

## First Nations in Alberta are helping Fort McMurray wildfire evacuees

As wildfires ravage the small city of Fort McMurray, mandatory evacuations were issued. This created a mass exodus along a single highway out of the city. First Nations along the route have created space in their hearts and communities for evacuees.

80,000 residents were forced to leave their homes. The wildfire continues to burn after it left a post-apocalyptic scene in its wake with more than 204,000 hectares of scorched earth behind. Many homes in Fort McMurray were destroyed. Most of the city's infrastructure has been shut down, including gas and electricity.

To make the mass evacuation easier for people, Fort McKay First Nation, a community of 417 people, has organized meals, gathered diapers and ensured people have their medication. Fort McKay is 50 kilometres north of Fort McMurray. Chief Jim Boucher said that this community has taken in around 3,000 people. However, fuel remains in short supply.

Several other First Nations have offered food, water and space to those fleeing the wildfires. Enoch Cree First Nation gave away free gas. Kapawe'no First Nation took a bus load of food to Fort McMurray and left with a busload full

of people. The generosity exemplified by indigenous communities during these times are reminiscent of generations past where Settlers were lost on the land without support.

Most of Fort McMurray is left without vital infrastructure, but Alberta Premier Rachel Notley said that they will provide a schedule for evacuee return within two weeks.