



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
**FireSmart**<sup>TM</sup>

# Annual Report

## 2024

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## Message From Committee Chair

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Throughout 2024, FireSmart BC continued to progress towards our vision of “a wildfire resilient province where everyone works, plays, and lives FireSmart.” With another remarkable year concluded, it is with great pride that we share this annual report celebrating our successes.

The purpose of this report is to provide our partners with a high-level overview of what the FireSmart BC team accomplished in 2024 under the strategic guidance of the BC FireSmart Committee. The report provides transparency and open communication regarding FireSmart BC’s work throughout the year and quantifies the program’s achievements.

Notably, the FireSmart Professional network (Local FireSmart Representatives, Wildfire Mitigation Specialists, and FireSmart Coordinators) continues to see exponential growth. Through the FireSmart Community Funding and Supports program, 208 positions have been funded or partially subsidized in communities across BC to employ FireSmart professionals within First Nations, municipalities, and regional districts. The growth and success of the FireSmart BC program would not be possible without the passion that these FireSmart professionals bring to their communities.

FireSmart BC’s strategic themes (evidence, access, education, collaboration, structure, and engagement) continue to enable FireSmart BC to better serve the residents of BC. It is my hope that this report demonstrates our ongoing commitment to reduce the negative impacts of fire for everyone in the province through FireSmart.

On behalf of the BC FireSmart Committee and the greater FireSmart BC team, thank you for supporting and contributing to a wildfire-resilient province where everyone is aware of FireSmart, understands their role, accepts responsibility, and takes action.

Hannah Swift

**FireSmart Program Lead | BC FireSmart Committee Chair**

## Program Vision, Mission, and Strategy

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In spring 2022, the BC FireSmart Committee (BCFSC) completed work on the FireSmart BC Strategic Plan 2022-2025. This document, which was the result of over a year of planning, consultation, research, and collaborative work, has been a foundational piece to guide the committee and program's activities over the past three years. Among its contents are the program's vision, mission, and strategic goal. These key statements, which can be found below, are critical in contextualizing the overall direction of the BCFSC. This strategic direction will be reviewed and advanced in 2025.

### OUR VISION

A wildfire resilient province, where everyone works, plays and lives FireSmart.

### OUR MISSION

Build wildfire resiliency and reduce the negative impacts of fire for everyone in the province through FireSmart.

### OUR STRATEGIC GOAL

Everyone in the province is aware of FireSmart, understands their role, accepts responsibility and takes action to increase wildfire resiliency.

In addition to these guiding statements, the BCFSC's activities are framed within a set of themes that give direction to the strategy and allow the team to identify priorities, build work plans, and set goals and objectives.

## Our Strategic Themes



### EVIDENCE

Integrate research and information management to support evidence-based decision making.



### ACCESS

Recognize unique needs and capacities to facilitate equitable access and outcomes.



### EDUCATION

Targeted education, training and communication that empowers and mobilizes.



### COLLABORATION

Collaborate with partners to build capacity, trust, and public confidence.



### STRUCTURE

Build an aligned, sustainable and inclusive organizational structure.



### ENGAGEMENT

Engage with all levels of Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments to support and implement policy, planning and funding.

## BC FireSmart Committee Update

The BCFSC, in 2024, consists of eleven voting agencies (14 voting members) and one advisory agency. There are three standing committees that support the work of the larger committee. These standing committees operate under separate terms of reference, and while they are not decision-making authorities, they guide decision-making and provide recommendations to the BCFSC on future actions and growth opportunities.

### The 2024 standing committees were:

- Standing Committee on Research
  - » Co-Chairs: Helena Marken (FNESS) and Eric McKay (BCWS)
- Standing Committee - Indigenous Outreach Alliance
  - » Chair: Amanda Reynolds (FNESS)
- Standing Committee on Strategic Direction
  - » Chair: BC Wildfire Service - Prevention

In 2023, an external party conducted a full review of the BCFSC governance structure and membership and provided recommendations to BCWS regarding structure to accommodate consistent and sustainable growth. The recommendations are still being reviewed by upper-level decision-makers.

## 2024 Program Highlights

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2024 was another successful and exciting year for FireSmart BC: one that saw the continued growth of a number of major programs, another sold-out Wildfire Resiliency and Training Summit, and increased public attention and awareness.

