

Rebuilding Resilient Indigenous Communities



**A PARTNERSHIP OF THE ATHABASCA
TRIBAL COUNCIL, THE ATHABASCA
RIVER MÉTIS, AND THE NISTAWOYOU
FRIENDSHIP CENTRE**



BACKGROUND



- Worst disaster in Canadian history
- Government reports ignored Indigenous impacts and voices
- Concern things would go back to 'business as usual' until next disaster



GROUNDBREAKING STUDY



- First Indigenous-controlled disaster study to bring together First Nations and Métis from an entire region;
- Broad and inclusive consultation: 10 focus groups, 40 interviews, survey with more than 600 responses over more than 2 years;
- Make sure Indigenous impacts, concerns, and recommendations are heard by governments; provide foundation for collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments in disaster management.

Lessons Learned



- ① Context matters: historical legacies left Indigenous peoples highly vulnerable to natural disasters; disaster management requires reconciliation and respect;
- ① Relationships matter: lack of trust and communication meant the region was not prepared;
- ① Indigenous peoples were affected differently and disproportionately from the wildfire to the recovery;
- ① Disaster planning must be community-based but Regionally-Integrated;

Context Matters



- Cannot understand wildfire impacts without context of the history and relationships between Indigenous/non-Indigenous peoples, including:
 - Residential schools
 - Sixties Scoop
 - Infringement of Treaty and Aboriginal rights
 - Negative effects of the oil sands
 - Amalgamation
 - Consultation policies
- This wasn't simply a 'natural disaster'; for Indigenous peoples, it was a 'disaster waiting to happen'

Recommendations: Reconciliation and Respect



- Framework Agreement for reconciliation based upon UNDRIP principles and government-to-government relations;
- Establish an Indigenous Disaster Emergency Management Agency to manage preparedness, response, and recovery programs in the province;
- Prioritize hiring of Indigenous peoples in the RMWB

Relationships Matter



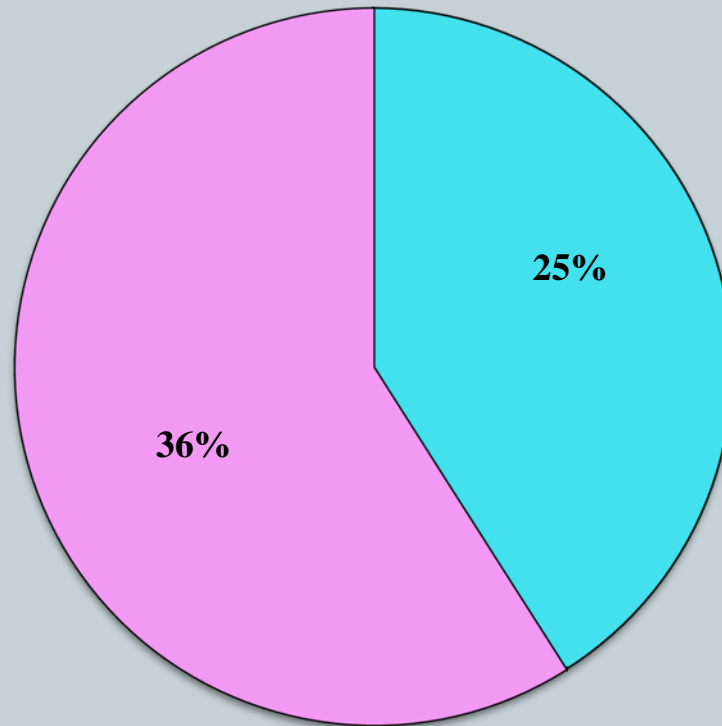
- Multiple governments and a lack of federal leadership meant a lack of clarity for roles and responsibilities;
- No institutions to coordinate disaster response with Indigenous governments at the regional level: RMWB had no plan beyond Fort McMurray;
- Indigenous governments were excluded from Emergency Operations Centres, as well as re-entry and recovery planning;
- Cultural disconnect and communication breakdowns; Indigenous peoples did not receive adequate support from RMWB and GoA;

