

Xwémalhkwu Homalco First Nation

FireSmart Community Plan



June 12th, 2020

Land Forest People Consulting Ltd.



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Homalco First Nation and Land Forest People wish to acknowledge the contributions made to this project by:

- Strathcona Regional District
- City of Campbell River Fire Department
- Strathcona Forestry Consulting
- Strategic Natural Resource Group



The Homalco FireSmart Board is pleased to accept this plan and the Assessment Report found in appendix I. Congratulations to the community!

Darren Blaney
Chief of Homalco First Nation


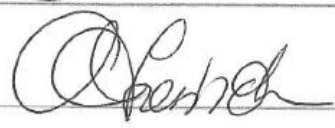
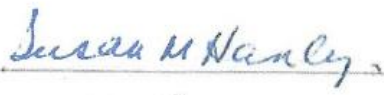
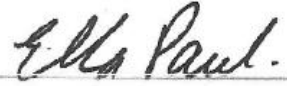
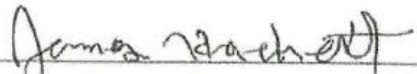

Alison Trenholm
Homalco Councilor

Sue Hanley
Homalco Administrator and Emergency Program Coordinator

Ella Paul
Homalco FireSmart Champion

James Hackett
Homalco FireSmart Champion

Thomas Doherty
Fire Chief, City of Campbell River



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Source: Google Maps

Figure 1 – Xwémalhkwu Traditional Territory



1.0 XWÉMALHKWU

Traditionally known as the “people of fast running waters,” the Xwémalhkwu (Homalco) are named after the turbulent waters surrounding our ancestral home in Bute Inlet. Homalco people lived up and down the inlet, holding residence seasonally in various locations as they drew from the gifts of the land and water.

Displaced from the homelands, Homalco First Nation established a village (IR No .9) just south of Campbell River where the community now resides. The geographical scope of this plan is the Homalco Community as per Figure 2.

The Homalco Community occupies an area of 66.8 hectares of generally level ground. The Community includes 68 residences as well as the Nation administration offices, health centre, and day care. All of the structures on reserve were built in 1991 or later. The 2006 census gives the population as 220 people, with almost half being children ages 14 and under.

The Homalco Community is surrounded by the City of Campbell River and the Strathcona Regional District.

Latitude/Longitude coordinates: 49° 57'05" / 125°14'37"