1. **FireSmart BC's flagship programs continued to grow.**
2. **Our annual campaign told everyone to do their part.**
3. **The FireSmart BC Wildfire Resiliency and Training Summit went north.**
4. **The Home Partners Program rebranded: new name, same growth.**
5. **The FireSmart BC network expanded exponentially.**
6. **An increased focus on partnerships opened new doors.**

## Major Program Update

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The below updates are intended to provide a high-level overview of key events and initiatives from our 2024 Work Plan.

### Programming

The programming category represents the major internal and external programs that facilitate the delivery of FireSmart throughout the province. Programs such as the newly rebranded Wildfire Mitigation Program and the FireSmart BC Plant Program provide the public direct resources and tools to make their homes more resilient. Whereas the Local FireSmart Collective (formerly the FCNRP) and Wildfire Community Preparedness Day (WCPD) focus on neighbourhood and community resiliency.

2024 marked a transitional year for a number of these key programs. The FireSmart Plant Program saw continued growth with 56 garden centres participating and actively involved. A notable win was seeing the first major chain retailer join the Plant Program: North Saanich Canadian Tire. The Plant Program was also added to the FireSmart Coordinator job profile and included as an eligible activity within CRI FireSmart Community Funding & Supports (FCFS), allowing funding to go towards the Plant Program.

Formerly, the FireSmart Canada Home Partners Program, the Wildfire Mitigation Program (WMP) is now a provincially managed program with its own assessment platform, course deliveries, and support team. Significant work was done in 2024 to build the new brand, assessment capacity, and digital tools (FireSmart BC Platform) to deliver the program. The WMP enters 2025 set to markedly increase home assessment and certification volume, playing a critical role in the resiliency landscape.

Rounding out these programs is the FireSmart Neighborhood Recognition Program (FCNRP). This program continued to grow incrementally in 2024 but is also transitioning into a new name and BC-centric approach. The new Local FireSmart Collective program design, development, and rollout will be a major focus for the year ahead.

Delivering the above initiatives and on the frontlines of home and community resiliency are our FireSmart Professional network (Local FireSmart Representatives, Wildfire Mitigation Specialists, and FireSmart Coordinators). This group of dedicated individuals continued to grow and receive increased training, resources, and focus. With a network of over 1,400 of these professionals across the province, our collective ability to deliver FireSmart throughout the province continues to expand.

## Partnerships & Events

FireSmart BC continues to prioritize partnerships and events as key drivers of wildfire resiliency, guided by the Collaboration theme in its strategic plan. Internal partnerships include members of the BCFSC, while external partnerships encompass organizations such as BCAA, the insurance industry, other sectors, associations, and potential new collaborators aligned with FireSmart BC's mission and strategic goals.

We continued to collaborate with our internal BCFSC partners more intentionally and formally, leveraging joint communications initiatives to enhance outreach. The FNESS FireSmart BC team made significant progress in their portfolio, including completing the first year of the new Indigenous Outreach Alliance Committee. This committee focuses on strengthening relationships and collaboration with First Nations communities, with membership and engagement steadily increasing over the past year.

FireSmart BC's engagement with Indigenous communities expanded significantly this year, with over 33 education and outreach visits to First Nation communities reaching an estimated 1,700 people. Ember participated in 15 of these events, helping to enhance community connections. Additionally, updates to the CRI FCFS program were implemented to remove barriers for First Nations communities and increase access.

In 2024, FireSmart BC's newly formed partnership working group established processes and systems to evaluate and align external partnerships with organizational goals. The team developed and launched a dedicated partnership webpage and package to guide potential partners effectively. They also identified over 20 potential companies and industries for future collaboration, along with a separate list of 25 insurance-specific organizations for consideration. Additionally, they began creating tailored materials to engage the insurance industry more effectively.

The BCAA FireSmart BC partnership moved into its second year out of a three-year agreement. Funding from this partnership supported the creation of two FireSmart positions in the Lillooet Tribal Council and several outreach and education initiatives with local governments and First Nations communities.

The 2024 FireSmart BC Wildfire Resiliency and Training Summit was a resounding success, centered around the theme Recover, Rebuild, Prepare. The event brought together over 600 wildfire professionals, industry experts, and community leaders to network, share knowledge, and enhance collective efforts to reduce wildfire risks. Indigenous perspectives and voices were integrated throughout the Summit, enriching discussions and fostering inclusivity.

