



RDCK FireSmart Recognized Neighbourhoods

All over the RDCK, neighbourhoods are working together to reduce their risk to wildfire. This guide will walk you through the process of becoming a FireSmart Recognized Neighbourhood as well as provide some background and inspiration from six neighbourhoods within the RDCK.

What is a FireSmart Recognized Neighbourhood?

The FireSmart Canada Neighbourhood Recognition Program is a unique approach to collaboratively reduce a neighbourhood's risk to wildfire through education and events. It is run nationally through FireSmart Canada and facilitated locally by the RDCK. It is a grassroots, volunteer run program that is assisted by RDCK Wildfire Mitigation Specialists. It is a small scale approach for neighbourhoods consisting of 5-50 homes, with the intent to implement achievable FireSmart goals.



How do I get my neighbourhood recognized?

- 1) **Get in touch with us** – The RDCK has a Wildfire Mitigation Specialist near you who can help establish what a FireSmart program in your neighbourhood might look like.
- 2) **Form a FireSmart Committee** – A FireSmart Committee consists of 3-5 people living within the neighbourhood.
- 3) **Receive a neighbourhood assessment** – This addresses the wildfire-related characteristics of the neighbourhood, providing unique recommendations in the form of a detailed report.
- 4) **Create a FireSmart plan** – A [written plan](#) for your neighbourhood's unique approach to FireSmart.
- 5) **Host an event and implement parts of your plan** – This generally takes the form of some sort of neighbourhood event or work party. Every neighbourhood is different! See pages 3-8 of this document to be inspired by what other neighbourhoods have done.
- 6) **Apply in the fall** – A [one page application](#), completed each fall, informs FireSmart Canada what you did that year.

What are some of the benefits?

- **Reduced fire risk**
We've seen neighbourhoods drastically reduce their risk to wildfire over the years. Whether it be an area of forest being treated, having more neighbours becoming educated on what they can accomplish around their home, to creating an emergency evacuation plan; year over year, every neighbourhood becomes more resilient in some way.
- **Community engagement and bonding**
The FireSmart Recognition Program is a great way to get the neighbourhood together to work towards a common goal. Events often have music or food and always include lots of smiles. We've seen various community groups, stratas, and Fire Departments use this as a way to engage with residents.
- **Increased number of personal home assessments**
We often have the highest concentration of personal home assessments within FireSmart neighbourhoods. Residents can sign up for free FireSmart home assessments where we take a detailed look at individual homes and properties to provide unique recommendations on how to drastically reduce the chance of a home being affected by wildfire.
- **Grants and funding**
There is some funding available to FireSmart neighbourhoods. FireSmart Canada offers a yearly \$500 grant to selected applicants. The RDCK FireSmart Champion Grant has allowed neighbourhoods to apply for up to \$3000 in reimbursements for completed FireSmart activities. Some neighbourhoods have even been successful in applying for Columbia Basin Trust grants to have nearby forest fuels treated.



The following pages are stories from six of the RDCK's many FireSmart recognized neighbourhoods. The goal is to showcase some of the great work being accomplished while, at the same time, inspiring others and provide a roadmap for new neighbourhoods to start the process.

For more information
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Rosebery

This neighbourhood is located on the south side of Wilson Creek in Rosebery, and consists of approximately 38 residential properties on DeRosa Drive, Stewart Street, and the Rosebery Shores development.

FireSmart Committee Formed: June 2020

Date of Neighbourhood Assessment: July 29th 2020

Years Recognized: 2020, 2021



With an increase in smoky summers and heightened awareness of wildfire potential in the area, residents in this neighbourhood came together to look at ways to reduce their risk of wildfire damage. Since creating a FireSmart Committee and hosting a FireSmart information session, Rosebery residents have focused their efforts on fuel reduction where it matters the most - in their back yards and in overlapping home ignition zones within the neighbourhood.

The FireSmart Committee has been a recipient of both the FireSmart Canada Wildfire Preparedness Grant and the RDCK FireSmart Neighbourhood Grant. These funds have assisted the neighbourhood in moving forward with additional FireSmart initiatives by covering expenses for administration, BBQ, and refreshments for the work bees, and hiring local youth to assist homeowners with clean up in their own yards. The involvement of local youth has been an integral part of the success of the work bees as several residents in this neighbourhood have physical limitations.

Residents have also demonstrated admirable generosity by donating time with dump trailers and small machinery to assist with annual work bees. Overall, this FireSmart neighbourhood is a great example of focused action, neighbours helping neighbours, and the benefits of engaging youth. By hosting these FireSmart events just one to two times per year, Rosebery is already seeing great progress in the reduction of their wildfire risk as a result.



Vallican

Vallican is a neighbourhood within the Slocan Valley consisting of about 60 homes. It is within the fire protection area of the Passmore Fire Department. The FireSmart Committee members are also key members of, and work in conjunction with, Rural Alternatives Research and Training Society (RARTS). RARTS is the non-profit that runs the Vallican Whole Community Center.



