



United Way
British Columbia

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

NEWS RELEASE
August 23, 2023

United Way BC grant applications open for wildfire relief efforts

Agencies helping with immediate & long-term wildfire relief efforts are encouraged to apply to the United for BC Wildfire Recovery Fund



Head Office, Burnaby, B.C. – In the wake of the devastating wildfires that have swept through the heart of British Columbia, the [United for BC Wildfire Recovery Fund](#) swiftly channels resources to both immediate and long-term needs through strategic partnerships with non-profit agencies, ensuring that displaced residents receive the vital assistance they require.

United Way British Columbia – working with communities in BC's Interior, Lower Mainland and Central & Northern Vancouver Island, is committed to supporting access to essential needs, such as food assistance, trauma care, and mental health support. What sets this fund apart is its adaptable nature, designed to respond with agility and precision to the evolving needs of impacted communities.

From the very onset of the Central Okanagan wildfire crisis, United Way BC displayed responsiveness, mobilizing within 24 hours. Collaborating closely with non-profit agencies on the ground, the organization assessed urgent requirements and swiftly bridged the gaps. An example of this proactive approach is the partnership forged with Salvation Army Kelowna to provide nourishing meals for vulnerable seniors during the crisis, as well as issuing a call out for volunteers.

As the wildfire's impact continues to widen, so does United Way BC's commitment to relief and recovery. Beyond the Central Okanagan, the organization is extending its reach to communities including Similkameen, Vernon, North Shuswap, Sorrento, Sicamous, Merritt, Lytton, and Kamloops.

Michael McKnight, the President and CEO of United Way British Columbia, underscores the significance of their mission: "In these trying weeks, where thousands of British Columbians find themselves evacuated or on alert, the United for BC Wildfire Recovery Fund emerges as a vital lifeline. We comprehend the acute trauma and stand steadfast in supporting the recovery process."

Amidst these challenges, heartwarming stories emerge as a testament to the fund's impact. During the Casper Creek fire crisis, when 700 individuals were forced to flee, United Way BC stepped in, providing critical funding to support their needs. Essential supplies, such as fuel for vehicles and generators, food, and other necessities were provided to 50 evacuees who sought refuge at the Lillooet Friendship Centre.

Beyond immediate relief, United Way BC champions the restoration of social fabric within communities. This includes support for programs nurturing mental wellness, welcome-back events, counselling services, and the revival of social spaces that foster community bonding. A notable instance is the aid extended to the Tsal'alh Nation, facilitating the revival of gardens, replenishing lost food supplies, and hosting a heartfelt feast to welcome back returning residents and express gratitude to firefighters.

The United for BC Wildfire Recovery Fund extends its helping hand to agencies engaged in immediate relief, long-term recovery, resilience-building, and preparedness for future adversities. Organizations stepping up to aid in wildfire relief are encouraged to apply for assistance through the portal at <https://resources.uwbc.ca/>.

Recognizing the urgency, United Way BC is committed to expediting approvals and distributing funds to areas of highest need.

The United for BC Wildfire Recovery Fund stands as a testament to unity, compassion, and resilience. Be Here. For each other. Individuals and businesses are urged to make a monetary donation to the fund at uwbc.ca/campaigns/wildfires.

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About United Way British Columbia – working with communities in BC's Interior, Lower Mainland and Central & Northern Vancouver Island

United Way supports healthy, caring and inclusive communities by strengthening vital connections that support people in need. Representing the six regions of Central and Northern Vancouver Island, East Kootenay, Lower Mainland, Southern Interior, Thompson Nicola Cariboo, and Trail and District, our organization serves a population of more than 4 million people, with a focus on kids and youth, seniors, poverty, mental health and food security.

www.uwbc.ca

Kim Winchell, United Way British Columbia Provincial Director of Community Impact & Investment, is available for media interviews.

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