Recommendations: Relationships and Cooperation



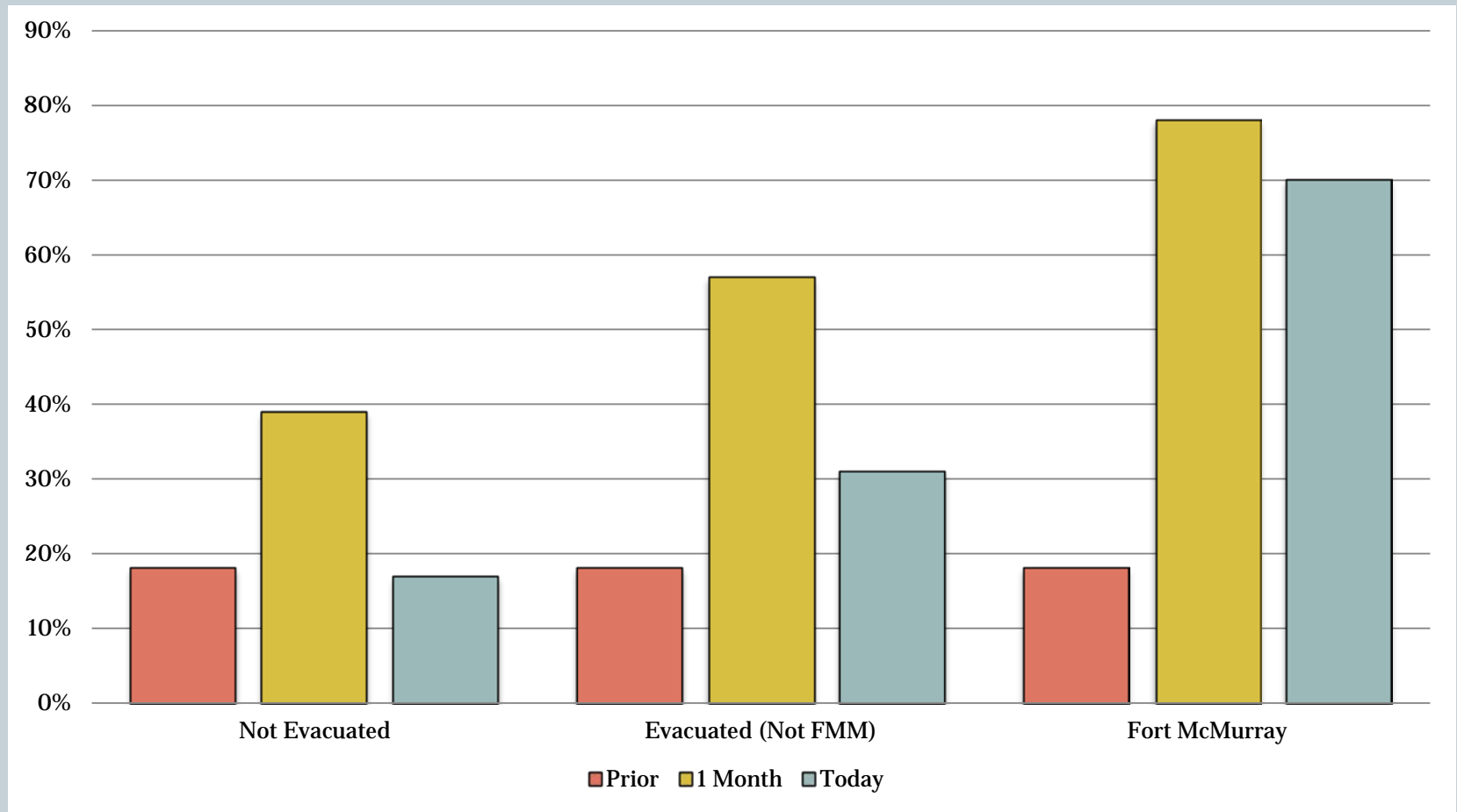
- **Disaster Management Framework Agreement that defines and coordinates institutions, roles, and responsibilities for disaster management in the region on a government-to-government basis;**
- **Emergency Operations Centres and Recovery Committees should be based on a Tri-Partite model of RMWB, First Nations, and Métis representation;**
- **Establish network of Indigenous evacuation centres across the province to provide centralized, safe, and culturally-appropriate evacuation sites for evacuated Indigenous communities;**
- **Institute an Indigenous All-Hazards Incident Management Team;**

