

# WHAT SHOULD WE BE WORRIED ABOUT AND WHO CARES?

## Updating Aanischaaukamikw's Emergency Preparedness Plan

By Fiona Hernandez (Conservator) and Harold Bosum (Facilities Manager) Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute, Ouje-Bougoumou, QC [www.creeculture.ca](http://www.creeculture.ca)



### ABOUT

Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute (ACCI) is a museum, library, archive and education centre dedicated to preserving and sharing the culture and traditions of the James Bay Eenuu (Cree) for current and future generations, with a class A moveable cultural property certification.

### THE PROBLEM

Our existing EPP did not address the risks to the institution and few staff knew it existed.

### THE PROJECT

Updated the EPP with 3 key objectives:

- Embed EPP procedures with staff and wider community
- Match EPP to our organisational infrastructure
- Understand and respond to the specific challenges in our region

### THE STEPS

1. **Gather information:** Completed a detailed risk assessment, gathered documents from other institutions and compiled a list of all our unique challenges.
2. **Build a team:** Organized a PLANNING team and RESPONSE team, arranged to meet monthly.
3. **Follow in others' footsteps:** Assembled the plan using the *CCI Emergency Response Planning Workbook* (Version 2, 2014), and consulted EPP information from books, apps and advice from other institutions.
4. **Adapt plan to our needs:** Created extra documents and procedures to respond to our challenges.
5. **Engage with staff and community:** Approached all staff with aspects of the EPP, organised drills, salvage training and developed relationships with local first responders.

## FIRE

In January 2016, there was a major fire at the central heating facility in Ouje-Bougoumou, resulting in major damage, but nobody was hurt. ACCI was unaffected.

### CHALLENGE 1:

**Lack of awareness about emergency preparedness**

Ouje-Bougoumou (founded 1994) and ACCI (opened 2011) are both new and haven't experienced many emergency situations. No other institution in the community has a comprehensive EPP and the needs of ACCI are perceived as different and labour intensive compared to other public buildings in the area. The fire highlighted that an emergency in our new community is possible, and helped staff and community to understand the importance of EPP as well as the need for clear information, dialogue, increased awareness, skills and confidence.

### Addressing the challenge

- ACCI completed a comprehensive risk assessment with all staff. The activity raised awareness of risks in the institution and the community.
- ACCI EPP team responded immediately to the fire, by preparing the building to shelter residents affected by the loss of heating. This service was not used as backup heating was available.
- ACCI EPP team participated in EPP workshops and activities organised by the local fire department, which has concurrently been upgrading the communitywide EPP.

## TESTING OUR PLAN!

Since October 2015, ACCI had two minor emergency situations, and one community building had a major fire. This gave us the opportunity to test and adjust our plan. Each emergency brought up a challenge specific to our three objectives.

Struggling in the snow during fire drill  
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## POWER OUTAGE

In October and December 2015 there were 2 ~30 hr power outages at ACCI. One during work hours, the other over holidays. No objects were damaged, but unsaved electronic data was lost.

### CHALLENGE 2:

**Staffing structure**

Staff availability is irregular due to travel for medical appointments, spending time in home bases up 9 hours away, participating in traditional Cree activities, etc. In addition, we have many staff on short contracts, making it difficult to assemble a trained team that will be consistently present in case of an emergency.

The power outages highlighted that emergency procedures need to be completed, regardless of who is on site.

### Addressing the challenge

ACCI EPP team created checklists for each emergency scenario and each position of the emergency response team, to ensure that the first 12-24 hours of any emergency can be handled by any staff member, giving time for the EPP team to arrive at the scene.

## ALARM MALFUNCTION

In December, days before Christmas holidays, the fire alarm system broke down. ACCI staff was evacuated and could not enter building until the issue was resolved. Constant building monitoring and communication with staff was needed.



table top scenario © ACCI 2016

### CHALLENGE 3:

**Living in a remote community**

There are many challenges ACCI faces by being in a remote community. Two recurring problems are great distance from maintenance companies, and irregular cellphone reception. Few residents have landlines and most communication happens on Facebook through wifi/3G. The alarm malfunction highlighted that repair calls are costly, wait times are around 48hrs, and communication with staff out of hours is a major challenge.

### Addressing the challenge

- ACCI EPP team created a private Facebook group to keep staff up to date with progress of emergencies, and included Facebook names in the emergency call tree.
- ACCI EPP team incorporated expected maintenance wait times to procedural documents and training, and included contingency funds in EPP budget for expensive maintenance calls.

## Looking Forward

Communication, patience and teamwork have been key to our emergency preparedness planning. We have completed our EPP and supplementary documents for all staff, and undertaken fire drills and tabletop scenarios. Later in the year we will be doing salvage training which we will open to staff and volunteer community members. We hope that our approach and solutions can be useful to others in similar situations. We also look forward to hearing what others have done!

## Acknowledgements

EPP Team: Rob Imrie, Laura Phillips, Paula Menarickken Thaverve  
Staff at CCI: Irene Karsten, Evelyn Ayre

### Reference:

Canadian Conservation Institute. CCI Emergency Response Planning Workbook, version 2. Ottawa: CCI, 2014.

If you would like more information, copies of our documents, or just want to chat about EPP, contact [fiona.hernandez@creeculture.ca](mailto:fiona.hernandez@creeculture.ca) and [harold.bosum@creeculture.ca](mailto:harold.bosum@creeculture.ca)

