

2024 JASPER WILDFIRE:

SOCIAL TRAJECTORIES AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN LIGHT OF ANTHROPOGENIC CHANGES



Parks Canada. (July 29, 2024). Wabasso Campground Jasper National Park [Photograph]. <https://parks.canada.ca/pr-np/ab/jasper/visit/feu-alert-fire/feudeforet-jasper-wildfire/dommage-damage>.

INTRODUCTION

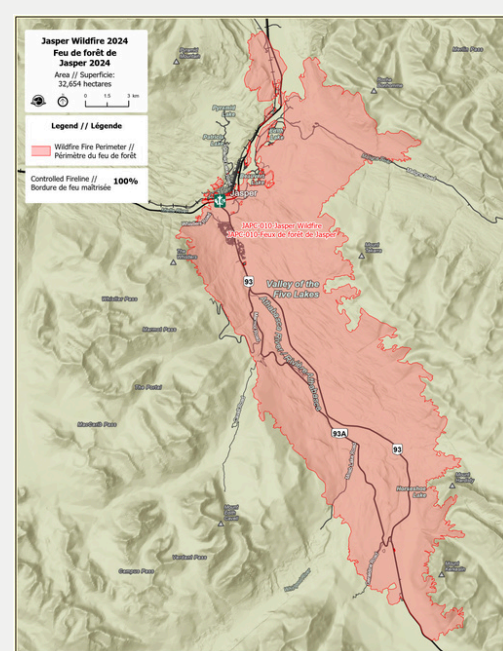
Wildfires around the globe are increasing at an alarming rate due to climate change and rising temperatures. Since the associated challenges are complex and primarily ecological and social in nature, the interrelationships between humans and the surrounding environment must be re-examined. In my dissertation, I explore the 2024 Wildfire in Jasper National Park focusing on the social trajectories of environmental changes and the emerging fields of tension in remediation and natural landscape management

KEY FACTS

- Duration: July 22, 2024 - April 1st, 2025
- Area affected: 32,654 hectares
- Approx. 25,000 residents were evacuated
- One firefighter was killed
- Insurance reimbursements of \$880 million
- Second most expensive wildfire in Canadian history (\$1.23 billion)

AREAS OF FOCUS

- Community Life, Resilience, and Environmental Challenges
- Indigenous Expertise
- Narratology and Oral history
- More-than-Human perspective
- Transnationality



Parks Canada. (2025). Jasper Wildfire Complex 2024 - Fire extent legend [Map]. <https://parks.canada.ca/pr-np/ab/jasper/visit/feu-alert-fire/feudeforet-jasper-wildfire#>.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What impact had the 2024 Jasper Wildfire on local human-environment perceptions, interrelations, and landscape management?

How did the Wildfire affect community life and population resilience? Which tensions and coping strategies can be identified?

METHODOLOGY

I aim to apply a mixed-methods approach, combining various qualitative research methodologies, including:

- archival research
- comprehensive literature review
- expert interviews with university members, politicians, national humanitarian organizations, e.g. *Canadian Red Cross*, fundraising associations, local authorities
- semi-structured interviews with volunteer firefighters, local journalists, NGOs, and grass-roots movements
- surveys & informal conversations with residents
- participant observation - if possible -

CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH

- identify key actors and areas of tension
- detect human-environment entanglement and interdependencies
- differentiate complex positions and perspectives toward wildfires in the area
- link cultural practices to environmental conservation strategies

JASPER NATIONAL PARKS WILDFIRES

- the role of fire in the region
- intercultural approaches in landscape management
- history of wildfires in Western Canadian National parks
- ecological interrelations
- ontological perspectives

INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES

- views on Jasper's natural landscapes
- current environmental management in Jasper National Park
- sensemaking of ecological status
- cultural practices and conservation approaches
- traditional fire management

MODERN FOREST MANAGEMENT

- Firesmart Canada
- federal fire response and community action
- prescribed burns ≠ cultural burns
- local human-environment relationships

POST-FIRE GOVERNANCE AND TENSIONS

- Land ownership and Lease system
 - Crown land; leasehold housing; restricted property rights
- Land availability and Housing density
 - limited buildable area; density requirements; relocation proposals
- Complexity of regulations
 - permitted procedures; building codes; wildfire-resilient construction standards
- Transfer of planning authority
 - Parks Canada vs. Municipality of Jasper; Bill C-7; transitional delays
- Delays in approval and institutional capacity constraints
 - slow issuance of permits; administrative backlog; intergovernmental coordination
- Environmental Constraints and Soil contamination
 - post-fire soil contamination; site investigations; remediation requirements



Parks Canada. (August 16, 2024). Ash Avenue - Local Firefighters at work [Maps]. <https://parks.canada.ca/pr-np/ab/jasper/visit/feu-alert-fire/feudeforet-jasper-wildfire/dommage-damage>.

NEXT STEPS ...

- Travel arrangements
 - contacts and networking
 - preparation of interviews and surveys
 - schedule on-site interviews
 - arrange archive appointments
- In-person research on site
 - visit archives
 - semi-structured interviews and informal conversations
 - fieldnotes; field diary; multimedia approach



Parks Canada. (August 16, 2024). Turret Street overlooking Miette Avenue [Photograph]. <https://parks.canada.ca/pr-np/ab/jasper/visit/feu-alert-fire/feudeforet-jasper-wildfire/dommage-damage>.

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