



Indigenous Fire Stewardship

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Wildland Fire Evacuations 1980-2021

Community has >50% Indigenous population

Yes

No/Unknown

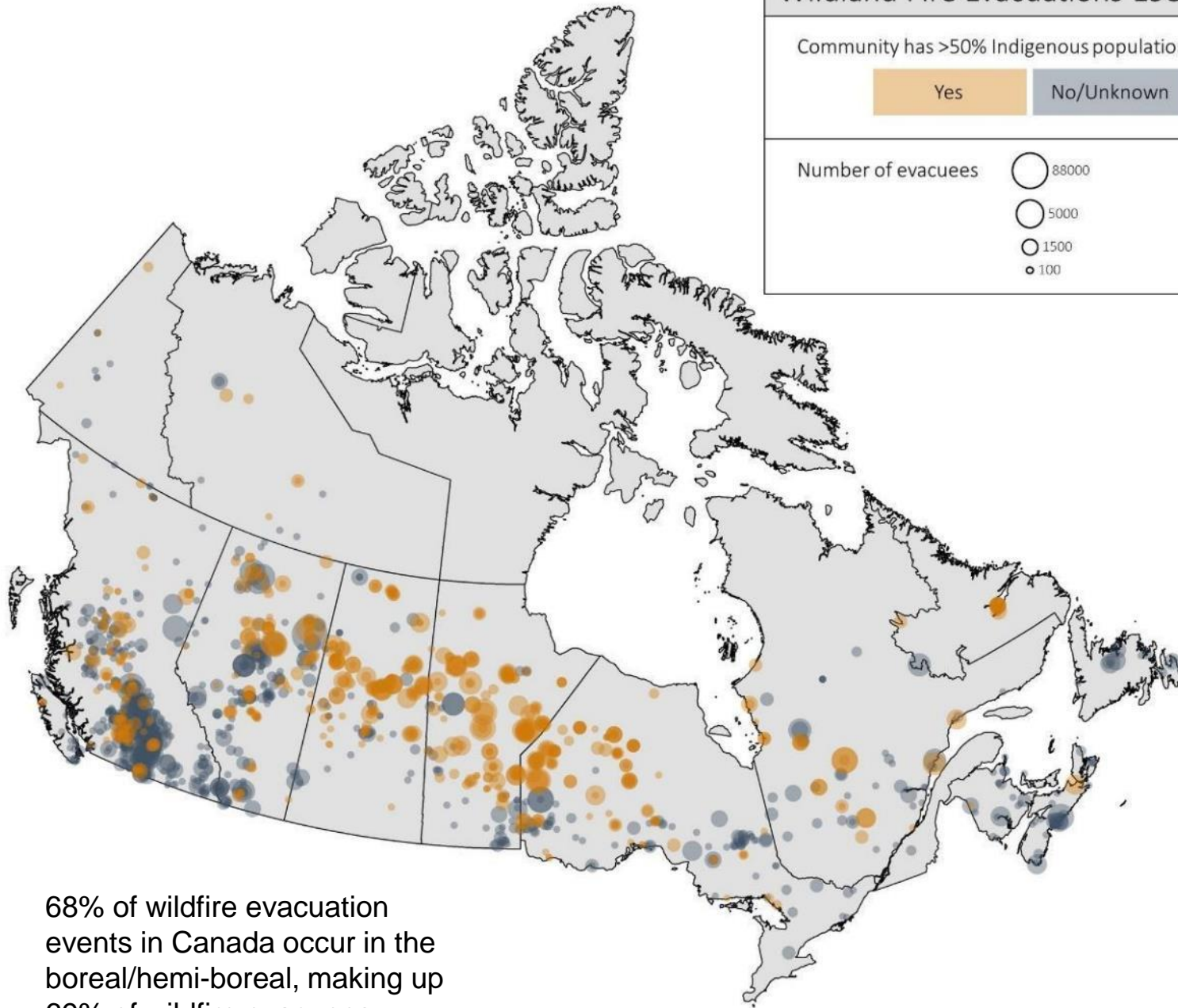
Number of evacuees

88000

5000

1500

100



68% of wildfire evacuation events in Canada occur in the boreal/hemi-boreal, making up 69% of wildfire evacuees between 1980-2021.