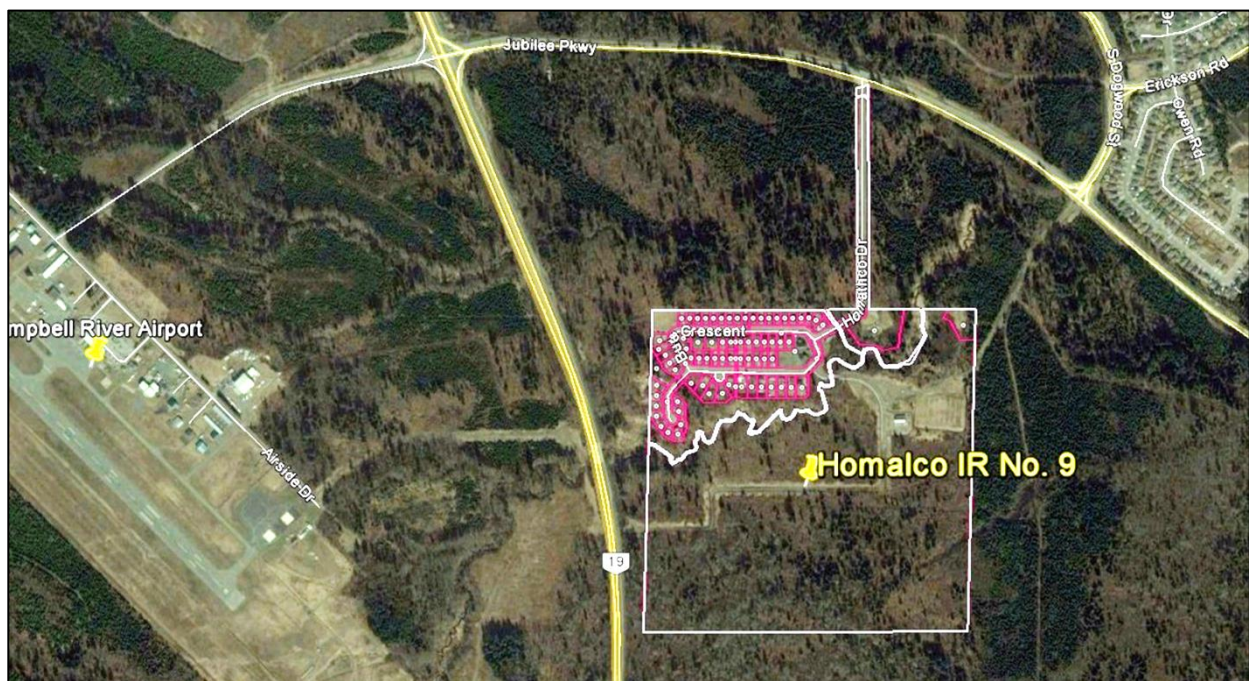
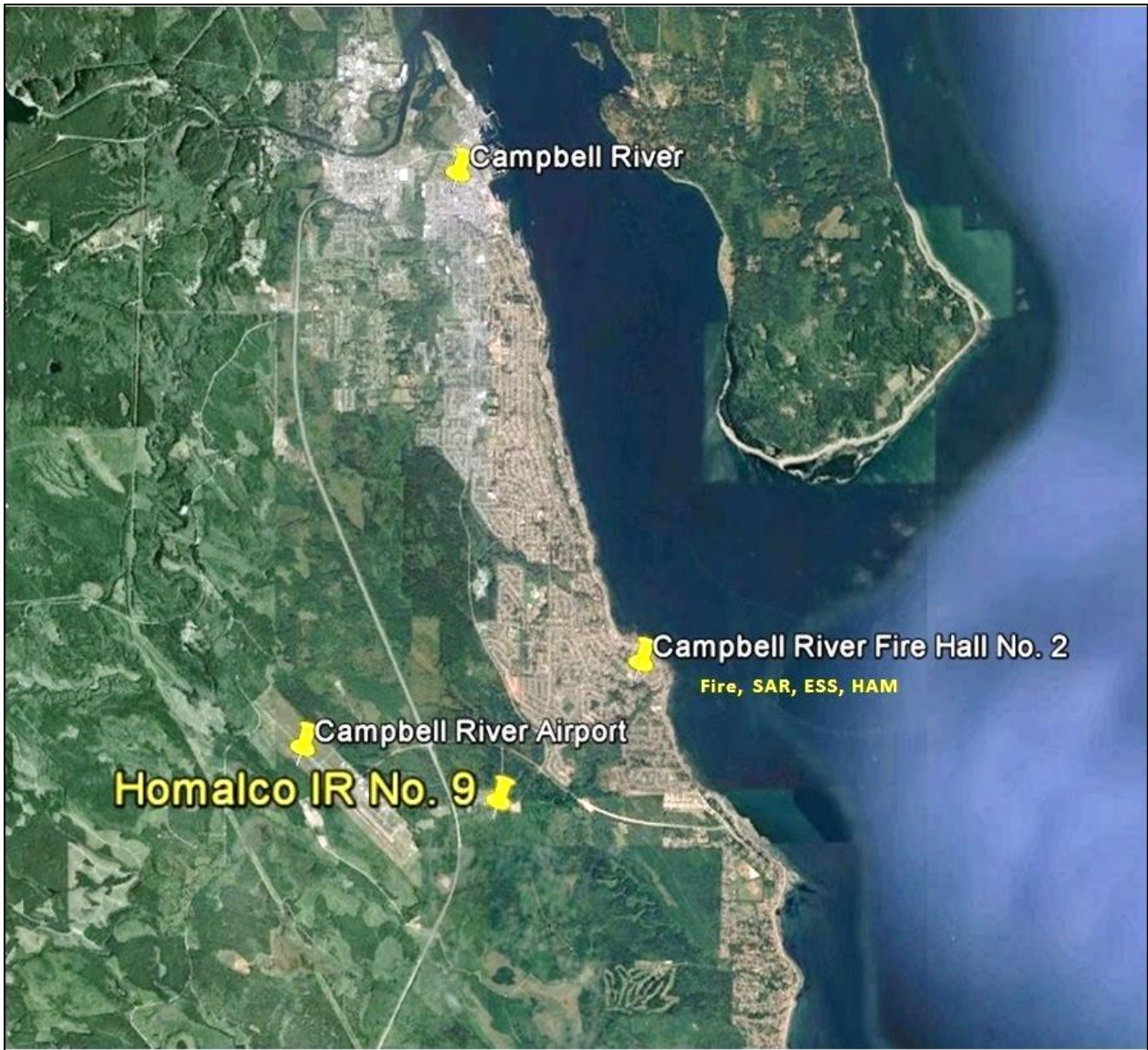


Figure 2 – Homalco Community

From Figure 2 one can see that the reserve is an interface community with housing concentrated in the northwest corner and the remainder of the land forested.



