODUCTION

“Preparing our Home” is a community-based program that enables Indigenous youth to reach their potential in becoming resilience leaders in their communities.

Experiences and research around the world show that youth programs can help build, sustain and improve community preparedness and resilience. “Preparing our Home” enhances activities directed at understanding risk from an inclusive people-centered community-based approach that connects youth, Elders and community members and brings together Indigenous Knowledge and global disaster risk reduction solutions. The program strengthens resilience capabilities in Indigenous communities by building leadership through youth training and exercises.

Following best practices of community-based planning, Preparing Our Home workshops involve community members, educational and youth staff, band staff (e.g. land officers, housing staff), community safety officers, councillors, former

Chiefs, and Elders. A community gathering showcases and celebrates youth (an exhibit of workshop photography and paddles carved) and brings awareness to emergency preparedness work being conducted by the youth in the community (hazards and risk assessment, preparedness strategies and measures developed by the youth, community resilience strategies and the role of youth).

This toolkit outlines key elements of the program as it was implemented in Stanley Mission Band, Saskatchewan: hazard mapping and community asset mapping, First Aid basics, youth-led fire safety, youth preparedness training and strategies (personal/household and community levels), and traditional food preservation practices (fish preparation).

A series of workshops were conducted under the leadership of Sheena Sinclair over spring, summer and fall seasons (all of this accompanied by delicious meals cooked by Sheena and her team!).

## STANLEY MISSION

Stanley Mission is located on the banks of the Churchill River in the boreal forest of northern Saskatchewan on the edge of the Pre-Cambrian Shield, 80 kilometres north east of the town of La Ronge, 305 kilometres north of Prince Albert. Highway 915 is the main access road to the community.

The community is part of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band. Located in northern Saskatchewan, the Lac La Ronge Indian Band is the largest First Nation in Saskatchewan, and one of the 10 largest in Canada. Our Central administration office is located in Stanley Mission. We are proud of our heritage and our Cree Language.

The community has experienced several wildfire fire evacuations.

As Chief Tammy Cook-Searson spoke about our community: “I was raised on the family trapline, and along with my wider community, we continue to rely on our physical and mental and social well-being. We hunt elk, moose, deer. We fish, we trap, and we harvest plants for medicines and food.

Lac La Ronge Indian Band is the largest first nation in Saskatchewan. We are the 10th-largest band in Canada out of 633 first

nations. Our population as of last week was 10,911. That’s how many band members we have. We are part of Treaty 6. Our treaty was signed on February 11, 1889. We’re situated in north central Saskatchewan on the edge of the Precambrian Shield. Usually, our traditional territories are based on how the traplines were separated in the 1930s. Lac La Ronge Indian Band is comprised of six separate communities and 19 reserve lands that cover over 107,000 acres of reserve lands.

During the summer of 2015, our communities experienced an unprecedented number of wildfires that resulted in the largest evacuation effort in Saskatchewan’s history. It made national and international news. The fire season began like any other year during the month of May. However, by the first week of June, there were 25 new fires caused by hot weather, dry conditions, and lightning resulted in a fire situation that we had never experienced before.

It was an incredibly trying and difficult time for the evacuees, yet our community members, who are known for their resilience, managed to make the most of the situation with the support of many” (Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, 2017).

# PREPARING OUR HOME

## STANLEY MISSION WAY

Wechi utoskemetowin - working together in Cree

### Day 1 of workshop

I invited Colleen Ballantyne to come in and teach the children how to prepare white fish. She was very informative and interactive with the kids. They enjoyed the learning experience. We then finished off the workshop with a meal.

### Day 2 of workshop

Colleen came over to the Youth Centre with some moose meat and she taught the kids two different ways to cut moose meat: thinly sliced and ready to be smoked, and cubed for stew or stir fry. We finished off the workshop with a lovely meal prepared by my co-workers.

### Day 3 of workshop

We only had a small map so we did what we could. We identified important buildings in the community, and places we would need to go in case of an emergency, such as a forest fire. The youth were very interested in this project and had many questions about what to do in case of an emergency.



