

WILDFIRE AWARENESS

2022





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Rocky Mountain Goat

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McBride sisters on duty with BC Wildfire

BY ANDREA ARNOLD

McBride residents, sisters and best friends Constance and Charlotte Rauter have not been dreaming of being BC Wildfire Firefighters since they were little. For both of them, their interest in the career is relatively new, and they are loving this opportunity to work alongside each other.

"When I was in Grade 11, there was a presentation by BC Wildfire at the High school," said Constance, now 21. "It is an outdoor job with a great crew. It sounded like a neat experience."

Valemount-based Wildfire Technician Chikara Hiroe (Chico) encouraged her to apply for the junior program.

"I started the Junior Program for the Robson Valley in an attempt to recruit locally," said Hiroe. "Locals are familiar with the area, are more likely to stay in the zone for longer (less turn-around), and especially these days they already have a place to stay."

Charlotte (17) has watched as her older sister went away each summer for the past three years, and listened to her stories with growing interest.

"Constance's involvement was a big motivator," she said. "Without her, I may not have applied at all. As a homeschooled student, I may not even have heard of the opportunity. I thought I would apply for the junior program my Grade 12 year."

In the meantime, she joined the McBride District Volunteer Fire Department in November of 2020. It fueled her desire to to learn more.

"I found out through Constance and Chico that BC Wildfire were accepting grade 11's this year because there were not enough

Grade 12 applicants," she said. "So I applied."

"Charlie (Charlotte) is a valuable member of the fire department," said department Chief Dave Hruby. "She is reliable and hardworking. I gladly provided her with a reference as part of her application to BCWF. I believe her sister has a similar work ethic. I am proud of both, and am excited to see them continue in fire suppression careers."

Charlotte began her training in March. The crew underwent one day of training every two weeks for four months before having to complete and pass the WFX-FIT test. Crew members are required to accomplish the following tasks in 14 min and 30 seconds. Junior members have 17 min and 45 seconds to finish. Hiroe gives the Juniors a little extra push.

"I get them to aim for 14:30 so they know how hard it is for them and how hard they will need to train to pass the fit test as a crew member," said Hiroe.

While wearing a 9lb belt, individuals must complete the following laps on a ramp 20m long with five feet elevation.

Each round trip lap totals 40m:

- four laps over the ramp with a Mk 3 fire pump on back weighing 65 lbs
- two laps around the ramp carrying Mk 3 fire pump
- 25 laps over the ramp with a hose bag weighing 55lbs
- two laps dragging a sled weighing 40 lbs

"Charlotte carried just over double her body weight for over 1200m (distance) and around 90m (vertical) in under 14:30," said Hiroe. "It is especially challenging for her as her stride is not nearly as long as a person that is 6 feet tall. I was impressed."

This year is the fourth year that



Charlotte (junior fire crew member) and Constance Rauter (fire crew member) ready for action. They are holding some of the equipment commonly used by wildfire fighters. Charlotte has a hose slung over her shoulder, and is holding a polaski in front of her while Constance balances a chainsaw. /SUBMITTED

Constance has been employed by BC Wildfire Services.

"My junior year and first year were pretty quiet," she said. They aided locally during severe flooding in 2020. Constance was a part of the crew that filled approximately 2500 sandbags for use around McBride.

"Last summer, my first real experience came when my crew was deployed to Manitoba. I

CONT'D ON P10

Rocky Mountain Goat

SUMMER BREAK

There will be no newspaper August 4th to accommodate staff vacation. Thanks for your understanding and support! We will continue to post breaking news on our website during that time.

Irene Berndsen

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see LISTINGS ON
PAGE 15



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WILDFIRE AWARENESS

Holding the line

By GOAT STAFF WITH FILES FROM BC Gov

The BC Wildfire Service employs approximately 1,100 firefighters each year. According to the Province, staff work on one of four crew types spread across the province and are able to respond to new fires in as little as 30 minutes.