Source: Google Maps

Figure 3 – Locator Map



2.0 BACKGROUND

Climate change is real and now. There is no longer a normal pattern of weather, but we do know that weather events will be more extreme and more frequent. Fire is a natural component of the forests surrounding Homalco, and in the future its presence and impacts will only be more strongly felt by the community. Excluding fire is not an option, but how can we live with fire without disastrous loss of life, property, and resources?

2.1 PREPAREDNESS

The Chief and Council of Homalco First Nation carry ultimate responsibility for the safety of our members and for emergency preparation, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts within our community. Chief and Council directed Homalco staff to establish an emergency preparedness program and through that program staff has prepared the *Homalco All-Hazards Emergency Management Plan*.

The purpose of the *Homalco All Hazards Emergency Management Plan* is to provide a framework for response and recovery activities to be undertaken during and after an emergency, and to protect the health and safety of our community members and our critical infrastructure.

Specifically to:

- Save the lives of our members and emergency response personnel;
- Protect and preserve life, safety, health, and the environment and to minimize damage to property in the face of natural and environmental disasters;
- Provide a process for staff and residents to properly prepare for and respond to emergency events;
- Provide for the orderly emergency evacuation of our community should it be required;
- Provide interim shelter for displaced residents; and
- Provide for orderly return to community when safe to do so.

In preparation of the plan wildfire was identified through hazard, risk, and vulnerability assessment as the highest-risk hazard facing Homalco First Nation.

2.2 FUEL MANAGEMENT

Although surrounded by forest of higher wildfire risk, the Homalco lands are generally low risk due to the mixed deciduous forest cover, wet ground, and streams crossing the land. For these reasons we are not considering fuel management in the non-residential areas of the community at this time.



3.0 COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The goal of the FireSmart program is to protect homes and lives. In the process we will achieve recognition as a FireSmart community.

FireSmart is living with and managing for wildfire. Preparing for the threat of wildfire is a shared responsibility. Community members, community leaders, industry, and government all have responsibility to lessen the effects of wildfire. FireSmart uses preventative measures to reduce wildfire threat to communities.

Community members can take the lead in preparing their homes to be as resistant to wildfire as possible. We will show you how!

Homalco FireSmart communication efforts will promote and support our program in the following ways:

- Raise awareness and develop enthusiasm;
- Attract a community champion;
- Interest members in participating in the local FireSmart board;
- Inform members of program activities;
- Involve home owners in FireSmart home and property assessments; and
- Advertise the FireSmart clean-up weekend.

Tools that we may use:

- Facebook: Xwémalhkwa (Homalco) First Nation;
- Website;
- Newsletter;
- Flyers delivered door-to-door;
- Community meeting; and/or
- Existing tools:
 - Video - FireSmart your home: <https://youtu.be/1VZWwCOPhUk>
 - Posters, pamphlets, etc.

On the following pages we present two Facebook posts used to promote the program and the full message from the second post.





Figure 4 – Facebook Posts



**Homalco Indian Band**

2 hrs · 

FireSmart


With the air thick with smoke right now everyone is thinking about forest fires. All communities in BC are at risk, and being surrounded by forest, Homalco is no different.

In order to reduce the risk to our community the Homalco Emergency Management Committee has teamed up with the First Nations Emergency Services Society, the Union of BC Municipalities, and the Campbell River Fire Department to help us be “FireSmart”.

FireSmart means living with and managing for wildfire. Preparing for the threat of wildfire is a shared responsibility. Community members, community leaders, and all levels of ...

[See More](#)

 You and 3 others

 Like  Comment  Share 



Write a comment...    

[See All](#)

Notes [See All](#)

FireSmart



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FireSmart means living with and managing for wildfire. Preparing for the threat of wildfire is a shared responsibility. Community members, community leaders, and all levels of government have a responsibility to lessen the effects of wildfire. FireSmart uses preventative measures to reduce wildfire threat to communities.

We will be working with Land Forest People Consulting and Margaret Symon of Strathcona Forestry Consulting to assess our properties, homes, and building and identify what we need to do. The assessments will be happening September 24th. There is more information to come on that but please put that date on your calendar.

We are inviting all community members to work together in preparing their homes to be as resistant to wildfire as possible. While the purpose is to protect lives and property, our goal is to be recognized as a FireSmart Community. This FireSmart graphic tells the story on what things we can do!

