

Kananaskis – Taking Action Within Communities

Kevin Topolnicki

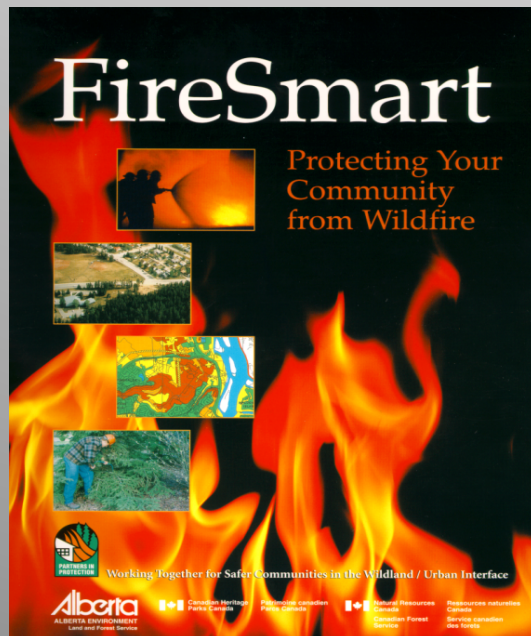
Kevin is a Wildfire Technologist with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development and currently works out of the Southern Rockies Management Area in Calgary. He has been with Department for almost 25 years and has spent time throughout the province in various postings. Kevin has an extensive background with FireSmart and prescribed fire and has been working with and promoting FireSmart and the WUI disciplines to communities, local municipalities, improvement districts and other interest groups for over 10 years. He is also one of the founding members of the Kananaskis Improvement District (KID) FireSmart Committee.

Join Kevin to discuss integrating community leaders with resource managers to achieve a successful approach to FireSmart and community protection.

Kananaskis – Taking Action Within Communities

Many communities face a uphill battle engaging residents in the adoption of FireSmart principles in and around their properties. However, in the Kananaskis region many of the area residents and local businesses have taken action to protect themselves from the threat of wildfire.

Hear how community advocates, businesses and government officials have worked together to achieve results from holding evening information sessions, implementing stewardship day events, conducting fuel modification projects to the forming of a FireSmart Committee and how similar tactics can be used to promote behavior changes in your community.

