

2023 WILDFIRE INITIAL REPORT



United Way
British Columbia

Working with communities in
BC's North, Interior, Lower Mainland,
Central & Northern Vancouver Island

INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, we see significant wildfires in our province each year and many British Columbians have experienced the personal and community impacts of these events.

This year was devastating for those in West Kelowna and the Thompson Nicola Region: communities devastated, families displaced, buildings lost, and more. These are the physical impacts of the wildfires.

The more hidden impacts are the trauma, accentuated mental health issues, and health concerns due to smoke and poor air quality...just to name a few.

We know from previous wildfires and floods that recovery is a long road, and one that takes patience and time. To help communities recover and rebuild is not an immediate fix, and United Way British Columbia remains committed to continually helping those impacted.

Your support has helped so many individuals and communities already – and your donations will continue to support them as they work towards recovery and resiliency.

Thank you!



UNITED FOR BC WILDFIRE RECOVERY FUND

YOUR IMPACT

Summer 2023

YOUR DONATION IS SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

Food and Basic Needs, Child Care and After-School Programs, Mental Health Supports and Counselling, Wildfire Education, Advocacy.



\$1,000,000
AMOUNT RAISED



\$300K
SET ASIDE
FOR RECOVERY



150+
CORPORATE
PARTNERS



\$696K
FUNDS DISBURSED
TO DATE



29

COMMUNITIES SUPPORTED



1732

DONORS WHO HAVE
SUPPORTED THE FUND

INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS RECEIVED

\$285,000
FROM THE OVERALL TOTAL

WHAT'S NEXT?

The next phase of the United for BC Wildfire Recovery Fund will be focused on long-term recovery for communities, including the heavily impacted communities of West Kelowna and the Shuswap.





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HIGHLIGHTS – THANKS TO THE GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS OF OUR DONORS

After opening our granting process, we have committed grants to 20+ community agencies and First Nations to fund a variety of needs that address both immediate and long-term recovery, including:

-  **Mental Health supports and outreach:**
- In Kelowna, this included expenses for mental health/counselling supports, as well as increasing capacity to reach clients. Funding also supported emergency food hampers, purchasing clothing and hygiene items, transportation funds, and grocery gift cards.
 - Ensuring that outreach programs can support potential increased need for services resulting from the fires in Kelowna.
 - Providing support in Thompson Nicola Cariboo to evacuees with food, fuel, hygiene supplies, and assistance with lodging. Long term recovery support will include counselling for individuals and families.

-  **Supporting First Nations with cultural, mental, and emotional supports, as well as food security and traditional programs:**
- Helping pay community hunters and processors, as well as storage to support traditional hunting and food distribution.
 - Funding helped fill gaps in services that address First Nations' needs for well-being of all aspects of the medicine wheel needed for balance, like ceremonies, Knowledge Keepers, healing, and language.
 - Expenses for evacuees including honorariums, gas and grocery gift cards, food for feasts, canning, smokehouse, mileage, cultural supplies, and other identified needs of the community.



The Lower East Adams Lake fire as seen from across the lake on the night of Aug. 2, 2023. (Photo courtesy of Michelle Bazina)

PROVIDING SUPPORT TO ADAMS LAKE INDIAN BAND DURING THEIR EVACUATION

When many members of the Adams Lake Indian Band were evacuated due to two wildfires threatening their homes, United Way BC stepped up to help support evacuees with 400 grocery and fuel cards.

On top of that, we were able to coordinate two van loads full of supplies to help meet immediate needs, including blankets, non-perishable food, hygiene products, period products and N95 masks.

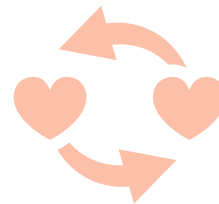


DISPLACED UKRAINIANS GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITIES THAT WELCOMED THEM

The Ukrainian Canadian Volunteers Association prepared authentic Ukrainian cuisine for the firefighters on the frontlines of the Central Okanagan wildfires.

Crafted to cater to diverse tastes, the vegetarian-friendly meals, featuring dishes like borscht, crepes, and baked goods, were served to over 150 first responders. United Way BC provided funding to support partners coordinating relief efforts.

Among those who prepared these nourishing meals were Ukrainian volunteers, some of whom are refugees themselves. Their journey has come full circle, having previously benefited from the United for Ukraine initiative spearheaded by United Way BC earlier in 2023. Their purpose was as wholesome as the food they prepared; a gesture of solidarity to uplift the spirits of firefighters on the front lines.





HELPING THOSE WITH BRAIN INJURIES IMPACTED BY THE WILDFIRES

The devastating impact of a wildfire is so much more than the physical threat to homes and property. The trauma response of being evacuated, being on alert, being forced indoors due to heavy smoke, or the uncertainty of the future, impacts each person differently. When you have a healthy brain, it's tough. When you've had a brain injury, it can be so much more challenging.

United Way British Columbia is working with BrainTrust Canada, providing much needed grants to help support wildfire survivors with acquired brain injuries get back on their feet in the aftermath of the most recent natural disaster.

"Our partnership with United Way emphasizes our shared commitment to the most vulnerable members of our communities," Amanda McFarlane, Executive Director at BrainTrust Canada said. "Those living with brain injuries face unique challenges daily, and these challenges are only amplified during community crisis. Together, we strive to provide them the support they need, ensuring they're not overlooked or forgotten in the fact of disasters."

These funds will help cover expenses like mental health and counselling supports, emergency food hampers, and grocery gift cards. It will help increase capacity to reach clients, purchase clothing, bedding and hygiene items, and emergency transportation funds for those with acquired brain injuries in the Southern Interior.

**THANK YOU TO THE MANY INDIVIDUAL, CORPORATE AND UNION PARTNERS
AND DONORS WHO MADE THIS AND SO MUCH MORE POSSIBLE**



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