For more information please contact Keanna or Alison at the office.



4.0 FIRESMART

Homalco undertook this FireSmart project in order to take action toward greater wildfire safety and compatibility with our wildfire environment. Our FireSmart program is targeted at the residential area of the community.

FireSmart means living with and managing for wildfire. Preparing for the threat of wildfire is a shared responsibility. Community members, community leaders, and all levels of government have a responsibility to lessen the effects of wildfire.

By taking advantage of being within the geographic scope of the City of Campbell River's *Community Wildfire Protection Plan*, Homalco was able to attract FireSmart planning funding through the Strategic Wildfire Prevention Initiative.

Through this project we have begun the work of mitigating risk from wildfire on the reserve using FireSmart principles. Within this project we have:

- Reach out to provincial liaison and local emergency management and response agencies;
- Developed communication strategy and built community awareness;
- Worked with the Campbell River Fire Department and the Strathcona Regional District Emergency Management Coordinator;
- Formed a FireSmart Community Board;
- Undertaken a community assessment;
- Developed this FireSmart Community Plan;
- Held a FireSmart Day Event;
- Amended our emergency management plan to reflect FireSmart planning;
- Trained two FireSmart Community Champions; and
- Created and submitted an application for FireSmart Community Recognition Status.

4.1 FIRESMART BOARD

Homalco has established a FireSmart Board listed below:

- Darren Blaney, Chief of Homalco First Nation;
- Alison Trenholm, Councilor and Emergency Operations Centre Director;
- Sue Hanley, Administrator and Emergency Program Coordinator;
- Ella Paul and James Hackett, FireSmart Champions; and
- Thomas Doherty, Fire Chief, City of Campbell River.



5.0 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

A community wildfire hazard assessment report was produced following an assessment of homes within the community. The report was authored by Margaret Symon RPF PCP of Strathcona Forestry Consulting and can be found in Appendix I. Individual assessments can be found in Appendix II.

The assessment focused on the residential section of the reserve. The land is relatively level and surrounded by forest. There are 76 households and two community buildings. The homes are relatively close together and home ignition zones overlap one-another. A mix of brush and grass fuels with other combustibles throughout the community there is sufficient fuel continuity to enable a fire to spread rapidly to all homes and the single main access route to the community.

The situation, however, is such that residents will be able to substantially reduce their exposure to loss with a relatively small investment of time and effort.

A few areas of concern were identified through the assessments as priorities for community attention:

1. Roof maintenance. Roofing material is universally asphalt shingles which are Class A for fire risk. However, faulty or dirty gutters were common and represent a risk to the homes due to accumulated combustible material and susceptibility to flying embers. Fix and regularly clean gutters and down spouts.
2. Building exterior materials. Vinyl siding used throughout the community offers very little protection. As new homes are built, and as exterior siding is replaced, the use of materials such as stucco, metal, brick and concrete offer superior resistance to wildfire.
3. Combustibles within the FireSmart 1.5 metre non-combustible zone around homes. As a priority remove combustible materials from this zone. Non-combustible ground cover materials should also be established. Do not block access to decks. Remove brush and combustibles from decks to ensure emergency access is not impeded. Combustibles may include rattan doormats, flammable patio furniture, and firewood stacked next to the house.
4. Excessive vegetation including coniferous vegetation within the community's interface priority zones. Required is the alteration and reduction of fuel, including:
 - a. Remove combustibles surrounding homes (within the 1.5 m zone and out to 10m around the home). In the event of a fire, combustibles surrounding the home will impede fire fighter access, and will also help feed a fire.
 - b. Remove hazardous fuels within home priority zones.
 - c. Removed dead and down woody debris.
 - d. Prune and thin coniferous trees.
 - e. Remove broom along road rights-of-way.
5. Work in conjunction with the Fire Department to ensure all homes are equipped with working smoke alarms.
6. Work in conjunction with the Fire Department to ensure all homes and community buildings have clearly visible address signage, especially at night.
7. Stack firewood or wooden building materials a minimum of 10 metres away from any structure.



6.0 FIRESMART EVENT

A community FireSmart event was held in conjunction with a village spring clean-up. This allowed for a more extensive event with multiple goals of community fire safety, FireSmart, and community engagement.