4.9%

Canadian population identifies as

Indigenous

42%

(583/1387)

of wildfire

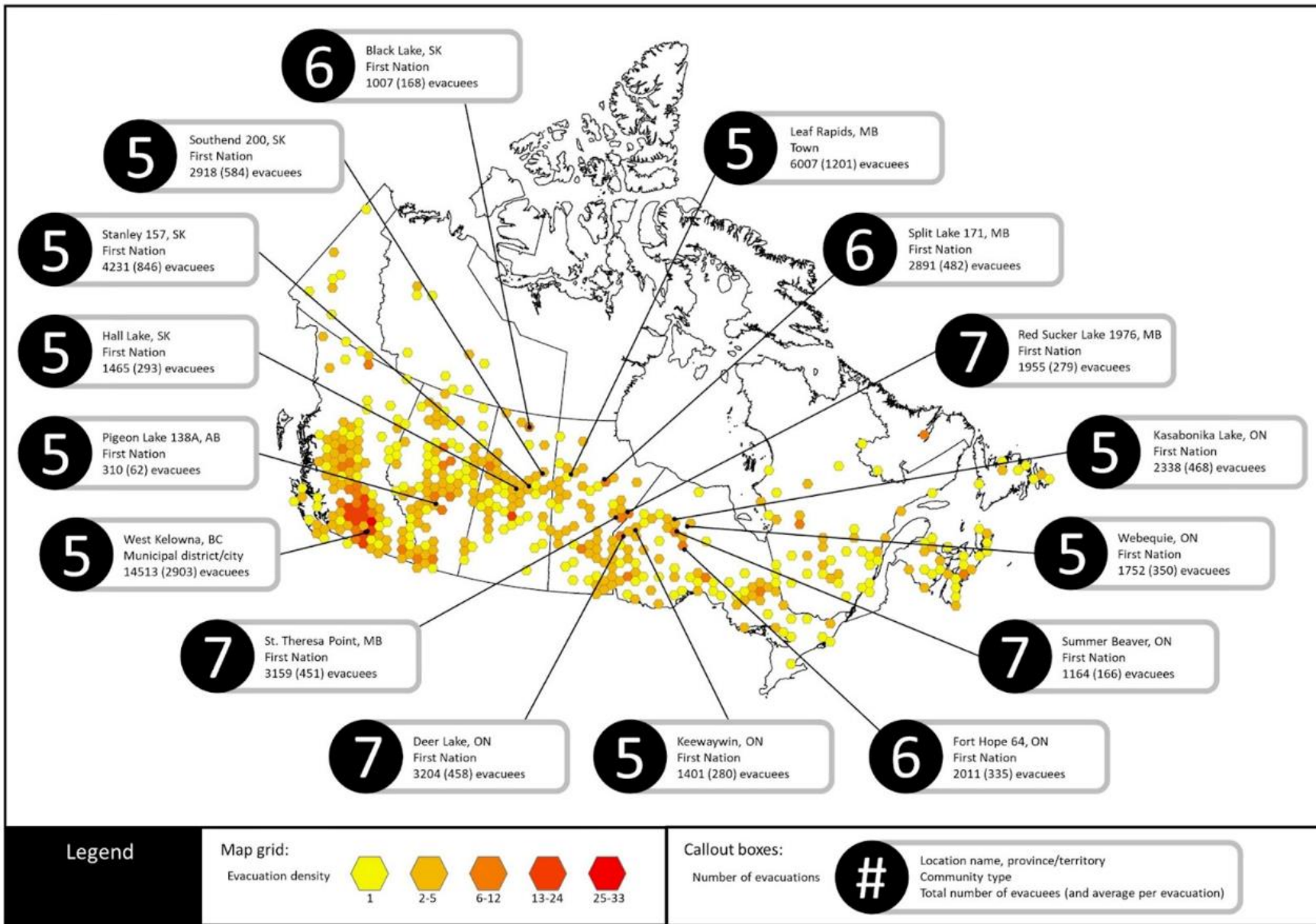
evacuation events

between 1980-2021

were of

**Communities with >50%
Indigenous population**

- Christianson, Johnston, et al. submitted



Communities with
>50% Indigenous
population

Direct Threat
60%
~349 events

Smoke Only
35.7%
~208 events

Other/Unknown
4.3%
~25 events

Christianson, Johnston,
et al. submitted



Indigenous Cultural Burning

Indigenous peoples ‘sought to replace fires of chance with fires of choice’ (Pyne, 2007, p. 23).
“cleaning the land”

Using fire to achieve specific cultural objectives

• *“I didn’t set the forest on fire just for the sake of burning, but so that I could return to hunt the next year and live”* (Ferguson, 1979, p.81).




