

# The Giving Season

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## Initiative to advance wildfire studies and research

Call for support to fund solutions to address climate change impacts

Wildfires are a provincial, federal and global concern, and Thompson Rivers University (TRU), located in Kamloops, B.C. – an area at the heart of wildfire response in recent years – plans to contribute to the knowledge and research on the subject and be part of future solutions, says Dr. Shannon Wagner, TRU's vice president of Research.

As fire seasons become more severe and prolonged – causing billions of dollars in damage to infrastructure and the environment, triggering large-scale evacuations and impacting health and well-being – the need for wildfire experts in research and management is urgent. As a first in Canada, TRU is collaborating with BC Wildfire Service (BCWS) to develop an initiative that will advance wildfire studies and research at the university.

It is envisioned the program will eventually include certificates and diplomas to undergraduate and graduate degrees and establish a clear educational pathway for those seeking a long-term career in wildfire.

Partnerships between academic researchers and fire management agencies are crucial to developing new tools and strategies, says TRU's Dr. Mike Flannigan, BC Innovation Research Chair in Predictive Services, Emergency Management and Fire Science.

From 2017 to 2024, wildfires in B.C. have burned more area than in all the years from 1950 to 2016, says Dr. Flannigan.

"Given climate change, this is our reality."

TRU already has a robust presence in wildfire studies and research and is home to the Institute for Wildfire Science, Adaptation and Resiliency, and is the only Canadian university to have two research chair positions dedicated to wildfire science. The university's strategic research plan also prioritizes understanding and responding to changing climate.

While wildfire science is very important, it's one aspect of the overall picture, says Dr. Wagner, noting the university is pursuing research, education, training and innovation related to wildfires with four core areas of focus: wildfire science, community/social factors, health/well-being, and Indigenous fire stewardship.

"Mentoring is probably my biggest priority because these students are the future and for them to be well trained is critical – and it costs money."

**Dr. Mike Flannigan**  
BC Innovation Research Chair in Predictive Services, Emergency Management and Fire Science, Thompson Rivers University



With climate change grabbing the headlines, Dr. Flannigan says after decades of cuts to wildfire research, federal funding for fire research and management has increased, but more is needed to address the scale of the problem.

He says philanthropy and community engagement are important to accelerate research, train the next generation of fire management professionals and educate the public on fire prevention.

"Mentoring is probably my biggest priority because these students are the future and for them to be well trained is critical – and it costs money," says Dr. Flannigan, noting working in the field requires expensive fire protective clothing and equipment that some students can't afford.

"Support to buy this clothing is just one example of how funding can accelerate research because the research we do today will have an impact on decisions by fire management in the future," he adds.

Unfortunately, there's no silver bullet or quick fix to remedy the wildfire situation, says Dr. Flannigan. "It's going to take a lot of hard work and money," he adds, accentuating the role philanthropy can

play, from funding purchases like protective clothing through to major investments in developing models to predict where fires are likely to start.

Dr. Wagner points out wildfires are one of the quintessential issues of our time.

"If we, as a society, want to address the impacts of climate change and start to provide solutions to

some of the really troublesome impacts that have been associated with wildfire, the contributions from people who are able to provide support for the researchers and leaders of tomorrow will make a tremendous difference to our ability to meet the call to action," says Dr. Wagner.

Learn more: [tru.ca/wildfire](http://tru.ca/wildfire)

### A FORCE FOR GOOD

The Giving Season – from GivingTuesday through to the end of December – is one of the most important times of year for Canadian charities.



AFP Canada is a leading national voice for fundraising professionals who are vital in advancing charitable work. The over 3,000 AFP members in Canada play a critical role in helping to shape Canadian policy and by raising funds that change lives.

They fundraise for organizations large and small, in rural and remote communities as well as towns and major cities across the country. Fundraisers support the arts, culture, shelters, emergency services, health care, education, reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and social justice, all while contributing over 8% to GDP annually.

AFP members in Canada are part of the larger AFP Global network – the largest community of professional fundraisers in the world. The approximately 26,000 members worldwide raise over \$100-billion annually to support thousands of philanthropic causes and organizations across the globe in accordance with AFP's Code of Ethical Standards.

**24%** of Canadians rely on charities and nonprofits for basic needs

**46.1%** of nonprofits reported increased demand for services or products in 2023

**170,000** number of nonprofits in Canada

**8.2%** share of GDP attributed by nonprofits in 2022

**\$216.5B** value of economic activity generated by nonprofits in 2022

**81.8%** of nonprofit organizations had volunteers in 2023

**41.5%** of registered charities' funding in 2023 comprised individual donations

Sources: Ipsos (on behalf of CanadaHelps); 150.statcan.gc.ca (National Insights into Non-profit Organizations, Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, 2023)

## Support for Asian Canadians with mental health issues

Changing attitudes, encouraging discussions about mental health

Ann (not her real name), a divorced mother of five, struggled with schizophrenia for over 10 years before any of her children knew about her serious mental illness.

In the bleak days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ann, an Asian Canadian, was discharged from hospital and dropped off at Hong Fook Mental Health Association, the agency in Toronto that had provided her with mental health support since 2009.

