



**TOURISM EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS**



WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

Indigenous Tourism Emergency Preparedness Discussion Forum

Discussion Forum Date:

February 2026



**TOURISM INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA**

**ASSOCIATION DE L'INDUSTRIE
TOURISTIQUE DU CANADA**



Introduction

The Indigenous tourism in-person session brought together participants from Indigenous communities, tourism operators, and regional stakeholders to explore emergency preparedness and response in remote and tourism-dependent regions. The discussion drew on recent experiences across regions, highlighting the growing scale and unpredictability of events such as wildfires, extreme weather, and infrastructure disruptions.

Participants explored the systems, partnerships, and resources that support effective emergency management, with particular attention to communication, coordination, and local response capacity. While examples of strong collaboration were noted, participants identified ongoing gaps in integrating tourism into emergency planning and ensuring consistent access to timely and reliable information.

A key focus throughout the session was the importance of approaches that reflect the realities of Indigenous and remote communities. This includes incorporating cultural knowledge, addressing language and accessibility needs, and developing community-driven strategies. The role of the tourism sector was also discussed in the context of both supporting emergency response efforts and maintaining visitor safety during crises.





Discussion Highlights: What We Heard

Emergency Preparedness in Remote and Indigenous Communities

Participants described the growing complexity of emergency events and the compounding challenges faced by remote and Indigenous communities. Geographic isolation, limited infrastructure, and reliance on constrained transportation networks significantly affect response capacity and recovery efforts.

Challenges

Geographic Isolation and Limited Infrastructure

Remote locations and limited transportation routes restrict access to emergency services and complicate evacuation efforts.

Increasing Frequency and Complexity of Emergencies

Communities are managing overlapping events, such as wildfires and severe weather, placing strain on response systems.

Limited Access to Essential Services

Constraints in healthcare, emergency response capacity, and supply chains increase vulnerability during crises.

Opportunities

Tailored Emergency Planning

Developing community-specific plans that reflect geographic and operational realities can improve response effectiveness.

Strengthening Local Response Capacity

Investing in local resources and capabilities can reduce reliance on external support.

Scenario-Based Planning

Using case studies and modeling can enhance preparedness and awareness of potential risks.



Communication Systems and Information Sharing

Effective communication was consistently identified as a critical component of emergency preparedness and response. Participants emphasized the importance of timely, accurate, and accessible information, particularly in regions with limited connectivity.

Challenges

Limited Connectivity and Infrastructure

Poor cellular coverage and internet access hinder the dissemination of real-time information.

Inconsistent Messaging and Coordination

Gaps in coordination between agencies and stakeholders can lead to confusion and delays.

Barriers to Accessibility

Information is not always available in culturally appropriate formats or languages.

Opportunities

Multi-Channel Communication Approaches

Leveraging a combination of digital tools, radio, satellite systems, and local networks can improve reach.

Strengthening Coordination Mechanisms

Clear communication protocols and defined channels can enhance consistency and reliability.

Culturally Relevant Communication

Ensuring information is accessible, trusted, and tailored to community needs can improve engagement and response.



Integration of Cultural and Traditional Knowledge

The integration of Indigenous knowledge and practices was identified as essential to effective and inclusive emergency management. Participants emphasized the value of combining traditional and Western approaches across all phases of emergency planning.

* Challenges

Limited Integration in Formal Systems

Cultural knowledge is not consistently incorporated into emergency management frameworks.

Language and Cultural Barriers

Communication approaches may not reflect the needs of diverse communities.

* Opportunities

Holistic Planning Approaches

Combining traditional knowledge with conventional emergency management practices can strengthen outcomes.

Respect for Indigenous Data and Knowledge Systems

Ensuring culturally appropriate use of information supports trust and collaboration.

Education and Awareness

Integrating cultural knowledge into training and public education can enhance preparedness for both residents and visitors.





Role of the Tourism Sector in Emergency Preparedness

Participants reinforced the critical role of tourism operators in emergency preparedness and response, particularly in supporting visitor safety and contributing to local response efforts.

Challenges

Limited Engagement in Emergency Planning

Tourism operators are not consistently included in preparedness frameworks or decision-making processes.

Preparedness Gaps Among Operators

Awareness and prioritization of emergency planning vary across the sector.

Visitor Vulnerability

Visitors may lack awareness of local risks, increasing complexity during emergencies.

Opportunities

Greater Integration into Planning Frameworks

Including tourism stakeholders in emergency systems can improve coordination and outcomes.

Enhanced Preparedness and Training

Providing targeted resources and training can strengthen sector readiness.