The event also featured two award ceremonies: the inaugural Indigenous Wildland Firefighter Honour Ceremony and the Lynn Orstad Award, celebrating outstanding contributions to wildfire resiliency and community safety.



## Research

Aligned with the Evidence theme of the strategic plan, wildfire resiliency and FireSmart research remained a top priority in 2024, with insights from these initiatives shaping and guiding the organization's work. To support knowledge sharing, a new and improved Research Hub webpage was launched, providing access to findings from various research projects. Additionally, FireSmart BC conducted its fourth annual Public Opinion Survey, featuring an expanded question set and oversampling of Indigenous respondents to ensure more inclusive insights.

Several significant research initiatives were highlights of 2024. In partnership with FPIInnovations, FireSmart BC completed the fourth year of the WUI Research Program. While there were no deployments to active wildfires this year, the program made considerable strides in strengthening relationships with key partners, improving its standard operating procedures, and gaining greater visibility through partners and public speaking engagements.

Following the 2023 Grouse Complex wildfires in the Okanagan, FireSmart BC partnered with the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction (ICLR) and FPIInnovations to analyze the McDougall Creek, Clarke Creek, and Walroy Lake wildfires. Findings, including a comprehensive report and actionable insights, were shared via FireSmart BC's digital platforms.

Collaboration extended to the Government of the Northwest Territories through the Northwest Territories Structure Ignition Project in Fort Providence, launched in June 2024. This multi-year initiative focuses on deepening understanding of structure ignition risks, with findings and a case study video published on FireSmart BC's digital channels.

Progress also continued on the development of a Wildfire Ember Simulator, a joint effort with the University of Victoria, Camosun College, and the BC Wildfire Service's Research and Innovation Branch, culminating in the completion of a phase-two full-scale prototype.

The Wildfire Resiliency Research Communities, including BCFSC and other provincial and national groups, maintained regular meetings to foster partnerships and advance collaboration in resiliency and mitigation both nationally and internationally. Additionally, a new guidelines document on Critical Water Infrastructure was developed, approved by BCFSC, and published through FireSmart BC's digital channels, enhancing wildfire preparedness in vital areas. Finally, a new firewood shed assessment and guide were developed to support rural and First Nation communities in reducing wildfire risks.

## **Education**

In 2024, we continued to expand the reach and impact of the new FireSmart BC Education Program, designed to introduce students from grades K-12 to FireSmart concepts and teach them how to make homes and communities more resilient to wildfire. This was achieved through a combination of digital and traditional marketing efforts, alongside community engagement initiatives such as presenting at educational conferences and professional day workshops.

Highlights of our marketing efforts include the successful launch of the inaugural “Classroom Contest,” which attracted nearly 40 entries from schools across the province. Feedback from educators was continuously gathered to ensure the program remains accessible and inclusive.

To enhance another key initiative, the Library Program, underwent a thorough audit in response to partner feedback. As a result, the program’s information package and library webpage were updated to be clearer and more user-friendly for audiences. We also reached out to Local FireSmart Coordinators to evaluate the uptake of both the Library Program and Education Program within their communities. The data collected is currently under review to inform future improvements.

Ember the FireSmart Fox, FireSmart BC’s official mascot, continued to be an integral part of our outreach. Ember participated in numerous FireSmart community events and school presentations, fostering engagement with children and families. Additionally, Ember was featured in new resources to further support wildfire education efforts. We are in the early stages of developing a new FireSmart children’s book about wildfire featuring Ember, further enriching the program’s resources.

Following an accessibility audit of FireSmart’s resources and materials, we have begun implementing the recommendations. These updates, which include improvements to both the website and physical/digital resources, aim to enhance accessibility and ensure greater intersectional representation across all materials.

## **Communications**

2024 saw both incremental growth and notable leaps forward for FireSmart’s marketing and communications. Our overall brand awareness grew by 5% to 60% of the province having a base level of awareness of FireSmart. Our digital marketing channels continued their ongoing growth and effectiveness, working cohesively to deliver social media content, monthly newsletters, magazine articles, and the Get FireSmart Podcast. Our social media growth was especially notable, with average account growth of over 60% and more than doubling our post engagement and impressions (reach).