Initial attack crews are small, 3- or 4-person quick-response teams that are able to control approximately 94% of all new wildfires in B.C. Unit crews are 20-person teams specialized in sustained attack operations like installing hose and pump lines, burn operations and removing fuel using chainsaws. Rapattack crews are a specialized 3-person initial attack crew who use medium-lift helicopters equipped with hoist and rappel gear to access difficult-to-reach incidents. Parattack crews

are a specialized initial attack crew that are deployed to incidents by parachuting out of fixed-wing aircraft.

In addition to wildfire crews employed directly by the BCWS, thousands of contract firefighters join the response to B.C.'s wildfires each year.

At the peak of the 2021 wildfire season, nearly 4,000 personnel were involved in wildfire response efforts. This included upwards of 1,400 personnel who were contracted to provide various fire-related functions, including fire suppression, tree falling, structure protection, first aid, catering, and security.

According to the B.C. government, Lightning (and a rare chance of other natural causes) causes approximately 60 per cent of wildfires. Human activity causes approximately 40 per cent of wildfires.





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and those helping with the
firefighting effort...



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From all of us at the
Rocky Mountain Goat





To our provincial wildfire firefighters and all those helping with the wildfire effort - thank you!

From the Mayor, Council & Village staff

Thank you to the selfless
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Thank you to all the wildfire crews for keeping our province safe!



From the Village of McBride
Mayor, Council and Staff

Firefighters put themselves at risk
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A message from your local MLA



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WILDFIRE AWARENESS

HOW FIRESMART TREATMENTS INFLUENCE WILDFIRE SPREAD



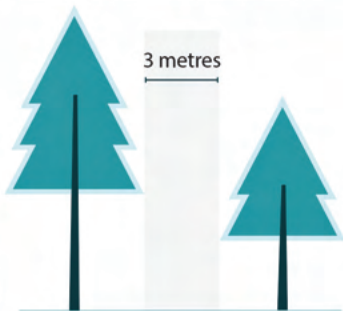
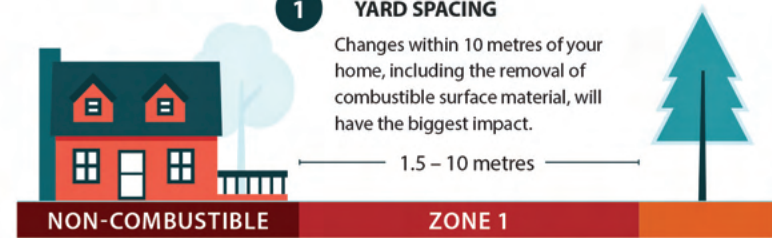
Wildfire can follow a path from a forest or grassland to your home. A wildfire moving from the tops of trees can be slowed if the trees are spaced out. It can be further slowed by flame-resistant plants and shrubs in your yard. Since plants have different flammability, consider spacing out your plants to increase your home's ability to withstand a wildfire.



FIRESMART RULES OF THUMB

1 YARD SPACING

Changes within 10 metres of your home, including the removal of combustible surface material, will have the biggest impact.



2 TREE SPACING

Spacing trees at least 3 metres apart will help reduce the intensity of a wildfire.



3 PRUNE TREES

Prune all tree branches within 2 metres of the ground.