### Day 4 of workshop

We had Angus Mcleod come in and speak to the youth about the traditional way of living. He told the kids how they would travel by ski-doo, or just plain old snowshoes, for hunting to provide food for their families. And if they got stuck out there, they would have to walk back because they had no way of communication. The kids kind of asked silly questions, but that's to be expected. Angus did a really good job on his presentation.

### Day 5 of workshop

The youth learned basic First Aid. They practiced treating burns and cuts. They were very well-behaved and did what they were told. Some of the youth were curious why they were doing this, and were told to keep this information and use it at home in case of emergency situations. Basic First Aid kits were provided in their backpacks. The youth were given backpacks that contained a flashlight, fleece blanket, and non-perishable food items. The youth were very excited to receive these hard-earned gifts. Their backpacks were pretty stylish and they said "it feels like Christmas!" I had such a great time hosting this workshop and hope to inspire other youth leaders to teach emergency preparedness all over Canada.

Michelle Vandevord came to Stanley Mission to teach the high school students about FireSmart. It was a very emotional speech. She then came to the Youth Centre to teach fire safety and the kids were very interested.

# PRAISING AWARENESS ABOUT FIRE SAFETY: HOW ALL FIRES ARE PREVENTABLE.

By Michelle Vandevord/Manager

Saskatchewan First Nations Emergency Management & Protective Services

When I went to Stanley Mission to do my Fire Safety Presentation, we are usually presenting to the elementary students. However, at Stanley Mission, I was asked to do a presentation for the high school students, which I had never done before. I decided to focus my presentation around a house fire that we had in my community. The image below is a news article from the day it happened.

I started my presentation by showing the students the article. I talked about how we were called to the home a few days before because the children were playing with fire and started a fire in the basement. I talked about going through fire safety with the kids and the family that day, as they had fire hazards in the basement where the kids were playing.



A few days later a fire call came through on our radios and as soon as I stepped out of my house, I could see the smoke and knew exactly where I was going. I talked about pulling up to the scene and having lots of people yelling and screaming at the firefighters to help and how that still gives me nightmares to this day.

This was a very personal presentation and I poured my heart into the story and how it could have been prevented. Long story short, the children were pulled from the burning house and myself and a co-worker performed CPR on the children. In the end, we lost both of the children as they were overcome with the smoke.

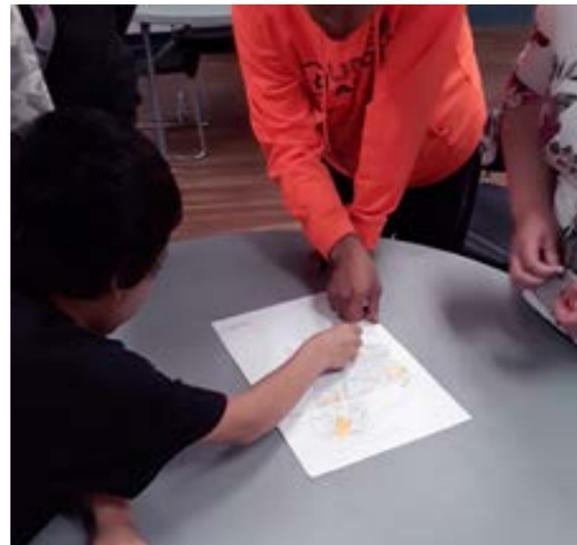
The gym was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. I then talked about their own homes and hazards, how they can survive a house fire, and about drinking and driving, kitchen safety, etc. It was a hard day for me because it was the first time I shared the story outside of my firehall and it is still very hard to talk about. I believe that sharing my story and how it affected my community and department really got through to the kids.

# COMMUNITY ASSET AND HAZARD MAPPING

THE YOUTH PARTICIPATED IN COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING AND DISCUSSION OF HAZARDS.

## FIRE SAFETY

Fire Safety leader Michelle Vandevord, Manager, Saskatchewan First Nations Emergency Management visited from Prince Albert and taught youth about fire safety.



## TRADITIONAL FOOD PREPARATION

Youth had a lot of fun preparing fish with Colleen.



## FIRST AID

Youth learned basics of First Aid to be able to help themselves and their family.



## YOUTH PREPAREDNESS

Youth were given backpacks with preparedness items: a flashlight, a fleece blanket, First aid kit, and non-perishable foods.





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