Visitor-Focused Communication Tools

Developing clear, accessible information for visitors can improve safety and response effectiveness.



Workforce Preparedness and Community Capacity

The importance of training, role clarity, and community-based support systems was emphasized as critical to effective emergency response.

* Challenges

Limited Training and Preparedness

Staff and volunteers may lack the skills and confidence needed to respond effectively.

Resource Constraints

Limited personnel and reliance on volunteer-led responses can affect capacity.

Coordination Gaps

Unclear roles and responsibilities can hinder response efforts.

* Opportunities

Regular Training and Simulation Exercises

Ongoing drills and structured training can build confidence and coordination.

Defined Roles and Responsibilities

Clarifying expectations can improve efficiency during emergencies.

Strengthening Community Networks

Leveraging local support systems can enhance resilience and response capacity.





Emergency Response, Recovery, and Resilience

Participants highlighted the importance of planning for both immediate response and long-term recovery, including the social, cultural, and economic impacts of emergencies.

Challenges

Gaps in Preparedness and Planning

Insufficient planning for both residents and visitors can limit response effectiveness.

Misinformation and Public Perception

Inconsistent or inaccurate information can affect safety and recovery efforts.

Recovery Constraints

Rebuilding infrastructure and restoring confidence can be prolonged and complex.

Opportunities

Comprehensive Preparedness Planning

Integrating response and recovery considerations can improve long-term outcomes.

Strengthening Public Communication

Clear and transparent messaging can support trust and confidence.

Innovative Recovery Approaches

Initiatives such as educational tourism and community engagement can support recovery and resilience.



Priority Action Items and Key Recommendations

Integration and Inclusive Planning

Participants emphasized the need for more inclusive and coordinated approaches to emergency preparedness.

Integrate Indigenous and Tourism Perspectives

Ensure both Indigenous communities and tourism operators are included in emergency planning and decision-making.

Develop Community-Specific Plans

Create tailored approaches that reflect local conditions, risks, and cultural contexts.

Define Roles and Responsibilities

Establish clear expectations for all stakeholders during emergencies.

Communication and Information Systems

Strengthening communication systems was identified as a critical priority.

Enhance Multi-Channel Communication

Utilize diverse technologies to ensure reliable information sharing across regions.

Improve Coordination and Consistency

Align messaging across agencies and stakeholders to reduce confusion.

Ensure Cultural and Language Accessibility

Provide information that is culturally relevant and accessible to all communities.



Capacity Building and Training

Building local capacity and preparedness is essential to improving response effectiveness.

Expand Training and Simulation Exercises

Provide regular, practical training opportunities for staff and communities.

Support Workforce Preparedness

Equip personnel with the skills and knowledge required for emergency response.

Strengthen Local Capacity

Invest in community-based resources and support systems.

Tools, Resources, and Knowledge Integration

Participants highlighted the importance of accessible and culturally relevant resources.

Develop Practical, Community-Focused Tools

Create resources that reflect operational realities and local needs.

Integrate Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Ensure cultural and traditional knowledge is embedded in planning and response.

Support Knowledge Sharing

Facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices across communities.



Resilience, Recovery, and Continuous Improvement

Ongoing collaboration and adaptation are critical to long-term resilience.

Strengthen Recovery Planning

Incorporate long-term recovery considerations into emergency frameworks.

Foster Collaboration Across Sectors

Encourage partnerships between communities, tourism operators, and governments.

Promote Continuous Learning

Update plans and approaches based on evolving risks and lessons learned.

Question Guide:

1. When you think about emergencies in your territory (for example, wildfires, floods, storms, health emergencies), what kinds of situations come to mind first for your community?
2. What is most important in your when it comes to staying safe and looking after people in any kind of emergency?
3. Where do you currently get emergency information, and how reliable or culturally relevant is it?
4. During an emergency (e.g., wildfire, flood, evacuation), what information do you need most in the first 24–72 hours?
5. For someone who doesn't know your community, how would you describe the role that culture and traditional knowledge serves in your tourism emergency or continuity planning?
6. How does your community define 'success' in recovery after an emergency event? — **Prompt:** What could recovery look like culturally, environmentally, socially, and economically?
7. During recent wildfire or flood events, what was the biggest challenge you experienced or observed for your tourism operations and provincial emergency services? — **Prompts:** If we were to design a 'Gold Standard' for emergency preparedness, what is one cultural protocol that must be included to make it relevant for Indigenous operators?
8. What specific skills do staff (youth or seasonal staff) need most to feel confident during an emergency evacuation?