THANK YOU

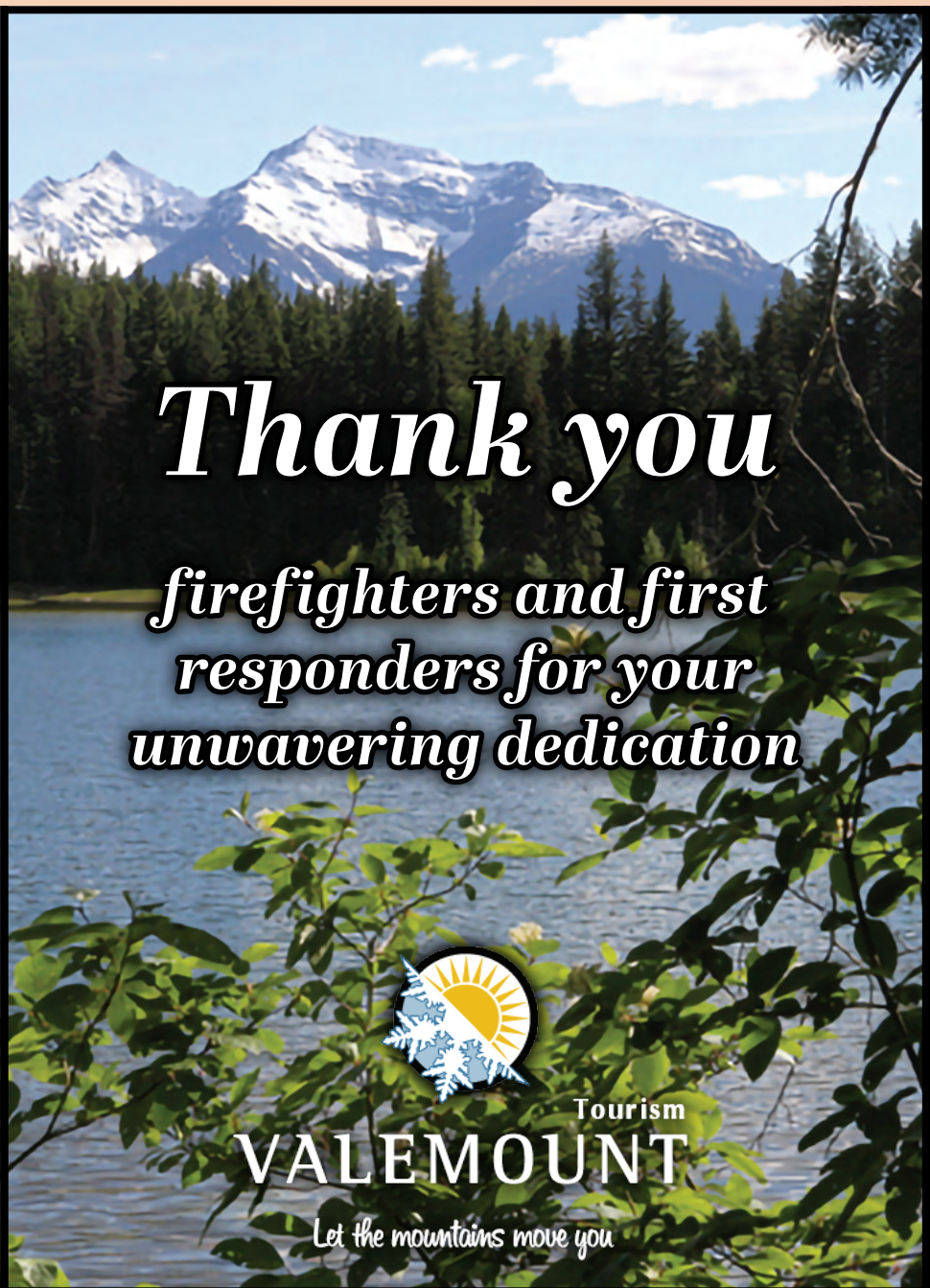
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McBride firefighting sisters... CONT'D FROM P1

was nervous and excited. You step into the experience knowing what is happening and what to expect, and are full of adrenaline. Once you start working, it all falls into place and the training takes over.”

This summer has been a quiet one so far, so Charlotte has not had her first wildfire experience.

However, crew members do not just sit around waiting for calls to come in. They report to work every day at 8:30am and spend their days on project-based tasks like trail clearing, fuel management (creating fuel-free zones), helipad building practice, taking courses and proficiency training or completing fire-related field exercises.

“A fuel-free zone is an area that has been cleared of debris that can burn, creating an area where the fire can’t continue,” Constance explained.

Their days involve much practical physical training, but they are also scheduled one hour at the end of each day to ensure they maintain their fitness level.

