

THE CANADIAN RED CROSS, THE CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION, AND FORT MCMURRAY WOOD BUFFALO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM JOIN FORCES TO BRING TO LIFE **BACK HOME AGAIN**, AN ANIMATED SHORT FILM WITH AN ALL-STAR VOICE CAST, THAT AIMS TO BUILD MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND SPARK CONVERSATIONS IN COMMUNITIES ACROSS CANADA AND AROUND THE WORLD.

[Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada - June 28, 2021] - Inspired by community resiliency after one of the largest wildfire evacuations in Canadian history impacted the lives of more than 80,000 residents of Fort McMurray and area in 2016, the animated short film titled, *Back Home Again*, has been brought to life through the support of the Canadian Red Cross, The Canadian Mental Health Association and the Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Economic Development & Tourism.

Told through the eyes of the woodland creatures that inhabit the land of Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo, *Back Home Again* has an all-star voice cast that donated their time to the production, including Jeremy Renner, Martin Short, Kim Basinger, Eugene Levy, Catherine O'Hara, Michael J. Fox, Howie Mandel, Ed Asner, Lorne Cardinal, Gordon Pinsent, Mena Suvari, Bill Burr, Tom Green, Norm MacDonald, Harland Williams, Sherri Shepherd, Marlon Wayans, Scott Thompson, and Tantoo Cardinal. The film also includes a new original song titled, *Back Home Again*, performed by Jeremy Renner.

Writer, Director and Creator Michael Mankowski commented, "I really wanted to make this film because I grew up in Fort McMurray and was there when this tragedy hit. I wanted to show the world how a community could come together and rebuild. I hope this film sparks conversations everywhere about how we are all one global community, and we all need one another."

Added producer John Schneider, "Now more than ever, in the wake of what we have all endured through the COVID-19 pandemic, we need inspiring stories like this. We all need emotional and mental support and our goal in making this film is to empower one another to be mental helpers. When Michael reached out to me about this project I knew that I had to enlist my friends in Canada and Hollywood and ask them to donate their time to be a part of this important project."

Jenn McManus, Canadian Red Cross Vice President, Alberta and the Northwest Territories said, "The film provides messages of hope, strength, resiliency, collaboration and unity in the face of adversity - all of which are important for those recovering from a disaster. We know from experience that recovery takes time, and the increased awareness and subsequent discussions created by *Back Home Again* will go a long way to build preparedness and resiliency in communities across Canada and beyond, now and in the future."

David Grauwiler, Executive Director of The Canadian Mental Health Association commented that, "CMHA is honoured to partner with *Back Home Again* and the materials created to educate people on mental health and resilience after a disaster or traumatic event. After viewing the film we are reminded of inevitable disruptions faced by communities and individuals which impact our mental health. This is not a disaster movie, this is a movie about how we come home, come back, bounce back and recover. The film gives us a glimpse of the very thing we all carry with us - resiliency."

Kevin Weidlich, President & CEO of Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Economic Development & Tourism said "The world is about to see a side of our region that doesn't get talked about enough. *Back Home Again* is a touching, animated film that shows who we are - a strong

community that lifts each other up. You can see it in this story, as told by one of our own - the film's director Michael Mankowski. It shows the healing, our stories and the heart of who we really are. That's the Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo the world is about to see and there's no better time to share this with our global community. I can't wait."

Back Home Again released the poster and a special early look at the film today. On Tuesday, July 6 tune in to www.backhomeagainmovie.com for a special conversation about the film and mental health. The official trailer for *Back Home Again* will be debuted globally in the coming weeks. This will kick off a summer long educational campaign that will reach communities all around the globe prior to the film's debut this fall. All screenings of the film will be free in the hopes to get as many people around the world to experience it first-hand, and join in the conversation about mental health.

For mental health resources and support, visit www.cmha.ca/find-your-cmha

For more information on *Back Home Again* and these exciting events please visit www.backhomeagainmovie.com and follow:

Instagram: @backhomeagainmovie Facebook: @BackHomeAgainMovie

Twitter: @backhomeagainmovie

For more information about the Canadian Red Cross, please visit www.redcross.ca

About the Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta Division:

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), Alberta Division is focused on recovery and support for Albertans impacted by mental illness. CMHA, Alberta Division stands with Albertans within their communities as they achieve their wellness goals. Hundreds of CMHA, Alberta Division staff and volunteers engage clients in activities, assisting with navigation of the complex matrix of mental health services. CMHA, Alberta Division works to increase and enhance individuals', groups' and communities' control over their mental health.

About Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Economic Development & Tourism |

www.choosewoodbuffalo.ca

Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo Economic Development & Tourism (FMWBEDT) is a wholly owned, arm's-length entity of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, governed by an independent board of directors and managed by an entrepreneurial, customer-centric team. FMWBEDT is responsible for growing and promoting investment into the region, supporting the growth of startups and existing businesses in the region, and generating tourism and visitation to the region. FMWBEDT's focus is on creating wealth for the region, measured as economic impact.

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