

Evaluating Whether to Enter a Building During a Fire

Author: Frances Allard, Cultural Advisor of Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwa Indians, fallard6345@gmail.com

Introduction:

This cultural unit will educate one on the cultural significance of fire.

Cultural Objective:

Students will learn that from our Elder's perspective they never shared any of this with me and I'm not sure that they had to worry about that then.

Cultural Information:

The PPT presentation will demonstrate the two different firefighters (wildland and structural) and their gear and training and I will share my experience with firefighting.

I was never told about firefighters long ago in either field. So, I would like to share what I know from my years of living in this world. I will explain the differences of a wildland and structural firefighter. Because of the question "Evaluating Whether to Enter a Building During a Fire". Fire is powerful; it can kill or can help.

Now the difference between a forest firefighter and structural firefighter: one goes into the forest and the other goes into a burning building.

I was a forest firefighter many years ago and took training; I had to take a lot of tests and training before they would even consider me as a wildland firefighter. First, I had to get a physical, then I had to take classes and the test that I took was called a step test while carrying a backpack of gear. I stepped tested for 10 minutes. Today, they do what is called WCT (Work Capacity Test).

I was trained as a wildland firefighter and worked in the mountains of Missoula, MT for three years. During this time, I was going to the U of M, and this was a summer job. As a woman, we were trained hard because it was a man's world during that time. This was some of training and physical work that had to do be updated every year before we could go out and fight any forest fire.

Using complex equipment and maneuvers, forest firefighters extinguish, control, and contain wildfires. The job can be dangerous and involves the handling of heavy equipment. The would-be wildland firefighter should be in prime physical condition and be able to carry loads of over 45 pounds for long periods of time. A wildland firefighter's duties depend on their level of experience, training, and qualifications. All equipment used to put out fires must be carried into the sites, and so one must be able to carry this weight far distances. As forest fires are highly unpredictable, one must be able to carry this weight over long distances quickly.

A forest firefighter prevents, controls, and suppresses fires in federal, state, and private forests. They work in various capacities under a variety of job titles including forest fire warden, forest ranger, forest ranger technician, forestry technician (fire), wildland firefighter, and forest fire inspector and prevention specialist.

They maintain contact with fire dispatchers at all times to notify them of the need for additional firefighters and supplies, or to detail any difficulties encountered, rescue fire victims, and administer emergency medical aid.

The **Yarnell Hill Fire** was a wildfire near Yarnell, Arizona, ignited by dry lightning on June 28, 2013. On June 30, it overran and killed 19 members of the Granite Mountain Hotshots. Just one of the hotshots on the crew survived, he was posted as a lookout on the fire and was not with the others when the fire overtook them. The tragedy is primarily attributed to an extreme and sudden shift in weather patterns, causing the fire to intensify and cut off the firefighter's route as they were escaping. The victims were killed by the intense heat and flames of the fire. Other factors that contributed to the tragedy included the terrain surrounding the escape route, which may have blocked the victims' view of the fire front and limited situational awareness, and problems with radio communications.

The National Park Service Structural Fire program (NPS) is committed to protecting all structures entrusted to its care, and the people and collections within. Program staff works to meet and exceed requirements through consistent ongoing education and training with an emphasis on prevention.

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1231/structural-fire-training.htm>

Structural firefighters have to learn to make split-second decisions while surrounded by flames, feeling the heat through their protective gear, while carrying heavy loads and wearing a breathing apparatus. They must learn to remain calm, quickly assess injuries and impending disaster, and respond constructively to many kinds of scenarios. The training builds self-confidence and helps rangers be more effective and versatile in their home parks.

While approaching a fire scene, first responders should observe and mentally note the following conditions and activities and initiate permanent documentation of the information. First responders to a fire scene must assess and secure the scene and ensure that victims receive medical attention. Fire patterns (including multiple fire locations).

Exercise scene safety. Safety overrides all other concerns. First responders must make sure that victims, bystanders, and public safety personnel are safe. This involves mitigating safety hazards that may further threaten victims, bystanders, and public safety personnel. They must exercise due caution to avoid injuries to themselves and others.

Both these types of firefighters have a lot of stressful situations that have to be considered. First and foremost, they are brave individuals who may love the excitement, this is the career they chose for a job, all are very well trained in their fields, and fit, and most are aware of their surroundings before they go in and fight, not only for their lives but the lives of others.

So, to answer this question, is a question: if you are a mother and gave birth to the children that might be in the house fire, we would without hesitation go in trying to save your children. Fathers would do the same thing. We do have an instinct that may stop us from doing this or someone in the crowd would probably not let us do that either. But could we knowingly do that even knowing we may die trying? We are intelligent beings and know that this is dangerous.

Knowing what I know about firefighting they are both very scary and can kill if you are not trained well. Like a forest fire can go up quickly and take lives without hesitation. I went into the forest during the fire storm, but I was geared up and trained for this job. I would say no to a home fire unless I was well trained and have the equipment on because I would not make it if I had no gear. That is what my instinct is at present, but situations change all the time, one minute you may and then you may not. It is up to the individual, they make their own choices.

This is a story about fire and how it came to be: These stories are not told in summer, spring, or fall only in the winter! When you have to tell this story, please put out tobacco and ask the Spirits that this is a teaching to share to the young ones and no disrespect to the stories told in the other seasons.

How the Birch Tree Got It's Burns an Ojibwe legend

The Ojibwe people always had stories to tell that had a moral. The main character who was always used was *Waynaboozhoo*. But it is told that you cannot tell a *Waynaboozhoo* story in the spring, summer, or fall, only when there is snow on the ground or it is said that a frog will be in your bed. You can put down cedar and ask to tell the story and nothing will happen to you or your bed. This is what I am told. Now, this is the story about how the birch bark got its burns. Often stories have different morals or different explanations so this one may be somewhat different from others that you have heard.