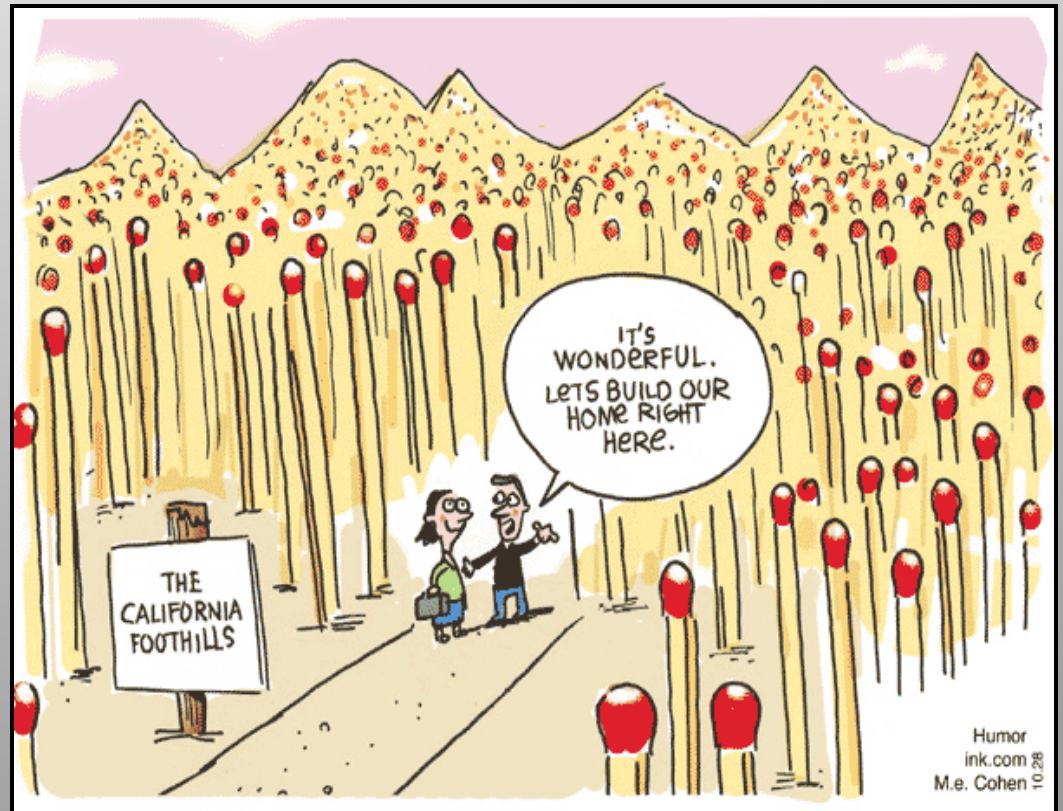


The Reality of Today's Concerns

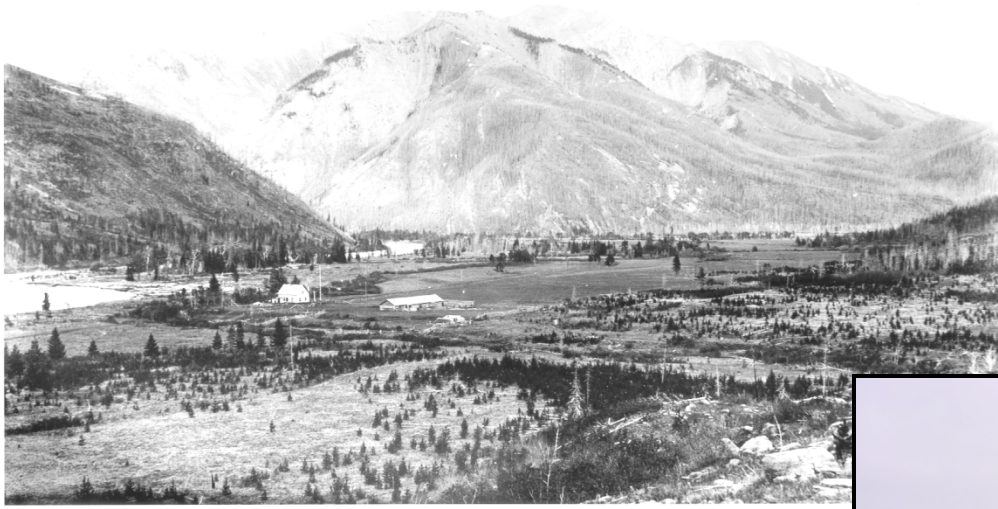
With the removal of fire from our landscape and the pressures of people moving into the rural environment government agencies are under more pressure to ensure that impacts of wildfire are minimized and that communities are prepared for an incident.

- **Increasing Development**
- **Increasing Fuel Loads**
- **Higher Values at Risk**
- **Public Perception**
- **Multiple Stakeholders**
- **Increased Pressure on the landscape (recreation and tourism)**

All Stakeholder **MUST** work together to accomplish all the goals for a FireSmart community and their surrounding landscapes



