

City announces newest additions to the FireSmart Team

(Penticton, BC – July 23, 2021) – The Penticton FireSmart program has recently secured new members to join FireSmart Coordinator, Brittany Seibert, to round out the FireSmart Team. Together they aim to provide the best possible FireSmart program for the City.

Team Leader, Miyoko McKeown, brings with her a background in wildfire management after working for the BC Wildfire Service for the past four years. She recently completed her Wildfire Mitigation Specialist training through the Home Partners Program, and City residents will have the opportunity to meet McKeown during their FireSmart Home Assessments, a free service available to City residents.

“I loved wildfire management but was looking to spend more time with family, especially after COVID-19. FireSmart seemed like a natural move and I’m excited to be able to educate the public on wildfires. Not only on how they can affect homes and communities, but also the steps they can take to reduce their risk to the impact of wildfires,” says McKeown.

Those who qualify can receive additional FireSmart supplemental mitigation work after completing a FireSmart Home Assessment. This work will be carried out by the other two new members of the FireSmart Team. Chantelle Hodge and Zac Evanoff recently joined the team as the FireSmart Laborers.

Hodge has been a member of the Penticton Fire Department as an auxiliary firefighter since 2018 and took the opportunity to join the FireSmart Team as a way to further her knowledge of wildfires, and engage in meaningful prevention work for the City.

“I’m jumped on the opportunity to be a part of the FireSmart program as it’s been my goal to make a career in fire suppression. Joining the team meant I got to round out my own experience by working with two experienced wildland firefighters,” says Hodge. “Living in a City where wildfires are becoming more common I wanted to take the opportunity to soak up every bit of knowledge they had to offer, while also taking advantage of being able to educate myself on the high risk areas of the city. I believe this experience and knowledge will help my contribute more to the Penticton Fire Department.”

While the other two members of the FireSmart Team bring a background of fire with them, Evanoff instead joins the team fresh from graduating high school.

"I joined the FireSmart program because I have an interest in pursuing a career in firefighting. I felt this was an opportunity to become more educated on fire, particularly from a mitigation and prevention standpoint," says Evanoff.

Residents can spot the FireSmart Team out in the community in their FireSmart van, clad with the FireSmart logo and Ember the Fox. Funding for the team is provided by the Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Program's FireSmart Economic Recovery Fund. The intent of the fund was to support immediate job creation in order to build local wildfire resiliency and assist communities in recovering from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The community can learn more about the FireSmart program by visiting www.penticton.ca/wildfireprevention.

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Contacts:

Brittany Seibert
FireSmart Coordinator
City of Penticton
firesmart@penticton.ca

Milena Marshall
Marketing & Communication Specialist
City of Penticton
250-490-2445



FireSmart Team Members: Chantelle Hodge (left), Miyoko McKeown and Zac Evanoff.