Figure - Indigenous peoples demonstrating a prairie fire start, 1903 (From the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton)



Cultural Burning

Fire Science and Management (ME Alexander, Section Editor) | [Open Access](#) |
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Centering Indigenous Voices: The Role of Fire in the Boreal Forest of North America

[Amy Cardinal Christianson](#) , [Colin Robert Sutherland](#), [Faisal Moola](#), [Noémie Gonzalez Bautista](#),
[David Young](#) & [Heather MacDonald](#)

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<https://yourforestpodcast.com/good-fire-podcast>



By: Daniel Harrington
For: Blazing the Trail

Cultural Severance

aka fire exclusion/
suppression

Wildfire management agencies racialized 'light burning' and delegitimized or erased Indigenous peoples and knowledge through three key narratives: (1) Discrediting - 'savage' narrative; (2) Downplaying - vanishing 'Indian' narrative; and (3) Erasure - terra nullius narrative.

Vinyeta K. Under the guise of science: how the US Forest Service deployed settler colonial and racist logics to advance an unsubstantiated fire suppression agenda. *Environ Sociol.* 2021:1-15
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23251042.2021.1987608>



What is the difference between cultural burning and prescribed fire?

PCA National Fire Management Plan and Prescribed Fire Standard Operating Procedure differentiate the two practices.

*Nations may have different terms they prefer to use. For example, the term cultural burning can have a strictly ceremonial meaning for some Nations. Local terms should be used.

Indigenous/Cultural Fire*

- Indigenous led around cultural objectives, land stewardship
- Creation of mosaics, reduces risk
- Spiritual/ceremonial aspects
- Indigenous knowledge-driven around time to burn and techniques for burning
- Generally, “slow cool burns” – fire we can walk beside
- Community roles / traditional governance / community involvement
- Ignition using traditional methods
- More than fire
- Living with the land

Prescribed Fire

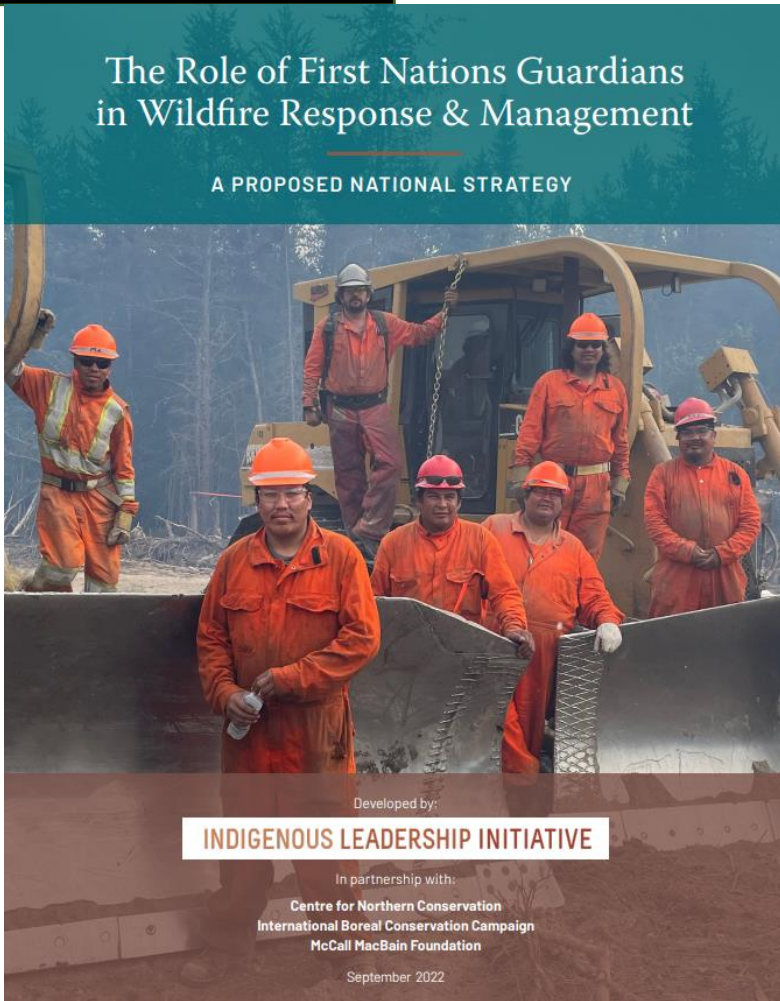
- Agency/organization driven
- Objectives – usually hazard reduction or ecological (including restoration)
- Production burning – as much in as little time as possible
- Vary in intensity – including crown fire replication
- Para-military structure, top-down approach, bureaucratic
- Ignition using accelerants
- Job
- Working off the land

Rightsholders NOT Stakeholders





INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE



Wearefire.ca

