



# Continuing to support recovery after the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfires – research projects

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Researcher	Funding amount	Project details
Dr. Geneviève Belleville, Université Laval	\$500,000	Dr. Belleville and her team will aim to understand the mental health needs of the people of Fort McMurray and make widely available tools to help alleviate peoples' psychological distress and promote resilience. The data generated from this study will be used by the province's health authorities to develop mental health services that meet the needs of different members of the community.
Dr. Arthur Chan, University of Toronto	\$500,000	Dr. Chan will lead a team that will determine whether or not the residual ash from the fires will pose health risks to the people of Fort McMurray and surrounding areas. The team will collect indoor dust from homes and outdoor ash samples and measure the concentration of known toxic compounds that can cause lung diseases at high enough concentrations.
Dr. Nicola Cherry, University of Alberta	\$499,400	Dr. Cherry and her team will follow career, part-time and volunteer firefighters who were deployed to fight the Alberta wildfires over several years to determine whether their respiratory or mental health were damaged by their exposure to the fires, ultimately assessing the importance of respiratory protection and mental health support in keeping firefighters healthy.
Dr. Chris Le, University of Alberta	\$500,000	During the fires, the combustion of houses and other materials resulted in the accumulation of toxic ash and fine particulates which spread through the air and ended up in surrounding communities. Dr. Le will lead a team to measure and compare the level of chemical contaminants, before and after the wildfires, in traditional foods such as local game meat and locally harvested plants in the Mikisew Cree First Nation (Fort Chipewyan), Fort McKay First Nation and Métis communities.
Dr. Stephanie Montesanti, University of Alberta	\$412,200	Dr. Montesanti and her team will partner with the Nistawayou Association Friendship Centre (Fort McMurray) to examine how the health and well-being of the Indigenous residents of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo were impacted by the wildfires.
Dr. David Olson, University of	\$500,000	Dr. Olson will lead a team that will study a group of pregnant women and new mothers who were forced to

Alberta		evacuate because of the wildfires. These women will be asked to engage in short bursts of expressive writing about their feelings about the fires to determine if this form of therapy reduces stress and improves their pregnancy outcomes and newborn development. If successful, this intervention could be applied to other victims of natural disasters easily and on a population-wide level.
Dr. Peter Silverstone, University of Alberta	\$500,000	Dr. Silverstone and his team will study the effects of the wildfires and evacuation on the psychological and emotional health of children and adolescents 5-18 years of age, with a view to better understanding the factors that contribute to positive mental health and resiliency.