Homalco Fire Safety Day

Homalco Hall
9am to 1pm

- 🌿 Home fire safety presentation
- 🌿 Community cleanup - trash and recycling
- 🌿 Help with FireSmarting your home - brushing and pruning
- 🌿 Fire extinguisher training
- 🌿 Fire Safety House
- 🌿 BBQ lunch at 1pm at the Hall

Fire Safety House

Dunk Tank

We will be bringing bins in to remove trash, recycling, and brush and garden waste. In preparation for removal, over the next week please bring out any materials that you want disposed of and place them at the curb. We will pick it up on Saturday.

UBCM Union of BC Municipalities

CAMPBELL RIVER FIRE RESCUE

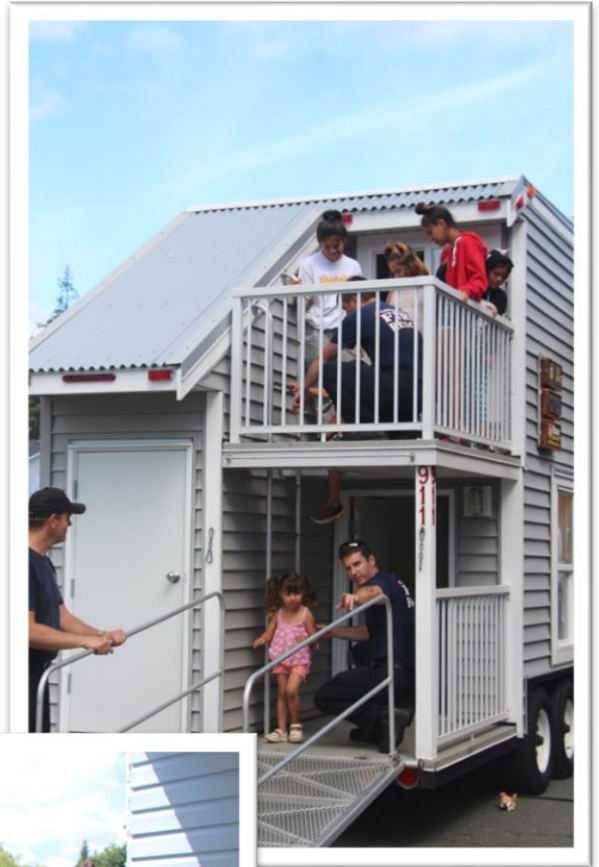
FireSmart

STRATEGIC NATURAL RESOURCE CONSULTANTS

Strathcona REGIONAL DISTRICT

Land Forest People.





7.0 COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

Two FireSmart Community Champions received training. We congratulate Ella Paul and James Hackett. Training was delivered by John Stechyshyn, RPF of Strategic Natural Resource Consultants Inc. (250.287.2246 ext.294).



8.0 ACTION PLAN

The following table lists completed activities upon which future action items will build.

Current Activity	Comments
FireSmart Project	Community engagement, home assessments, FireSmart plan, community event, and application for recognition.
All-Hazards Emergency Management Plan update	Will have FireSmart project embedded in the plan and action items.

The following table details the recommended action items for the community to undertake to reduce risk and losses from wildfire.

Priority	Activity
1	Home preparedness. In conjunction with the Housing Department and the Campbell River Fire Department, ensure all homes have functional smoke and CO alarms and fire extinguishers.
2	Remove combustibles from around homes. This includes recyclable materials, potentially hazardous materials, and residual solid waste. Provide appropriate solid waste removal for members to enable them to undertake the cleanup. Assist Elders and others requiring assistance to undertake the cleanup.
3	Vegetation management in the immediate area of homes. Train community members in safe practices for vegetation management and undertake vegetation modification and removal to meet FireSmart standards.
4	Continue education and engagement activities to keep FireSmart top of mind.
5	Home maintenance. In conjunction with the Housing Department, undertake maintenance and cleaning of gutters, siding, decks, and exterior stairs in order to increase wildfire resilience.
6	Building exterior materials. As new homes are built, and as exterior siding is replaced, install materials such as stucco, metal, brick, or concrete.

8.1 2020/2021 PROGRAM

Community Resiliency Investment Program funding for the 2020/2021 fiscal year has been secured. The activities will include:

- Member education messaging and distribution;
- Delivery of a second FireSmart event (now subject to COVID-19 restrictions); and
- Delivery of a wildfire themed emergency operations centre (EOC) tabletop exercise.



8.2 COMMUNITY RECOGNITION

With the completion of this plan an application will be made for FireSmart Community Recognition.



9.0 APPENDICES



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APPENDIX I. ASSESSMENT REPORT



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APPENDIX II. INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT FORMS



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APPENDIX III. FIRESMART EVENT AGENDA AND PRESENTATION



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