



**WATCH LAKE – NORTH GREEN LAKE  
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT**



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[www.wlnglfiredept.org](http://www.wlnglfiredept.org)

*Spring Newsletter 2025*

Board of Directors and Fire Officers (to contact please email your request via [wlnglvfd@gmail.com](mailto:wlnglvfd@gmail.com))

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| Ron Thurston, President/Firefighter liaison          | Lee Granberg, Insurance            | Cory Rushinko, Director                            |
| Roy Allan, Past President                            | Bob Nathane, Website/Facebook      | Tom Bachynski, Director                            |
| Gisele Polisenio, Vice President and Social Convener | Alan Watrich, Fund-raising         | John Dustan, Director                              |
| David Kneale, Treasurer                              | Guy Aggiss, Director               | Ernie Schmidt, Director, Interdepartmental Liaison |
|  | Laura Dewar, Secretary, Membership | Andy Polaniak, Fire Chief                          |

**Fire Chief’s Message**

This past year was very typical in terms of our usual types of callouts. We responded to numerous calls for smoke and/or wildfires as well as down power lines. We also attended a few minor motor vehicle incidents and BC Ambulance Service lift assists. Fortunately, we had no major structure fires. People seem to be much more aware of fire risk factors, such as dirty chimneys and clearly this awareness is paying off.

In light of our recent wildfires in the last few years as well as what’s happening all over the world, FireSmartering your property is more important now than ever before. We are working on getting this information out to the community and can help anyone who needs information on this. There is also information on our website ([www.wlnglfiredept.org](http://www.wlnglfiredept.org)).

We have been very busy with training as usual, working our way through the annual minimum training requirements set out by the Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC). This includes theory, written exams and the subsequent practical component to a dozen different modules. We also brought in instructors and examiners to do emergency vehicle driver training this past summer. Our officers continue to work with



Engine 21 all decked out for the Santa Claus Parade in 100 Mile House last November

the South Green Lake VFD to do officer training as well as some courses they've done with several south Cariboo fire departments.

We were all saddened by the passing of long-time member, Richard Hogg, late last year. Two members of our firefighting family also lost their spouses.

We hope everyone has a great uneventful summer.

Andy Palaniak  
Fire Chief WLNGLVFD

### **Message from the Society Directors**

Well, it's getting into Spring when the snow melts along with the lake ice and then we should get some rain. The rain will bring fresh new green grass which undoubtedly will turn brown by the time Summer arrives. BC Wildfire used to have a 1<sup>st</sup> of May date for the new fire Season; however, they did away with "The Fire Season Starts May 1<sup>st</sup>", as they realized that the fire season doesn't follow the calendar. It can happen anytime.

This year your fire department will undertake a project called "**FireSmarting Your Home**". We are fortunate to have some of our firefighters as well as community member Lynda, complete the FireSmart training modules so they will be ready later this spring to begin helping others in our fire protection area. We will be arranging seminars, where we hope many of you will attend and learn what you can do to your property to reduce the risk from wildfires.

We experienced two major fires in 2017 and 2021 where our properties became a target for wildfire and many of our residents were put under evacuation orders. In 2017 when residents were evacuated, our firefighters spent days going from one property to another to try and make your homes a little less prone to the approaching fire. Luckily the wind shifted and the fire went around us and only a few of our residents' properties were damaged.

In this newsletter you will find a link to a video that will show you how important FireSmarting your property is. Once you have had an opportunity to review it, your Department will contact you to see if you would like a review of your spring cleanup efforts. During the review, Lynda and the trained members will make suggestions on what other things you can do to improve the FireSmarting of your home. From the video and suggestions, you will see how a little effort can reduce the chances of losing your home to a wildfire.

The Department hopes that everyone gets involved in FireSmarting their properties so that a situation similar to what happened to Los Angeles doesn't happen here.

The Directors

## Accolades for our Fire Department!

Last month we heard that a small volunteer fire department in the northwest part of the province sent a request for information to the Office of the Fire Commissioner (OFC) about the steps required to become a Society. The OFC's response was to contact us, stating that “our VFD is the best run and operated Society department in the province of British Columbia.” It is wonderful that this information reached us. What a compliment!