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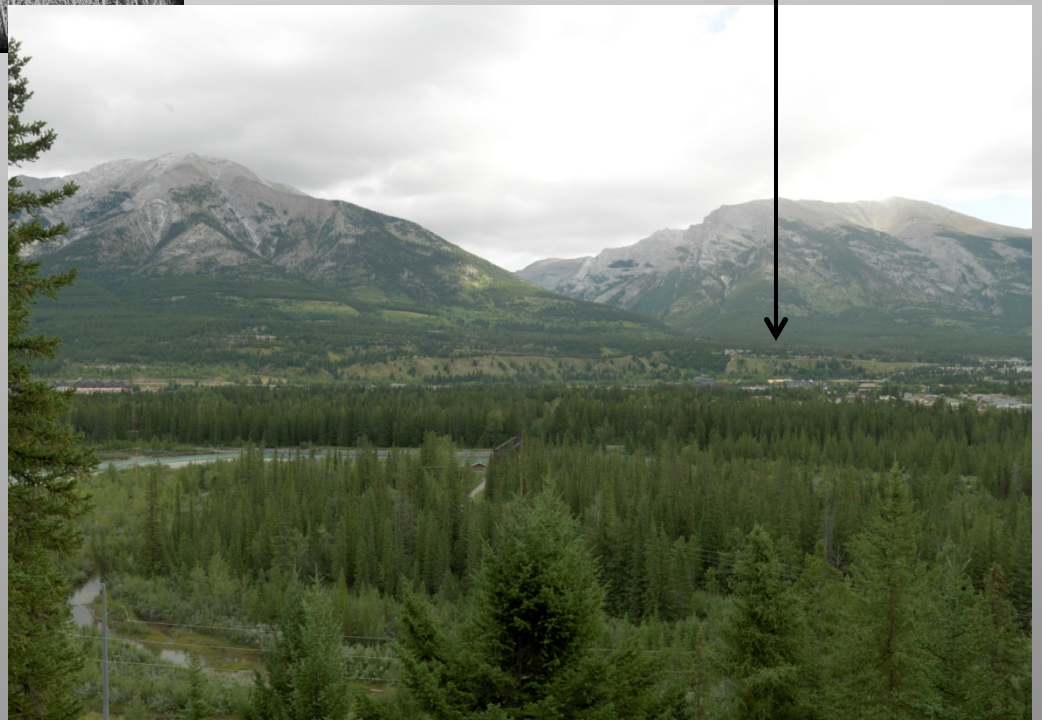
Increasing Fuel Loads

2002



Increased Development

Town of Canmore



Increased Pressure From Individuals Moving Into the Rural Environment



It will never happen to me mentality

Where Does Your Organization Stand?

Assess

What is the climate in your own organization?

- Is there an openness to include multiple parties in the planning process

Commitment

- Is there strength for commitment from the management level?
- Leaders create an atmosphere that support personnel in their efforts
- Is there an openness to new ideas and taking a few risks
- There must be the ability to experiment through trial and error
 - This includes being supportive even when mistakes are made



Success can best be achieved
when an organization
understands and promotes
multi-party relationships

Trust and Relationship Building From Within

Interagency cooperation is an extremely important part of the process

- It provides a framework for more strategic decision-making
 - Determine how decisions will be made, at what level and the role each organization will play
 - Some agencies may be better positioned to handle certain tasks or contribute differently to building partnerships
 - By acknowledging limitations early in the process, influence on outcomes can be more easily managed



Make Good Use of Your Resources

Create new directives that encourage interagency cooperation point to the value of a team approach.



Use the established credibility and trust within a community already established by another agency.

- local fire departments

Coordinate the agency message, it is an effective way to promote programs because the public does not always differentiate between agency boundaries and management responsibilities.

With a coordinated strategy, agencies are better positioned to consider the community's concerns and clearly show how multiple parties can work together.

Anticipated Outcomes



- When the strength of agencies is integrated, the power of the team (and its work) can be legitimized throughout the organization.
 - Interagency planning results in a decision-making structure that makes sense to the community, particularly as the public sees managers speaking in a unified voice.
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- Miscommunication and turf battles will likely dissipate as agencies accomplish the job together.
 - It becomes easier for citizens to have a role in the planning process.
 - As personnel are given latitude for planning activities they gain more authority to provide leadership.
 - Greater recognition is given for teamwork as well as personnel who possess critical communication and partnership-building skills.

It's About People

In many communities, the most relevant problems are local problems and anyone who participates has a personal interest.

Partnerships and involving the community helps all agencies focus on the most relevant values, and can help the public understand the range of considerations different agencies must take into account.

Working with community members on common concerns often result in more credible plans that are likely to gain broad support.



It's About People



- Ultimately, forest health and fire management are about much more than managing wildfires and protecting homes.
 - At the core of these programs is the need to understand people and respond to their concerns.

Accommodating a range of values can be challenging, but the importance of these issues within a community cannot be ignored:

- Recreation
- Watersheds
- Ecological conditions, etc.

Find The Leaders

Begin by recognizing work already being done by individuals in the community or is underway in local organizations. This includes seeking out people who are respected leaders.



Simply put – today's natural resource problems and concerns are too big for anyone to tackle alone. Therefore, it is logical to work with others to jointly develop projects the public and community members care about.

Coordinated efforts encourage skilled community leaders to draw on their networks and build support for projects.

