

FIRE WAGON 1

Unveiled for the Peace

By Heather Fossum



State of the art fire protection units are now here for Ranchers to help **protect their properties from wildfire in northeast BC**. Fire Wagon #1, with its professional fire fighting gear, was unveiled to a 25+ crowd of agriculture producers on August 13th.



Left: Jodi & Jackie, who are part of the Thiessen Ranch fire crew, also helped prepare the treats. Thank you.

Right: Step-in sprinklers, McLeod rakes, Pulaski axes and spades.

Delicious snacks & refreshments (courtesy of the Thiessen Family) and handouts from Northern Fire WoRx and the Peace River Forage Association (PRFA) greeted people when they arrived. The evening began with a show and tell of various pieces of fire fighting equipment (water thief, Hansen nozzle, 3 way splitter, back check valve, tandem coupling, McLeod rake, Polaski ax and drip torch). Some of those in attendance were able to identify every item as they were part of the 150 people who took the spring Wildland Fire Training.

Sonja Leverkus ([Northern Fire WoRx](#) & [Shifting Mosaics](#)), Nadia Mori (PRFA Coordinator) welcomed everyone to the reveal of Fire Wagon #1 (FW1). Two new members of Northern Fire WoRx, locals Atlin Thiessen and Ivan Harbidge, were officially inaugurated and given crew sweaters as was collaborator Jack Thiessen.

Sonja believes that people who live in rural places need to be able to take care of themselves. Often help in remote areas is slow to come. There simply are not enough trained humans to handle the fires we had in 2016, 2018, & 2023 and currently have in 2024. Many of the trained humans are not experienced; this year fifty percent of the BC Wildfire crews were rookies.

Ag Producers and Northern Fire WoRx crew with FW1



The Peace River Forage Association (PRFA) of BC received funding for the “Training & Acquisition of Wildfire Response Equipment,” which we call the “Fire Schools & Fire Wagons” project. Total project funding is \$644,728 with \$432,000 allocated to the two Fire Wagons (Wildfire Structural Protection Unit Trailers) and the remaining to providing Fire Schools (Wildland Fire Training).



Snacks and information for attendees.

Sonja is now seeing forests burn in places multiple times in a season (they fought fire in same spot in Sept 2023 and in the spring of 2023).

Not enough humans, experience and a history of BC Wildfire getting pulled elsewhere = limited wildfire suppression resources for northeast BC.

Increased wildfire activity = increased risk of wildfire damage to homes, infrastructure & animals.

⇒ Ranchers/Farmers need to have training and access to proper equipment in order to protect their properties from wildfires.

This story began back in 2022 when Sonja and Nadia teamed up with the SP Stockmens to provide Wildland Fire Training in Arras and Hudson's Hope. During the schools participants repeatedly remarked about how great it would be if **ranchers/farmers** had access to more equipment since they **are often the first boots on the ground in terms of detection and initial attack**. Sonja and Nadia

recognized this need.



Nadia Mori holding up a drip torch during the show & tell.

FIRE WAGON 1

Unveiled for the Peace continued....



A rural source of wildfire suppression can work alongside BC Wildfire Services & ultimately **enhance our region's ability to respond to wildfire.** Plus, when BC Wildfire Services gets pulled elsewhere in the province, as we saw in the summer of 2023, these rural wildland firefighters can be there to protect homes & animals in their communities.

Ranchers/Farmers have a vested interest to protect their homes & animals from wildfire. All they need is the training & gear to become part of the solution.

For more info on this project: check out articles in 2 previous newsletters (Spring Issue 98: pg 9-13 and Summer Issue 99: pg 9). The project webpage will be available early this winter.



Nadia Mori, Jack Thiessen and Dr Sonja Leverkus.

There was a clear vision, but how to fund it?

Last winter the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food offered funding for emergency preparedness. Amidst an already packed winter Nadia and Sonja worked together to hammer out an application for wildland fire training and equipment in northeast BC - and success! The region will benefit from their efforts for years to come; especially if training opportunities can continue onward.

Top notch training and gear make the Fire Wagons an absolute **GAME CHANGER** in terms of moving water and protecting structures in rural & remote areas. This trailer (\$220,000+), is the gold standard - a "mother ship" of sorts - and Sonja hopes that one day there will be a number of smaller ones throughout the region. The trailers were made in the US, outfitted by WASP (Kelowna) with equipment & custom shelves and inventoried/engraved by Northern FireWoRx.

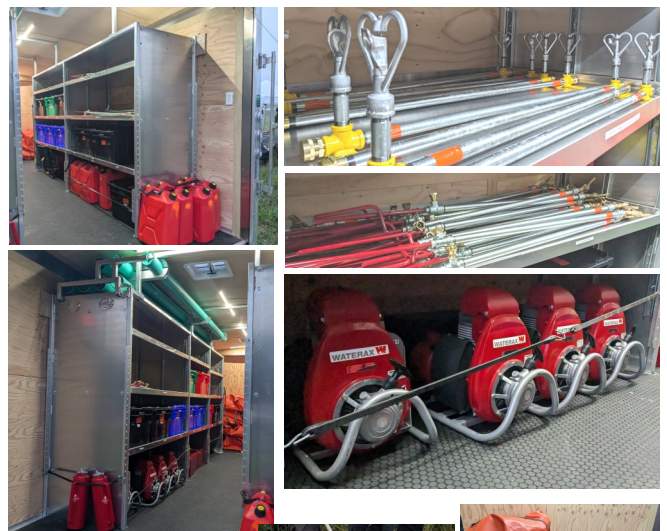
Homebase for Fire Wagon #1 will be in the North Peace at Jack Thiessen's (FW2 the South Peace). Hosts are ranchers with fire experience who are also willing to be involved in inventory and maintenance of the trailers.

The units will be used for rural property protection and also for Prescribed fire, as appropriate use of prescribed fire can help reduce the risk of wildfire. Using the equipment in a prescribed fire setting increases the hands-on experience of those involved which makes those people better prepared to fight wildfire. Ralph Kermer, Wildland Fire Training instructor with 30 years experience in wildfire, says "prescribed fire is an invaluable experience for dealing with wildland fire."

Next Steps: Fire Wagon #2 (FW2) will be ready late this fall (delays due to supply-chain shortages).

- * Early this winter inventory check-lists, training requirements to sign-out a trailer, rental deployment amounts and funding for the maintenance/insurance of the trailer will be finalized. Please keep an eye out for this information over the winter.
- * Next spring more opportunities for wildland fire training & recertifications will be available as well as advanced wildland fire training. Please stay tuned.

The legacy of these Fire Wagons will remain for many fire seasons to come.



cw: FW1, sprinklers, Mark 3 pumps, water bladders, BB4 pump, L side & R side of trailer.



"With the existing wildfire potential, another strategy to protect ranch communities is reducing fuel loads on crown land through more grazing." Jack Thiessen

The PRFA of BC received funding for Training & Acquisition of Wildfire Response Equipment (aka Fire Schools & Fire Wagons) through the IAF Food Security Emergency Planning & Preparedness Fund. The project will continue until Dec 31, 2025.