Committee formed: July 2020

Date of Assessment: August 2020

Recognized: 2021

Vallican got off to a timely, yet stressful start in their pursuit of becoming a FireSmart recognized neighbourhood. Less than one month after the initial assessment, the Talbott Creek Wildfire started within a few kilometers of their community and quickly grew to over 1000 hectares. Most of the neighbourhood was on evacuation alert. Thankfully, the winds pushed the fire away and no homes were lost. While this close call created awareness of the need for a FireSmart program, the neighbourhood was in no position to host an event while under evacuation alert. This set the stage for a big 2021.

Vallican's FireSmart plan focused primarily on education, while taking steps to FireSmart the Vallican Whole Community Center. Using the \$500 FireSmart Canada grant awarded, they were able to place an ad in the local newspaper advertising their event and get a big load of gravel delivered to the Vallican Whole. Neighbourhood Champions' Dale and Marcia also canvassed local businesses and received many donations to support the event in the form of food and beverages, building supplies, and door prizes.

The event was a huge success, it consisted of:

- A free BBQ with refreshments
- A FireSmart education booth attended by a local Wildfire Mitigation Specialist
- Demonstration FireSmart assessments completed on the Vallican Whole
- A work party that installed a non-combustible gravel perimeter around the Vallican Whole and metal flashing in places vulnerable to ember accumulations
- Attendance of the Passmore Fire Department who brought the fire truck, gave tours, and filled a large portable water tank for the kids



Vallican has no plans on stopping now that they are a recognized FireSmart Neighbourhood. They are currently planning their next event and are always actively promoting more residents to get educated by taking advantage of the free FireSmart home assessments and individual rebates.

Queens Bay

This neighbourhood is located on the west shore of Kootenay Lake just north of the West Arm outlet. Approximately 42 rural properties are located above Highway 31 with 18 below the highway on the shores of Kootenay Lake.

FireSmart Committee Formed: November 2015

Date of Neighbourhood Assessment: August 2015

Years Recognized: 2015,2016,2017,2018,2019,2020,2021



A community well aware of their surrounding wildfire risk, Queens Bay has seen multiple lightning and hydro line ignitions over the past decade. Early adopters of the FireSmart Canada Neighbourhood Recognition Program, this neighbourhood was one of the very first in BC to become recognised in 2015.

Queens Bay is serious about FireSmart. Their mitigation projects are complex and extensive, ranging from individual owners doing around home clean-ups, to community hand treatments on common and private land near critical infrastructure, to a pilot project with Forest Enhancement Society of BC to reduce fuel through selective logging. In addition to reducing their surrounding fuels, Queens Bay is well connected with its neighbours, using an established emergency communication structure and working towards an emergency event response evacuation plan.

FireSmart champion, Nancy is tireless in organizing events and information for the neighbourhood. The community has responded in generous fashion by supplying equipment for FireSmart work days and making donations of professional tree work by local businesses. Every community event turns out a crowd of eager neighbourhood volunteers who work hard together to build resilience. Queens Bay is a shining example of a self-starting, active, and engaged FireSmart neighbourhood that knows real effort can make a difference.



Lindmar Estates

Lindmar Estates is a 22 unit strata in Castlegar that is situated at the base of 2 large draws formed by Davidson Brook and Merry Creek.

Date of assessment: August 11, 2021

Committee formed: September 13, 2021

Recognized: 2022



On July 1st, 2021, in the midst of a heat dome, the Merry Creek Wildfire started only a kilometer from Lindmar Estates. The fire threatened infrastructure and caused evacuations as flames, falling debris, and smoke spread across the Merry Creek headwaters. Lindmar residents were loading vehicles with personal belongings in preparation for an evacuation order. Ash, small embers, and burnt pine needles were falling onto roofs and the upper residents had started spraying water on their buildings. Thankfully the fire was contained and no buildings were damaged.

Following this scare, some residents of Lindmar drew their attention to FireSmart and the Neighbourhood Recognition Program. The community had an assessment done on August 11th and on September 13th they held a special general meeting with the strata to pass a motion to establish a FireSmart committee, pursue FireSmart Canada Neighbourhood Recognition, and accept the committee's FireSmart plan.

The Neighbourhood Champion, Jon, wasted no time and got right to work with the help of his community, which included a couple residents who are over 80 years old! Any job above their ability was quickly hired out to a local contractor, with a big portion of the funds coming from the RDCK Neighbourhood Grant. By November of 2021, they had already substantially reduced their fire risk by removing over 70 ornamental cedars and junipers. This was accomplished all while maintaining an aesthetically pleasing landscape with large coniferous trees limbed and deciduous trees and flowers left.

Lindmar showed what can be done at a strata with some hard work and making sure that the right steps are in place to satisfy the needs of the strata board. They have accomplished a lot in a short time. Lindmar Estates is excited to keep the momentum going in 2022! They plan on continuing to reduce their wildfire risk by removing conifers and planting more deciduous trees and flowers in their place.