Encourage Local Initiative

Take advantage of opportunities that bring people together. Ongoing projects or new activities can become the basis for productive relationships; even adversarial relationships can soften when people work together as a group.

When agencies support the local economy it gives any project a higher level of credibility within the community.



Local commercial interests also make valuable partners.

They often provide the infrastructure necessary to accomplish project objectives.

A local focus can create a sense of ownership and a feeling of control among residents. At the same time, communities can become more resilient to wildfire.



Anticipated Outcomes

- Recognizing and acknowledging local problems demonstrate a commitment to communities.
- When the emphasis is on issues important to citizens, stakeholders accept joint responsibility for creating a fire-safe landscape.
- Agency personnel can cultivate a group of willing partners who carry the message to others.
- Agencies often respond more readily to solutions when agreement is developed through community consensus.
- Groups working together give people the opportunity to work directly with the local resource managers on issues they care about.



Working Together



Working together is more than holding a meeting or sharing a plan for review.

- It is about building relationships

Get to know people and understand their views, giving everyone a chance to voice their concerns or ideas and create an atmosphere in which individuals can find common values among many positions.

Start with people you know and trust!

- It makes sense to build on existing relationships and trust, new relationships will be established as others join the process

Working Together



- In some cases, relationship building might be the single best early outcome
- It might take awhile to get projects accomplished on the ground, but the goal of working together is that it will eventually pay off in agreement
- Over time, the power of the group will get things accomplished; having struggled through the first one, other projects will be easier as you build on the experience

- Without trust the entire process will be an uphill battle.
- Trust is an attribute that exists in an individual, usually towards another individual person or group.
- Most often it derives from personal experiences or observations.
- Trust is the anticipation that something will be forth coming; essentially a willingness to rely on someone to fulfill expectations.
- Be honest and open, if a mistake was made own up to it and make the necessary changes so it doesn't happen again!

BUILD TRUST



BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Trustworthy Qualities are often Measured by:



Competence: Belief in the managers' ability to make good decisions and implement practices safely and effectively.

Fairness and equity: Belief that managers are sincere and have undertaken genuine efforts to engage citizens about plans and decisions. Belief that the individual will act in the best interest of the community.

Shared values: Managers are perceived to have the same concerns and priorities as those who trust them. Belief that the individual has integrity, is reliable, and pays attention to local places that are important stakeholders.



Trust is generally considered the most important factor in reaching agreement and accomplishing management objectives on the ground.

Trust is built on two levels:

- In personal relationships with stakeholders, and
- By agencies building credibility within the community

From a personal standpoint, it is your actions and professional competence by which most people will judge the sincerity of your efforts.

Of particular importance to the community is having confidence in agency personnel to implement practices.

It is clear that cooperation is made possible by trustworthy personal relationships at the local level.

It is the ability to “say what you mean and do what you say”!

Moving Forward

Identify a small area within a community that can be used as a test site for a fuel modification project – removal of dead, downed and diseased trees along with pruning and ground fuels clean-up.

Small Scale Management Activities

In many communities, informal interactions regularly occur in which trust is built through mutual experience and successful implementation of low-risk activities.

In essence, trust evolves over time as participants interact and move gradually toward modest local projects.

Of course, even small projects can be complicated and occasional setbacks to occur, but small wins continue to incrementally build trust among participants.

Often, simply getting to know and working together leads to a positive result.

The trust accrued tends to establish a basis for the next project or decision.