Indigenous Impacts Were Disproportionate



■ Destroyed ■ Damaged

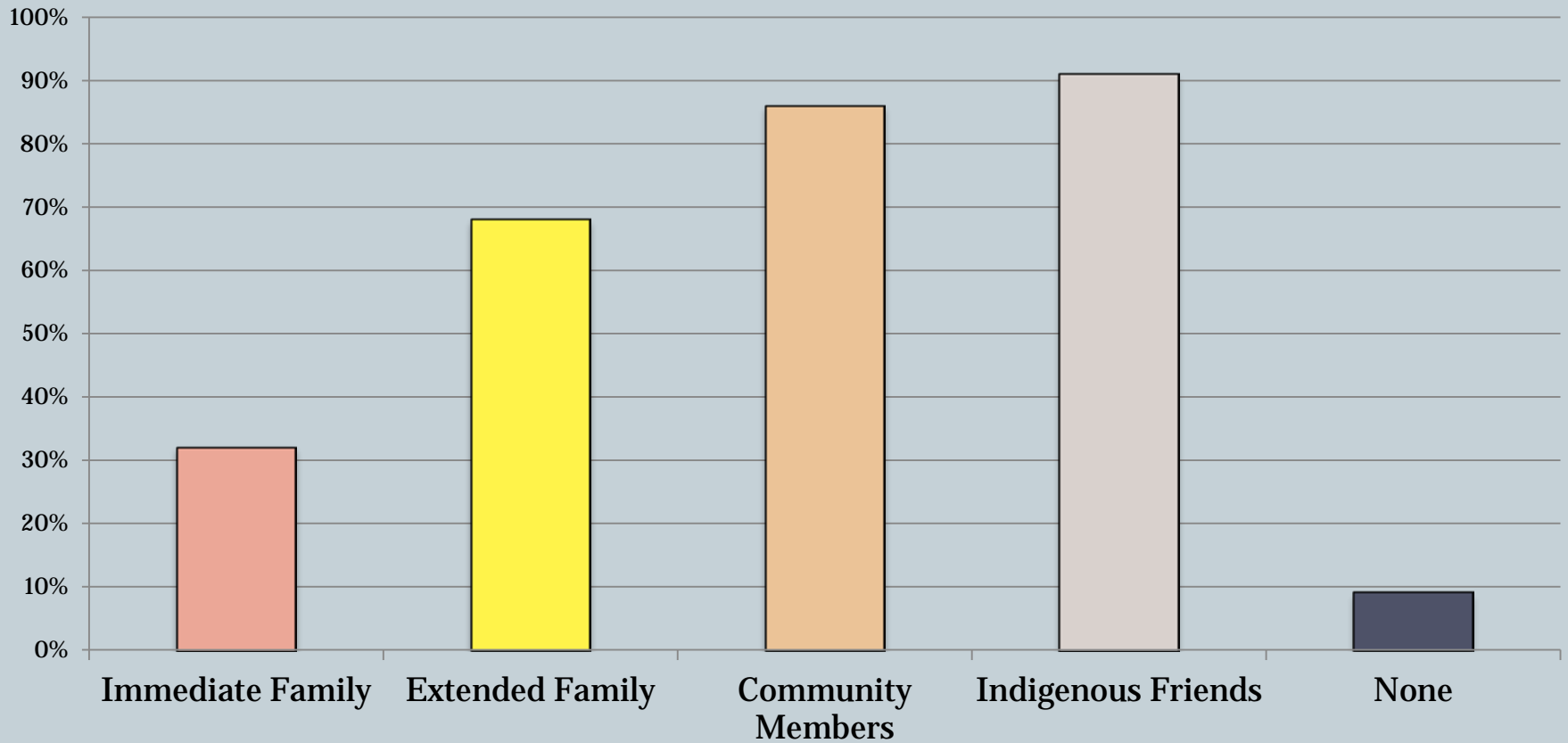
Self-Reported Stress Levels (High/Very High)



