



Indigenous Police Chiefs of Ontario

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

IPC O Supports IFNA in Strengthening Indigenous Wildfire Response

The Indigenous Police Chiefs of Ontario (IPC O) deploy teams to help strengthen Indigenous-led wildfire response capacity across IFNA member nations

Thunder Bay, ON (August 14 2026) – Due to wildfire activity, Whitesand First Nation has been leading its own evacuation efforts. At the request of the community, the Independent First Nations Alliance (IFNA) has been offering extraordinary support through their Integrated Emergency Service Department. The Indigenous Police Chiefs of Ontario (IPC O), in partnership with the International Wildfire Alliance (IWA) and supporting agencies, have been working diligently to establish the necessary resources and partners that can supplement IFNA's response efforts.

IPC O recognizes the importance of firefighter training, as officers from IPC O member services are often the first on scene to fire service calls due to the large geographical area they cover. In 2025, through federal wildfire preparedness funding, IPC O was able to tap into federal financial resources and successfully train a cohort of 75 wildland firefighters to nationally and internationally recognized standards. The vision of this program was to develop a provincial roster of trained, certified, and deployment-ready Indigenous wildfire responders who could assist First Nations. Several members of this cohort from Lac Seul First Nations, Saugeen First Nations, Walpole Island First Nation and Nipissing First Nation are now deployed and gaining operational experience under the mentorship of Carmanah Wildfire Ltd. and U.S. wildfire specialists from the IWA, in support of IFNA. It represents a historic operational activation of First Nations-aligned wildfire capacity.

A result of the partnership between IFNA, IPC O, and the IWA is the deployment of the IPC O Incident Management Assistance and Training Team (IMATT) and the Response-Ready Wildland Firefighter Unit Crews. IMATT is a collaborative leadership team, comprised of eight (8) senior leaders, and provides resources, mentorship, and operational support to First Nation Incident Management Teams deployed to incidents. IMATT has played a key





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role throughout deployment in strengthening interagency coordination and supporting community protection priorities.

“Our objective is simple: we are here to support Independent First Nation Alliance’s teams and their response efforts,” said IPCO’s Chief Operating Officer, Ashley Russell-Taylor.

“This deployment is the first of its kind in Ontario and demonstrates the true effectiveness of a coordinated Indigenous-led model that safeguards community members, critical infrastructure, and traditional territories while advancing long-term wildfire capability for First Nations in Ontario,” said IPCO Executive Director Kai Liu.

IPCO would also like to recognize several other agencies that have helped make this operation possible: RCMP, IFNA’s Emergency Operations Centre, specialized suppression and values-protection teams, and collaboration with First Nations leadership, Indigenous Services Canada, UCCM Anishnaabe Police Service, Anishinabek Police Service, Lac Seul Police Service, Nishnawbe-Aski Police Service, the OPP, RCMP, and wildfire specialists across North America.

This is a powerful demonstration of what can be accomplished when First Nations collaborate to serve and support First Nations. While “we’re stronger when we’re united” reflects the foundation of IPCO, this initiative shows that the same principle extends across agencies and partners working together to support First Nations.

The Indigenous Police Chiefs of Ontario was established in 2019 and is comprised of the nine (9) self-administered First Nation police services in Ontario. IPCO works to ensure that the voices of the First Nation policing services can be heard, and their unique needs can be addressed with professionalism and care.

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