In most call-out situations they are required to carry their line pack weighing an average of 20lbs. These bags contain, at minimum, drinking water, clothing, flagging tape, first aid items, safety equipment, personal hygiene supplies.

When a call comes in, the three-person crew receives coordinates and they mobilize. They arrive either by land or air, depending on the situation. The crew leader assesses the situation to determine which suppression tactics are most appropriate. Then the crew sets to work creating access to the fire, constructing a fire line, and setting up a water delivery system through hose lays.

“Ultimately the crew tries to respond as quickly, efficiently, and safely as possible to put out the fire,” said Constance.

Crews then work to extinguish hotspots and help contain the burning area.

Both Constance and Charlotte are part of the initial attack team. In a call out situation, Constance would be deployed as a part of a set crew. As a Junior member, Charlotte may or may not be assigned to the same crew, as Hiroe may move her between supervisors to allow for a more varied experience.

Although the job is very physical, there is a lot of mental energy that is involved as well.

The experience teaches respect and responsibility for the environment. It draws attention to the important things like taking an extra minute or two to ensure that your campfire is put out.

“People need to be more responsible in the things they do,” said Charlotte. “What you do can impact your whole community.”

Constance wholeheartedly agreed.



Constance Rauter works to extinguish a hot spot buried deep in a tree stump. /SUBMITTED

Hiroe also believes that public education about wildfires is important for everyone. He has observed that fire behaviour has increased in extreme ways since he started in 2008.

“Firesmart—<https://firesmartbc.ca/>—is an invaluable tool to educate residents on methods to protect their homes,” he said. “It provides ideas for ways people can be active while on evacuation alert that can help prevent their homes from being caught in a fire. After getting stuff packed up, these tasks can make them feel useful.”

The physical demands of a type 1 crew is such that it’s generally a “young person’s job,” said Hiroe. “Our crews are mostly made up of people under 30, so yes it’s important for them to be active in BC Wildfire.”

Both of the sisters would love to see more people get involved with BC Wildfire. Although anyone at any age can apply (beginning in Grade 11), they would specifically like to see the younger generation step up, and hope that their involvement might motivate young females.

“It is a good job,” said Constance. “It is a lot of being outside, learning, and working with a crew. No one should be held back due to the view that it is a male-dominated workforce.”

I’ve always been told that jobs like these would be difficult for me because I am not a big person, but I think as long as you are determined it is 100% doable,” said Charlotte. “Others facing that same advice need to not think about what you can’t do, but to see what you can.”

“I am very proud of Charlotte,” said Constance. “She worked hard to get here. The

CONT'D ON P11

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WILDFIRE AWARENESS



Using a drip torch, Constance Rauter along with the other crew members, in a method called burning out, light a controlled fire to eliminate any source of fuel for an approaching fire. The incoming fire loses intensity when it encounters one of these areas and as a result, is easier to contain. Close by, a tree blazes bright. / SUBMITTED



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In appreciation of the firefighters who risk their lives to protect us

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physical challenges are really tough.”

The two come from a family that puts an emphasis on serving. Their mother Lotta says they have watched their older siblings pursue community service type professions.

“We support Constance and Charlotte in all their adventures,” she said. “I am very proud of all four kids and how they serve their communities.”

Both young ladies want to continue to serve through firefighting as long as they can. Constance, a university nursing student, had to adjust her availability due to a practicum this spring. She loves the experiences and does not plan to quit before she has to.

Charlotte is unsure what her next year is going to look like as she came into the program a year earlier than most. She wants to come back to BC Wildfire in whatever capacity she is able, and continue as long as possible.

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HOW TO APPLY

Hiroe tries to visit the local high schools with a short presentation each fall to discuss the Junior program with Grade 11 and 12 students. If there are students in that age range that are interested in the program, they can apply with a cover letter and resume to Chikara.Hiroe@gov.bc.ca. Courses and training begin in March. They have 3 spaces available for the summer employment program.

Those that have already graduated from high school can apply through the provincial program application process:
<https://tinyurl.com/4p7x2mhf>



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