



FRIENDS OF ESS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF KITIMAT-STIKINE EMERGENCY SUPPORT SERVICES

October 2017

Volume 1

Issue 2

IN THIS ISSUE

Dates to Remember

BC's 2017 Wildfire Season

NESST Comes to Terrace April 13th-15th, 2018

Farewell to Kitimat ESSD Cameron Kelso

Volunteer Spotlight—Sonja Krug

ESS Stats for June 1 to Sept 30, 2017

Recognizing Rhonda Masch

Take our Survey

BC'S 2017 WILDFIRE SEASON

Relentless forest fires burning across BC may be the new normal and these recent events further demonstrate the vital role ESS plays in responding to disaster situations. ESS Responders throughout the province have been on the frontlines these past few months to help evacuees with referrals for basic necessities and provide up to date information.

multiple occasions and provided services such as referrals for groceries, hotel and billeting.

After such a destructive wildfire season, we can't thank our ESS Responders enough. Their insight and expertise is invaluable and their experiences help us to better plan and prepare our region for future wildfire threat.

Although the wildfires were outside of the RDKS boundaries, our ESS Responders were directly involved with the response efforts. In July and August we deployed five volunteers to Prince George and two volunteers to Kamloops to assist in the Reception Centres and Group Lodging Facilities. Our volunteers experienced first-hand the scale and severity of the situation and while there were many challenges they helped to empower many people to find new strength and resiliency.

Trained volunteers are the heart and foundation of the ESS program and it is only through their commitment and compassion that we can continue to do this important service.

As the fires raged throughout the summer, RDKS ESS saw many of the evacuees come to stay in the communities of Terrace, Kitimat and New Hazelton. Our teams opened 'mini' Reception Centres on



ESS Responder, Kieran Campbell provides assistance to evacuees from Williams Lake who came to stay in Terrace in July.



Kitimat ESSD, Cameron Kelso presents Kitimat ESS Leader, Rhonda Masch with a Team Shirt.

FAREWELL TO KITIMAT ESSD CAMERON KELSO

Cameron Kelso, Kitimat ESS Director and Shining Star will be stepping down as Kitimat ESSD to focus on his role as a First Responder with the Kitimat Fire Department and Dad duties to his beautiful family.

Cam's positive attitude and bright smile is inspiring and has given strength, motivation and initiative to many ESS Responders and those he has helped. We appreciate the energy, organization and time he has contributed to the ESS program and wish him every success on the adventures to come.

Cam, your ESS family supports you and holds you close to our hearts.

NESST COMES TO TERRACE APRIL 13TH – 15TH, 2018

The NESST Organizing Committee has been hard at work to design a dynamic training weekend that will bring together over 100 ESS volunteers and staff from across Northern BC. We thank the City of Terrace for sponsoring the costs of our host facility, the Sportsplex where participants will:

- Choose from five exciting workshops with highly knowledgeable and experienced instructors
- Enjoy an evening of appreciation, networking, speakers and culinary delights at the Volunteer Appreciation Banquet
- Take part in a multi-faceted Reception Centre scenario and exercise.

Our theme is "Connected Through Clear Communications" and we encourage all interested people, organizations and businesses to get involved. There are many exciting things planned for the weekend and we need your support. Contact Naomi Gourlay at essdirector@rdks.bc.ca

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: SONJA KRUG

Sonja Krug is a valued leader of the Skeena Valley ESS team who assisted in the BC Wildfire response this past summer and has recently completed the ESS Director's course at the Justice Institute of BC in New Westminster.

How do you prepare for deployment if you are called to help in another community?

To prepare I talked with my family and employer, assembled my grab and go bag which includes comfortable shoes, layers of clothing and my ESS ID.

What challenges did you face in your recent deployment to assist in the Wildfire evacuation response in Prince George?

As the EOC evaluated the situation they made changes, sometimes daily, to the procedures which made it frustrating for volunteers. Just as you developed a system it would be different. Communication from the top down was an issue. Thankfully members of ESS were in various functions and we told each other the latest information we received.

What were some of the key lessons learned during your recent deployment?

To be flexible and adapt to changes. I discovered how important chain of command is and that NESST is valuable in meeting other ESS members from around the province. It was nice to see friendly faces in that scale of an event. I think the most important lesson I learned is that human resiliency is amazing.

Self-care is an important part of ESS. What are some of the self-care tips and tricks that have helped you before, during and after an assignment?

Self-care tips that helped before deployment included the ESS training and mock exercises that



Connie Kirby and Sonja Krug at the Prince George Reception Centre where thousands of evacuees received ESS services.

gave me confidence and prepared me for Prince George as much as possible. During the assignment I had a buddy to check in with throughout the day, talk to and ensure we were both taking breaks and drinking lots of water. I also found making others laugh during such a serious time to be a stress reliever. After the deployment, I made sure to get lots of rest, talk with family and friends and continue to check in with my buddy. We also debriefed with our ESS Directors and team to discuss our experiences which made the transition easier.

WE'RE LISTENING

Help us, help others! Take our quick and easy survey and you will be entered to win a surprise for your Grab and Go Bag. We value your experience and preferences and will use this information to help us fine tune our ESS Plans.

Complete Online:
www.surveymonkey.com/r/99CMPM

RDKS ESS STATS JUNE 1ST-SEPT 30TH:

- 370 Training Hours
- 75 Community Outreach Hours
- 10 Level 1 Activation Hours
- 800 Hours Allocated to BC Wildfires
- 8 New RDKS ESS Volunteers
- 74 Total RDKS ESS Volunteers

RECOGNIZING RHONDA MASCH

We are proud of our volunteers and so grateful for what they do. This issue we honour Rhonda Masch, Co-director of the Kitimat ESS Team.

Rhonda has volunteered with ESS for more than 15 years completing extensive coursework and responding to countless call outs. Her talents, experience and ability to empathize have benefited the region and helped many people on their road to recovery.

She understands the importance of effective communication and is one to listen carefully, show sensitivity and provide relevant and timely information amidst challenging situations. She is always finding ways to encourage, lead and motivate her team.

ESS runs in Rhonda's family. Her interest in ESS was sparked by her parents, Bob and Joyce Mcleod; both visionaries who helped to establish the ESS program in Kitimat and throughout the province. She carries on their legacy and we are lucky that she has also encouraged her daughter, Renee and granddaughter Addison to be active members of ESS.

We believe there are no limits to what Rhonda can achieve. We recognize her as an outstanding ESS team leader, mentor and valued member of our program.

Contributors:

Naomi Gourlay, ESS Director
essdirector@rdks.bc.ca

Megan Glover, ESS Administration
reception@rdks.bc.ca



Emergency Support Services

Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine
Suite 300—4545 Lazelle Avenue
Terrace, BC V8G 4E1
Phone: 250-615-6100 or 1-800-663-3208
Fax: 250-635-9222
Email: essdirector@rdks.bc.ca
www.facebook.com/essrdks