When Ann's daughter Linda (not her real name) was called to collect her, it was the first time she learned of her mother's illness. When Linda's parents were divorced, her father was granted custody of the children and they rarely saw their mother.

During the pandemic, Linda called her mother regularly to check on her and ensure she felt supported and safe. With her daughter's encouragement, Ann was more willing to receive treatment, and today she has a case manager at Hong Fook who helps her manage her symptoms and connects her to recovery programs.

"In many Asian cultures, which prioritize harmony, mental health is a taboo subject, resulting in many Asian Canadians internalizing their emotions and feeling fearful or ashamed to share their struggles – sometimes until it's too late."

**Andrew Chung**  
Executive Director, Hong Fook Mental Health Association

Stigma around mental health among Asian Canadians is a major barrier to seeking help and even receiving informal support from families, says Andrew Chung, executive director of Hong Fook Mental Health Association, which serves Asian communities across the Greater Toronto Area.

"Compared to other groups, Asian Canadian communities report poorer self-rated mental health and more severe mental illness symptoms by the time of an ER visit or hospitalization," says Mr. Chung.

"In many Asian cultures, which prioritize harmony, mental health is a taboo subject, resulting in many Asian Canadians internalizing their emotions and feeling fearful or ashamed to share their struggles – sometimes until it's too late," he adds.

Hong Fook uses strategies to introduce mental health topics in cultural context, such as through the wellness courses or leisure clubs in its recovery college, to help change attitudes and encourage open discussions about mental health and illness, says Mr. Chung. The organization was founded in 1982 by two Chinese psychiatrists and a social worker when they observed Asian immigrants with mental illness were not receiving adequate care due to language and cultural barriers.

Today, with locations in Toronto and Markham, Hong Fook serves close to 4,000 clients a year through its programs and services.

"We want to ensure that no one in the community with mental health issues struggles alone," says Mr. Chung.

"This giving season, when people are making decisions about charities and organizations to support, we hope they will consider Hong Fook so that we can provide more resources and create an environment where people can talk openly about mental illness and support one another," he says.



Dr. Ted Lo, one of Hong Fook's founders, continues to work on the front lines at the association. SUPPLIED

Learn more: [hongfook.ca](http://hongfook.ca)



The Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association aims to make hospice palliative care available to everyone in the country. LPFETT VIA GETTY IMAGES

### ADVOCATING AND PROMOTING PALLIATIVE CARE FOR ALL

Program to support caregivers with accessible education

As the already important role of caregivers becomes even more critical as Canada's population ages, the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association (CHPCA) is launching Last Aid, a program to provide quality and accessible palliative care education to caregivers across the country.

"We're really going to be hurting if we don't start supporting caregivers and help them manage the pressures and responsibilities that they're taking on – while they're also often working full-time jobs, and maybe even taking care of younger children – while caring for someone else," says CHPCA's CEO Laurel Gillespie.

The Last Aid program, originally developed in Germany, covers topics such as understanding the dying process, providing care and navigating the health care system.

Canada will be the 23rd country to make the program available, says Ms. Gillespie, adding the low-cost course (about \$35) will be delivered virtually by trained facilitators, and

aims to reach as many caregivers as possible through partnerships with hospices and the organization's reputation as a leader in the palliative care space.

"For us, philanthropy means the difference of being able to advocate and promote palliative care for all Canadians, regardless of their postal code. Everyone should have access to quality palliative care, when and where they need it, whether that be at home, in a shelter, hospital or long-term care home," she says.

"Part of our mission at CHPCA is to make hospice palliative care available to everyone and to provide the same care and attention when a person leaves this world as when they come into it," says Ms. Gillespie.

Last Aid supports that mission, and donations to CHPCA will make the difference in being able to provide the course at the lowest possible cost.

Learn more: [chpca.ca](http://chpca.ca)



Give your gift of hope today, so no one struggles alone tomorrow.

Until December 31, all gifts up to \$50,000 will be **DOUBLED** thanks to one of the champions in the Hong Fook visionary society.

Your contribution will help empower more individuals and caregivers through free, culturally safe mental health care when they need it most. Thank you for caring.

Scan to Donate Now



416-493-4242

[www.HongFook.ca](http://www.HongFook.ca)

It's the season for Giving & Caring

Together, let's care for the caregivers & those receiving palliative care when they need it most.

[CHPCA.CA/DONATE](http://CHPCA.CA/DONATE)



# TRU WILDFIRE

RESEARCH | EDUCATION | TRAINING | INNOVATION

INNOVATING SOLUTIONS, BUILDING RESILIENCE

SUPPORT TRU WILDFIRE

At Thompson Rivers University, we're addressing the increasing threat of wildfires with a solutions-focused approach. Through the Centre for Wildfire Research, Education, Training and Innovation, and in partnership with the BC Wildfire Service, TRU Wildfire is advancing groundbreaking research and innovation to prevent, prepare for and respond to wildfires.

Translating knowledge into action, TRU Wildfire is creating real-world solutions to safeguard communities and build a more resilient future.

Your support fuels this critical work, ensuring progress for today and generations to come.

DONATE TODAY  
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[tru.ca/wildfire](http://tru.ca/wildfire)