Indigenous Impacts Were Regional



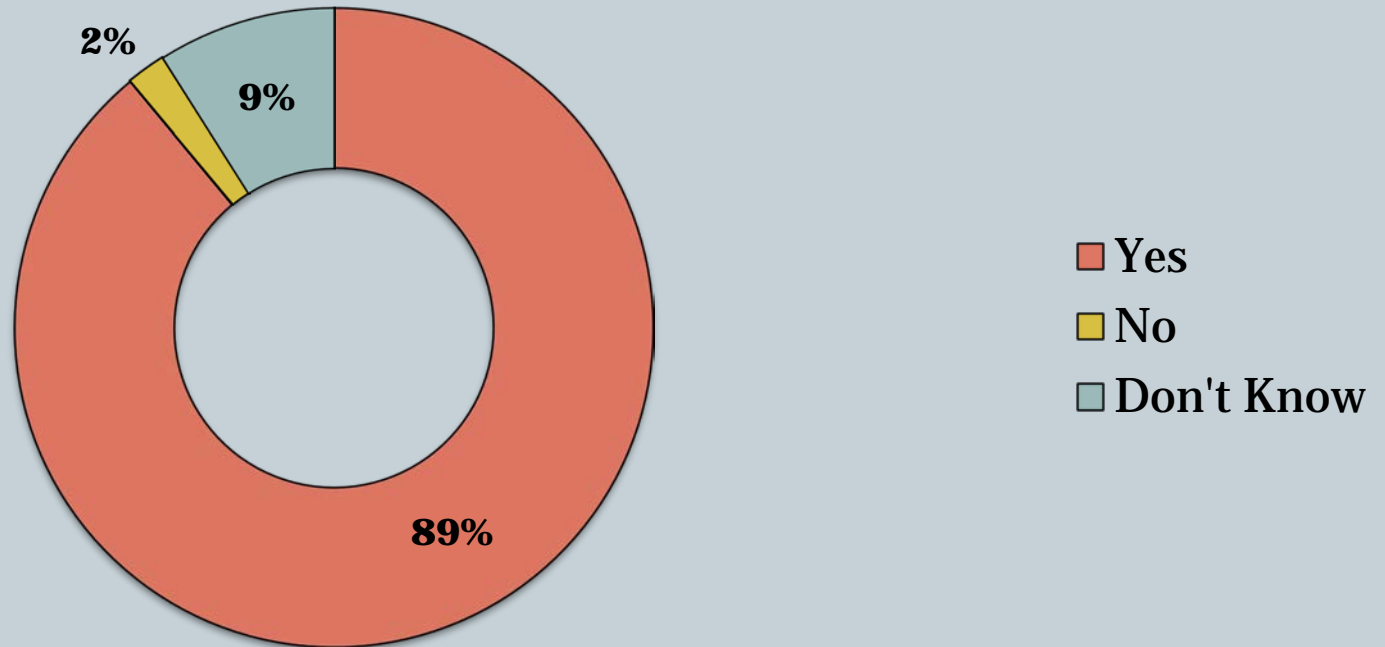
People You Know Whose Home Was Destroyed or Significantly Damaged



Community-Based But Regionally Integrated



Clear preference for community-based plans



Community-Based But Regionally Integrated

- Indigenous response shows Indigenous communities can best take care of their own;



- Indigenous culture and organizations were key to the recovery of Indigenous peoples

Recommendations: Community Plans, Regional Integration



- **Community-Based Emergency Response Plans;**
- **First Nation and Métis Regional Directors of Emergency Management (RDEM);**
- **Indigenous Re-Entry and Recovery Centres;**
- **Prioritize Indigenous hiring at Alberta Health Services (AHS); establish Indigenous Disaster Response Team;**
- **Indigenous Summer Firefighting Crew;**

Next Steps



- **Final Report and Video Launch: Tuesday October 30 at Keyano College from 13:00-15:00;**
- **Submission of Separate First Nations and Métis Reports;**
- **Return of Community-Specific Data.**