Small Wins Approach

Effective Communication

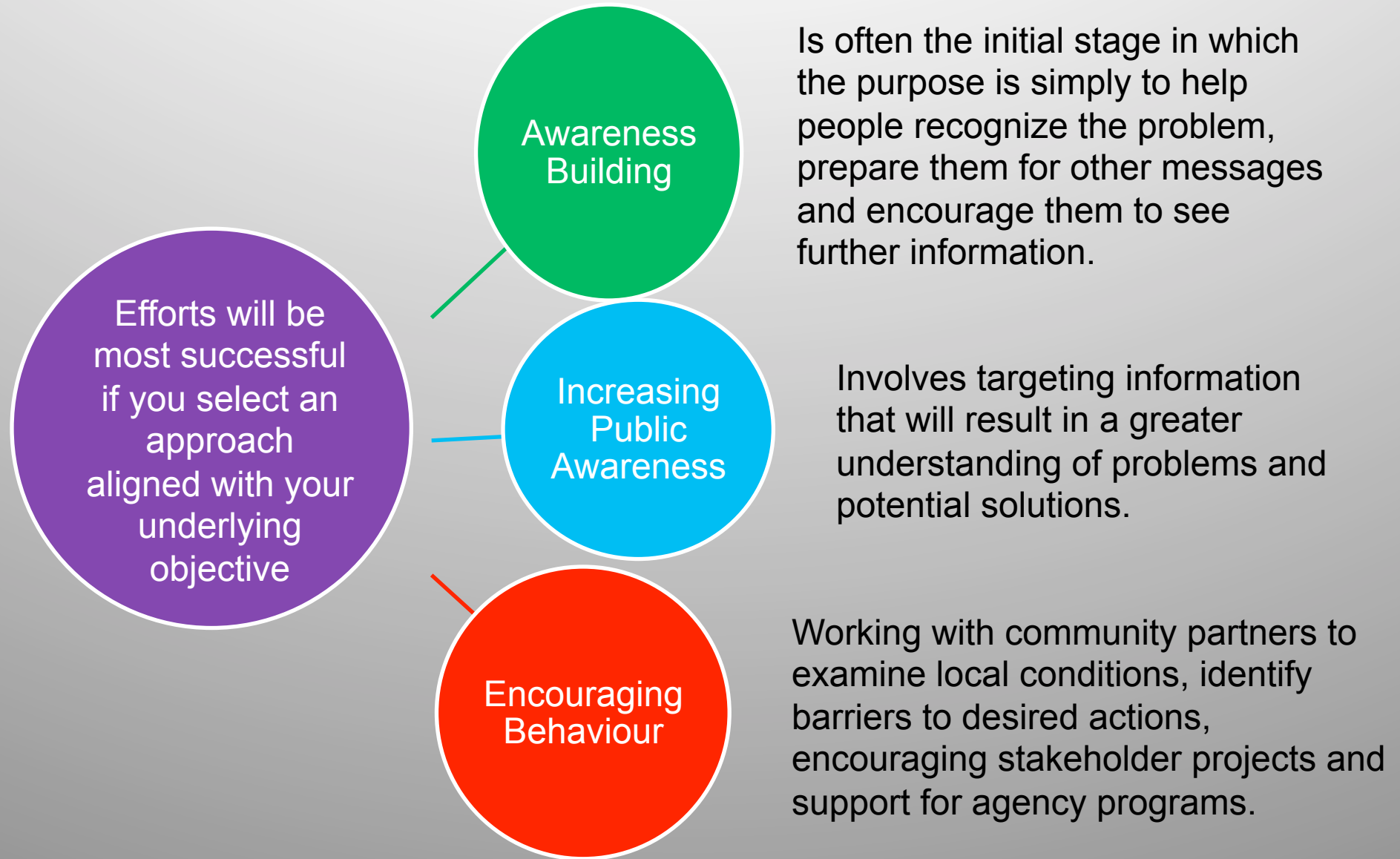
Effective communication goes beyond using standardized tools to provide information.

- Success is a result of both the information itself and the method of delivery
- The particular method used is based on the purpose of the communication and the particular audience



A word cloud inside a large oval, featuring various communication methods and media. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with some words appearing more frequently or in larger fonts than others. The words include: face-to-face, media, townhall, facebook, in-person, television, info-sessions, posters, twitter, newspaper, meetings, radio, email, and communicate.

Three Basic Levels of Communication



Communicate with a Purpose

Pre-Project Communication

This stage is about building understanding of existing conditions and helping stakeholders gain knowledge into the overall objectives.

