This partnership brings together researchers, First Nation communities in Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta that were evacuated due to recent wildfires, and agencies responsible for conducting or providing support during these evacuations.

The goal is to examine how Aboriginal residents and communities have been affected by wildfire evacuations and identify ways to reduce negative impacts of wildfire evacuations on Aboriginal people.

It has been a busy first year for the Aboriginal Wildfire Evacuation Partnership!

After setting up the project in the spring, we began collecting information about the wildfire evacuations of participating communities. Thank you to research assistant Anneka Bakker for her role in collecting and synthesizing this information.

Two graduate students joined the project in Fall 2013 – welcome Henok Asfaw and Kyla Mottershead! In the fall and winter we met with Chief and Council and other key contacts in communities involved in the research.

We started collecting data this year, with Tara spending three weeks in Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation in March/April 2014 to interview residents and those who had leadership roles during the wildfire evacuation.

Communication to partnership members included three teleconferences - in June and September 2013 and February 2014. The partnership website is now live!

We look forward to the next year of the partnership. Best wishes for the spring and summer!

From left to right: Henok Asfaw, Amy Christianson, Kyla Mottershead, Tara McGee
**Research team**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dr. Tara McGee</th>
<th>Dr. Amy Christianson</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>University of Alberta</strong></td>
<td><strong>Canadian Forest Service</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tara is the academic lead for the partnership. Her research program focuses on the human dimensions of wildfires and other hazards. She supervises graduate students and teaches undergraduate courses on social science aspects of hazards. Tara is collecting data with Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation.</td>
<td>Amy is a Fire Social Scientist and works with Aboriginal communities on fire management. She will be collecting data with Onion Lake Cree Nation.</td>
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<th>Kyla Mottershead</th>
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<td>Kyla is an MA student in the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences. She will be collecting data with Dene Tha’ First Nation.</td>
<td>Henok is a PhD student in the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences. He will be collecting data with Deer Lake First Nation and Sandy Lake First Nation.</td>
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**Visit to Onion Lake Cree Nation**

In Spring 2013, Amy was contacted by emergency responders at Onion Lake who were responding to flooding and wildfire in their community. Two separate fires in the community had resulted in the evacuations of 10 families; however, only two were displaced to Lloydminster for one night. The flood resulted in disruptions and damage to the infrastructure of the community, but no evacuations. Tara and Amy were invited to come to the community to observe the emergency response efforts and attend a meeting of the flood response team. They were taken on a tour of the flooding and wildfire that occurred in the community. Thanks to Eugene and Adrian for their hospitality.

In Fall 2013, Amy participated with Onion Lake in a debrief on the flood response with outside agencies, including a discussion of a report written about the event. All the agencies had praise for the organization of the Onion Lake response; however it was acknowledged that communication between departments in the community as well as communication with outside agencies could be improved.
In September 2013, Tara met with Chief Connie Gray-McKay and councillors in Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation. During this meeting, Chief Connie and others provided information about the evacuation and suggestions for the data collection phase. Tara then flew to Deer Lake and Sandy Lake First Nations to meet with key contacts to learn about the wildfire evacuations. In Deer Lake, Tara met with Howard Meekis and members of the Deer Lake health centre to learn about the evacuation. Following a delay in the flight to Sandy Lake (due to poor weather), Tara met with fire chief Fabian Crowe and councillors to learn about wildfire evacuations of Sandy Lake First Nation.

Tara wishes to thank the MNR for flights in Northern Ontario and extremely valuable assistance. Thanks in particular to Lee Austen and George Page.

In November Kyla, Tara, and Amy met Linda Semansha, the Emergency Coordinator for Dene Tha’ First Nation in Edmonton to learn about the wildfire evacuation that took place in Meander River in July 2012. In February Kyla, Tara, and Amy were given the opportunity to meet with Dene Tha’ First Nation’s Chief Joe Pastion and several council members over dinner while they were visiting Edmonton. The research project was discussed and some information was provided to assist Kyla with her data collection in Meander River this summer.

In September 2013, Tara met with Chief Connie Gray-McKay and councillors in Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation. During this meeting, Chief Connie and others provided information about the evacuation and suggestions for the data collection phase. Tara then flew to Deer Lake and Sandy Lake First Nations to meet with key contacts to learn about the wildfire evacuations. In Deer Lake, Tara met with Howard Meekis and members of the Deer Lake health centre to learn about the evacuation. Following a delay in the flight to Sandy Lake (due to poor weather), Tara met with fire chief Fabian Crowe and councillors to learn about wildfire evacuations of Sandy Lake First Nation.

Tara wishes to thank the MNR for flights in Northern Ontario and extremely valuable assistance. Thanks in particular to Lee Austen and George Page.
In April 2014, Tara spent three weeks in Mishkeegogamang Ojibway Nation to learn about community members' wildfire evacuation experiences.

Before leaving for Mishkeegogamang, Tara contacted representatives in the three evacuation host communities (Sioux Lookout, Greenstone and Ignace) to learn about where evacuees stayed and services provided during the evacuations.

While in Mishkeegogamang, Tara was able to meet with people who had a range of experiences, including youths, parents with young children, single adults and Elders. Interviews were completed with community members who were evacuated to Sioux Lookout, Greenstone and Ignace, those who self-evacuated to Thunder Bay and Pickle Lake, and residents who stayed behind.

She also met with community members who were part of the team that were involved in carrying out the evacuation or providing support to residents.

Tara is currently transcribing the interviews, typing up her fieldwork notes, and will be analysing the data over the summer.

Tara wishes to extend her sincere thanks to Chief Connie Gray-McKay, staff and visitors of the Elders home (where Tara lived during her time in Mishkeegogamang), and the many residents who shared their wildfire evacuation experiences and knowledge.