The FireSmart BC website continued to serve as a crucial hub for both resident information and internal resources. Website traffic increased substantially by 70%, with over 340,000 total sessions recorded throughout the year. Significant advancements were also made to the website's accessibility features, and new pages dedicated to research and partnerships were added.

The 2024 Annual Campaign was highly successful. The Our Part, Your Part campaign set new standards for integrated messaging throughout the fire season and overall campaign performance. The campaign was integrated across broadcast media (television, radio, press release), out-of-home (billboard), and digital platforms. The campaign ran from May through the September long weekend, with creative elements updated as the fire season intensified. It was complemented by additional unpaid content throughout the spring and summer to further demonstrate examples of "Our Parts" and "Your Parts." Notably, the campaign saw a 270% increase in total reach with only a 30% increase in media expenditure. The campaign achieved 74 million total impressions, with high-performing click-through and conversion (resource downloads) rates.

## **2024 Budget**

Highlights regarding FireSmart BC program area expenditures for the 2024/25 fiscal year budget can be requested at [chair@firesmartbc.ca](mailto:chair@firesmartbc.ca).

## 2024 Key Metrics

The below numbers represent key tracked metrics for the 2024 calendar year.

BRAND AWARENESS (As Per Jan 2025 Public Perceptions Survey)			
	Results	Yearly % Change	Absolute Change
Baseline Brand Awareness	60%	9.1%	5
Aware, not familiar	23%	-11.5%	-3
Aware, somewhat familiar	25%	13.6%	3
Aware, very familiar	12%	71.4%	5

FIRESMART PROGRAMS (as of December 31, 2024)			
	Results	Yearly % Change	Absolute Change
Recognized Neighbourhoods*	150	-27%	-55
FireSmart Coordinators (Total Number)	129	96%	63
HPP - Participating Agencies	113	60%	38
HPP - WMS (Total)	352	83.3%	160
HPP - Assessments Delivered (Total)	2950	60%	1,105
HPP - Homes Certified (total)	43	59%	13
Plant Program Partners	56	12%	6
LFRs Trained (2024)	307	21%	54
Total LFRs**	900	-16%	-166
Total FireSmart Network (LFS, WMS, FSC FCNRP)	1531	0.1%	2

\* Finalized numbers not available until March 31st, total number expected to be higher

\*\*Decreases in LFR numbers were primarily a result of removing a high-number of inactive LFRs from the system.

<b>SOCIAL MEDIA (as of December 31, 2024)</b>			
	<b>Results</b>	<b>Yearly % Change</b>	<b>Absolute Change</b>
X Followers	3343	3.0%	97
Instagram Followers	2779	60.6%	1,049
Facebook Followers	8640	51.4%	2,935
Facebook Fans	4647	71.4%	1,936
Total organic impressions	2,170,681	130.9%	1,230,481
Total organic engagements	65,829	167.6%	41,233

<b>WEBSITE (as of December 31, 2024)</b>			
	<b>Results</b>	<b>Yearly % Change</b>	<b>Absolute Change</b>
Total Sessions (hits)	341,864	73.5%	144,864
Unique Pageviews	596,684	70.0%	245,684
Magazine Articles	13	-13.3%	-2
Email subscribers	4670	62.6%	1,798

<b>PODCAST (as of December 31, 2024)</b>			
	<b>Results</b>	<b>Yearly % Change</b>	<b>Absolute Change</b>
Total Downloads	3,718	16.1%	515
Downloads/Episode	531	299.2%	398
Number of episodes released	7	-50.0%	-7

## Looking Ahead

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The FireSmart BC program experienced significant growth in 2024 due to a strong strategic plan, a unified Committee, and an increased capacity to deliver programming for British Columbians. This growth was further enhanced by the expansion of both the FireSmart BC internal team and the province-wide FireSmart network.

The upcoming year will capitalize on this momentum through the ongoing expansion and growth of our core programs and campaigns while also developing new initiatives, such as the Local FireSmart Collective and a Pilot Program for Hardware/Building retailers.

The severe wildfire seasons in recent years and international events continue to emphasize the importance of proactive wildfire preparedness and prevention. To address the escalating wildfire threat due to climate change, we will continue to grow and implement programs focused on strengthening our collective defenses. We are committed to ongoing FireSmart education and awareness initiatives, empowering residents and communities to take action and enhance their wildfire resilience.

Thank you again for playing your part in building a FireSmart BC. We look forward to continuing to serve you.