And more recently, Rocky Mountain Phoenix, the company that inspects much of our firefighting gear told the members that we are the “best rural fire department they’ve seen”. They do inspections throughout all of British Columbia and Alberta. Again, this is very welcoming news!

This accomplishment has been made possible in large part by YOU through your annual fire dues, donations and volunteer work (such as helping with the bottles and cans recycling program). We are an “**independent**” fire department, which means we rely on the annual dues paid by you to keep the doors open. We all benefit from this, because we, as property owners, don’t pay for fire protection through our annual property taxes. This means our annual taxes are much lower than other regions!

## FireSmart Presentations – mark your calendars!

### FireSmart presentation

**Watch Lake Community Hall**

**Wednesday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1:00  
p.m.**

**or**

**Wednesday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 p.m.**



Our very own FireSmart Coordinator, Lynda, has finished her online course requirements and is now preparing to visit concerned owners on their properties in our fire protection region later this spring and summer. She is also qualified to give presentations and will be attending various events throughout our area to promote FireSmart practices.

In the meantime, the Cariboo Regional District FireSmart Coordinator Travis Flanagan will be coming out to do a presentation on the FireSmart program and how to prepare for the upcoming wildfire season. These presentations run for roughly 1 hour with videos and information. You can choose either a daytime or evening presentation.

### **Independent volunteer fire departments unite**

Our past president Tom Manion came up with the brilliant idea of reaching out to the other independent VFDs (IVFDs) within the Cariboo Regional District. There are 10 IVFDs, including us. Thanks to the efforts of director Ernie Schmidt, we had our first meeting of all

10 fire departments in January. It was a successful and informative gathering.

Many IVFDs struggle with operating a fire department on a limited budget. None (including us) receive funding of any kind from the Cariboo Regional District. Like us, these other IVFDs rely on the annual fire protection fees that are paid by the community property owners. The increasing costs of insurance, equipment, training, etc. are very challenging but we do not want to have to increase fees. We look forward to our next IVFD meeting in April, where we will work on innovative ideas to keep costs as low as possible.

Some IVFDs are also struggling with acquiring enough gear to safely equip their members. It was gratifying to be able to help two departments with the sale and donation of some of our used gear. This gear was no longer in use by us as we were able to purchase top of the line updated SCBA gear last year and at a substantial discount.

It wasn't that many years ago that we were in the same position as these smaller departments – flat broke and desperately needing vehicles and gear. We were so grateful for the equipment donations we received back then. Now it's our turn to pay it forward!



We sold much of our older, unused gear to McLeese Lake VFD in February

### **We have Four New Directors!**

At our Annual General Meeting last August, we were extremely fortunate to have 4 people join our Board; Tom Bachynski, John Dustan, Cory Rushinko and Ernst Schmidt. The injection of fresh thinking and innovative mindsets was just what the doctor ordered! Read below for an introduction to one of our new directors.

### **Dr. Ernst (Ernie) Schmidt**



Being an avid fly fisherman, we moved to Watch Lake in 2023 in order to fulfill my retirement dream. Having always been too busy outside my career, I decided to stop with the excuses and get involved to make my community the best it could be. Having few useful skills, I became a bottle sorter at the #1 Firehall only to be demoted (poor performance?) to a director. I soon learned of the operation challenges of a volunteer organization in a community where the biggest threat to our homes is FIRE!

At the moment, I have a 'bee in my bonnet' and am driving to bring Firesmart BC awareness, front and centre, to our community. Also, being the liaison to the other independent VFDs has brought a lot more awareness through collaboration.

### **FireSmart Presentation video**

Make sure you view this video which was a FireSmart BC presentation at Williams Lake VFD in May 2023. Whether the fire starts within your neighbourhood or the surrounding forest, things that you can easily do around your home may make the difference in saving your home and your community. After watching this, please spread the word. Be proactive and let's be FireSmart!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9BhetGzHQNY>