



# FRIAA FireSmart: Protecting an At-Risk Community

## Heart Lake First Nation

Thin, prune,  
and mulch  
fuel-  
modification  
treatment at  
Heart Lake  
First Nation

FRIAA awarded funding under the FireSmart Program to Heart Lake First Nation in 2018. Heart Lake is located 70 kilometres northeast of Lac La Biche and 12 kilometres off Highway 881. The community is on 4,496 hectares, of which 99% are forested, with one road in and out.

The funding and project focused on vegetation management to protect Heart Lake First Nation from the devastation of a wildfire.

“At the time of the Fort McMurray fires, there was a fire at the entrance road to Heart Lake,” says Tony Bagga, director of Government and Industry Relations. “The community was evacuated immediately. Education and the evaluation of our situation and our vulnerability were addressed immediately.”

Heart Lake had developed a wildfire mitigation strategy in 2016 and worked with FRIAA to complete the program from December 2018 to December 2019.

Nearly 17 hectares were identified as high risk. More than 20 members worked to reduce the risk of a fire with fuel breaks, vegetation removal, thinning, and pruning. The community members also benefited by gathering the timber for cultural ceremonies.

“Chief and Council supported this opportunity to capitalize on the funding with community engagement to protect the Nation members,” says Bagga. “The collaboration of leadership, Heart Lake members, and staff—with the support of FRIAA FireSmart funding—was a huge win to protecting our people.”



Tony Bagga