It was wintertime and *Waynaboozhoo's* grandmother called him; "*Waynaboozhoo, omaa bi izhaan!*" she called. "Come here. It is cold and we have no fire for warmth or to cook and prepare our food. I ask of you to go to find the fire, *ishkodence*, that Thunderbird has in the west."

"Grandmother," *Waynaboozhoo* replied. "I will go and look for the great *ishkodence* for you." He disguised himself as a waboos, a little rabbit, and headed off to the west looking for the fire.

When *Waynaboozhoo* finally reached Thunderbird's home, he asked, "Please share the warmth inside your home. I am cold and lost. I will only stay a little while, for I must be on my way."

The Thunderbird agreed and allowed *Waynaboozhoo* to enter his home. Inside, *Waynaboozhoo* saw the fire and waited until Thunderbird looked away. Then, *Waynaboozhoo* quickly rolled in the fire and took off running toward his home with the fire on his back!

Thunderbird flew behind *Waynaboozhoo* throwing lightning flashes at him! *Waynaboozhoo* grew tired and yelled for someone to help him. "*Widoka! Widoka washin!* Help me!" he cried.

Then *omaaî mitig*, the birch tree, spoke. "Come, hide beside me my brother. I will protect you." The little *waboos* hid beneath the tree while Thunderbird flashed and thundered, angry that *Waynaboozhoo* had stolen the fire. The lightning bolts missed *Waynaboozhoo* every time but they hit *omaaî mitig*. Dark burn marks scarred the white bark of the tree. That is why the birch tree now has burn marks on its bark.

Author biography:

Boozhoo, my name is Miigizi Ikwe, Wapski Makwa indoodem, Mikanock Wajii. My other name is Frances Allard, I'm from the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation in Belcourt, ND. I am Anishinabe Ikwe (Ojibwa)/Cree/Mitchif and the eldest of 8 siblings. I have two sons, an adopted daughter, a foster daughter

and an adopted grandson. I have seven grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. I raised two other young men as well; one lives here in Belcourt and the other lives in Colorado. My father was a marine, my mother was a beautician, and when I was a child, we traveled throughout the US/Guam/Japan before returning to the Turtle Mountain home of my parents in 1959 when I was 14 years old.

I have had a lot of educational experiences, both formal and informal. I graduated from Turtle Mountain Community High School in 1963; got an LPN degree in 1974 through the Lake Region Jr. College in Devil's Lake, ND and was trained in Belcourt; completed a BA in Communication/Dance in 1985 (Missoula, Mt) during the summers I worked as a woodland fire fighter; added an AA in Chemical Dependency in 1993 and an AA in Child Abuse/Neglect in 1994 from Lummi Community College (which later became Northwest Indian College) in Bellingham, WA; and then went back to TMCC for an AA in Commercial Art/Graphic Design in 2005; and picked up many certificates along the way. During those years, I was educated also by many Elders from different tribal nations and finally came home to Belcourt in 1995 and began my studies with all the Elders in the Turtle Mountains. I learned a lot and was honored to sit with them and learn from them. I also went to Canada to learn from the other half of my blood line, the Cree Nation. My travels took me across the US/Canada and across the ocean to Guam and Japan, learning many cultures along the way. The very first teachings I learned were the Seven Teachings of the Ojibwa, which came from my Aunt Edna Cloud who began this journey for me.

While I was in college, I learned to do research and found that very interesting. That training has become even more useful now that I am a board member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribal Nations Research Group, a board that reviews and approves all research done on the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation. There are individuals from various universities who want to do research with our Turtle Mountain people, and the board makes sure they are following the guidelines of the Tribal Nations Research Group. We are the protectors of our people in the research/data arena.

I learned to sew in high school and loved it. This is one of my gifts that I have. I design all of my regalia (the traditional clothing/accessories) that I wear for Ceremonies/Pow Wows/special occasions. Since I have moved home, I have designed and made regalia for my grandchildren and other young people as well as others who request it of me.

I am a Cultural Advisor for TMCC and ND EPSCoR. I work with 6-12 graders in ND EPSCoR NATURE camps during the summer months and ND EPSCoR NATURE Sunday Academies during the school year. I write cultural supplements for each of the STEM topics covered in the various STEM activities. If I am not familiar with a STEM topic, I do research on the topic so that I can figure out which cultural information fits best with it. This I have been doing for 22 years. I work for TMCC as an instructor, and was asked by the TMCC president and vice president many years ago to develop an archive for our artifacts by our people (clothing, tools, baskets, sculptures, etc.) for the college, which I did for 6 years. I am also currently working for the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Heritage Center for the last 3 years as an archivist/assistant for our artifacts and the tour guide to explain the historical way of life of our people here on the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation. I also do research on various artifacts in our collection to find the importance/year/geographic origin of the items.

I realize that my passion is all about what I have learned and how to give back to our families, relatives, friends, and those who want to know who we are as Anishinabe people. I am grateful for the teachings of our elders, our young people of today and my children. I am also a sponsor for those who are struggling with alcohol/drugs on a one-on-one basis, as well in the sweat lodge. I work with the youth, adults, and the elders, outside this community in all four directions.

As I look at my journey throughout my life, my vision is to work with my people in any way I can to teach what I know, and pass it on to all that are interested in our Native way of life. I live simply so that I can live in peace and harmony in nature, which means I will follow the Seven Teachings in a good way. Those teachings came from my elders and I take the lessons they taught me seriously and to heart. So, my mission is to guide those who want the Seven Teachings in their life. The Seven Teachings are Love, Honesty, Humility, Bravery, Respect, Wisdom and Truth.