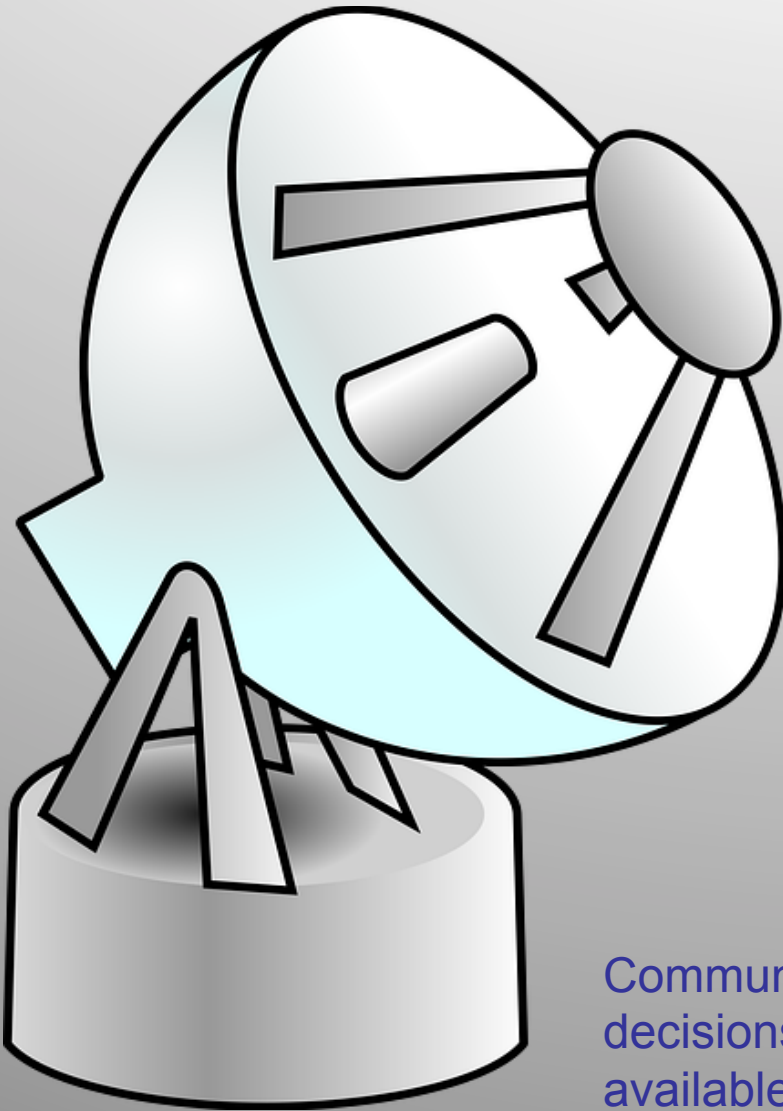
Communication During the Project

Maintain good communication throughout the entire project ensuring everyone is kept up to date on progress and all events.

Post Project

Maintain communications even after the project is complete to maintain relations and trust within the community.

Communications efforts are important during all stages and decisions made in one phase often influence the options available in other phases.



Acknowledgments

Kananaskis FireSmart Committee

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Derek Small

Derek is a recreational cabin lease-holder within the Kananaskis Improvement District (KID). As a resident of KID, Derek is a founding member of the KID FireSmart Committee and a member of the Partners in Protection representing community members. Derek is self-educated in the realm of FireSmart and does NOT have any formal training with regards to forestry or protection of forests. Derek views his work on the committee as an opportunity to facilitate two-way communication between residents and FireSmart professionals and thus support the focus of the Wildland Urban Interface initiatives in KID. Working with the committee, Derek provides input into how community members can help initiate programs supportive of being a FireSmart community in a wilderness setting.

Derek will be describing the road travelled and the progress underway by the residents of KID as they continue on the path to being a FireSmart community.

Join Derek to discuss how the Kananaskis residents are moving down this path and to share experiences or ideas you might have regarding your community.

Kananaskis – Taking Action Within Communities

Shawn Polley

Shawn is the Chief Administrative Officer for the Kananaskis Improvement District (KID) and is one of the founding members of the KID FireSmart committee since its inception in January 2008. Shawn has a 21 year professional municipal fire department and administration background serving the Kananaskis Improvement District and Emergency Services as an officer and then Fire Chief. Shawn is self-educated in the realm of FireSmart and does not have any formal training with regards to forestry or the protection of forests. Shawn views his ability to liaison between the Government of Alberta, municipal government and local stakeholders using partnerships and collaboration as a cornerstone in reaching successful outcomes.

Working within a committee structure, Shawn will discuss how individual strengths pull together to reach successful FireSmart community outcomes as well as discussing where the Kananaskis Improvement District has achieved success, where partnerships are celebrated and where challenges lay ahead.