Blewett - CA-TU-KA

CA-TU-KA is a rural community on the west end of Blewett road. It encompasses the roads of Carlson, Turner, Kays, and Verigin; with the first three, being the largest, combining to create the catchy name 'CA-TU-KA.' The acreages are a mix of mature conifer forests and thriving farm landscapes.

FireSmart Committee Formed: June 2019

Date of Neighbourhood Assessment: June 26th/27th 2019

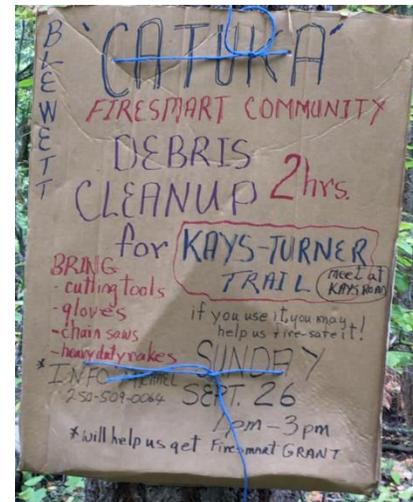
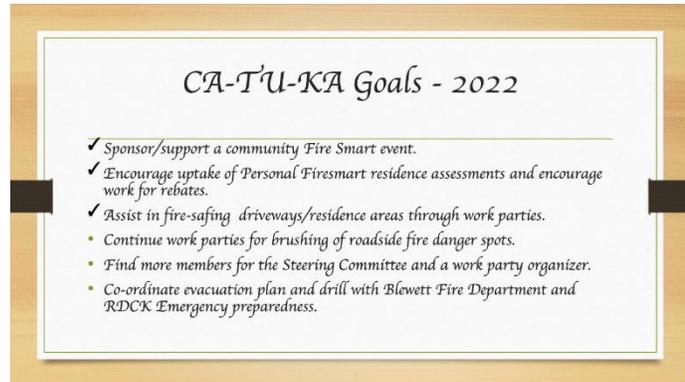
Years Recognized: 2020, 2021

In early June of 2019, Helen caught wind that a FireSmart informational evening was being held at the local Blewett fire hall. Quickly, it was realized that the Neighbourhood Recognition Program would be a great tool that could weave together the FireSmart work individuals were already undertaking, tackle community-level projects, and increase FireSmart awareness overall. Moving efficiently, a steering committee was established (for planning purposes) and, a few weeks later, the community had their wildfire hazard assessment completed.

Helen and Michael have been driving forces in keeping the FireSmart flame alive and prevalent within CA-TU-KA. However, they would have you know that it's a community effort and this is beautifully represented in how CA-TU-KA has shone in the areas of education and collaboration.

In 2019, volunteers walked door to door, connecting with neighbours, spreading awareness about individual home assessments, and inquiring about what help homeowners needed/were available to give. With this newfound community connection, in 2020 three work parties were able to brush a community used trail between two roads, cut overhanging branches along a section of Carlson Road, and clear an identified fire hazard, invasive common tansy, along Kays Road. As eradicating tansy is difficult, it has become an ongoing annual collaboration project between CA-TU-KA, BC Highways, BC Invasive Species Society, and CKISS to complete the long term eradication.

CA-TU-KA kicked 2022 off with a FireSmart education day on May 7th that featured live music, info booths from the Fire Department and the RDCK FireSmart program, a raffle, and a live firefighter demonstration. CA-TU-KA was able to fund this event fully through the grant money that they had received for their community FireSmart efforts in 2021 and it was a great success with many individual home assessments booked!



West Arrow Park

West Arrow Park is a small community located on the west shore of the Arrow Lakes, 28km south of Nakusp. Access to this remote neighbourhood is primarily via cable ferry, with logging road access to the north and south.

FireSmart Committee Formed: August 2019

Date of Neighbourhood Assessment: October 2, 2019

Years Recognized: 2019, 2020, 2021



West Arrow Park residents are highly alert to the risks of living in a wildfire prone environment. The Arrow Lakes region has a history of major interface fires including the Ingersol fire in 2003 that spread north on the west side of the Arrow Lakes, stopping just a few kilometers south of West Arrow Park.

Prior to becoming a FireSmart Neighbourhood, with support from RDCK Area K Director Paul Peterson, Arrow Park residents acquired wildfire suppression tools, fire caddies, and installed underground water storage tanks to increase on-site water supply.

Since gaining FireSmart Recognition in 2019, West Arrow Park residents continue to take steps to increase their wildfire preparedness. A FireSmart event is held each year to educate residents about FireSmart, provide fire caddy practice, and offer training. The group is also engaged with the Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program.

This FireSmart neighbourhood has received both the FireSmart Canada Wildfire Preparedness Grant and the RDCK FireSmart Neighbourhood Grant. In 2021 they were successful recipients of the Columbia Basin Wildfire Resiliency Initiative Program and coordinated a wildfire demonstration treatment on crown land adjacent to the neighbourhood. A local contracting company completed the work and employed community members to assist them.

This small neighbourhood has put in significant effort to increase their rural resilience. Their actions demonstrate how FireSmart is most effective when neighbours band together.

