

SUMMARY: IFNA and KI Human Rights Complaint on Fire Services

1. What is Happening

Independent First Nation Alliance (“IFNA”) and Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (“KI”) made a human rights complaint against Canada regarding Canada’s policies for funding fire services on reserves. The complaint alleges Canada discriminates against First Nations peoples living on reserves because Canada does not fund on-reserve fire services equitably when compared to similarly situated settler communities.

2. Why Make a Human Rights Complaint

Similarly to First Nations child welfare and policing, Canada has made a policy choice to fund fire safety on reserve. According to these policies, Canada arbitrarily limits the amount of funding available directly from Canada for fire services. The funding available is severely inadequate and results in tragic losses, especially in remote communities, such as KI and other IFNA communities.

IFNA and KI argue that:

- Canada has chosen to provide fire services on reserve by implementing funding policies for fire services.
- In doing so, Canada is required to ensure that the funding allows for fire services that are not discriminatory, culturally appropriate, and in accordance with legislated standards.
- However, the policies that Canada created are discriminatory, do not meet legislated standards for fire safety, and do not allow for culturally appropriate and effective fire services.

3. What we are Asking the Tribunal for

IFNA and KI are seeking:

1. Funding agreements that allow for culturally appropriate, effective, and sustainable fire services that meet legislated standards.
2. Compensation for community members’ pain and suffering, and compensation for Canada’s wilful and reckless actions.

4. Why This Matters

The deadly consequences of Canada’s fire service policy decision is a predictable that Canada has refused to address. First Nations people who live on-reserve are ten times more likely to die in a fire than non-First Nations peoples. If successful, this human rights complaint will force Canada to fix their deadly policy, provide sustainable and equitable funding for fire services, and pay compensation to First Nations people.