

Native Prairie Speaker Series

Title: Returning Fire to the Prairie: prescribed fire as a conservation management tool.

Speaker: Dinyar Minocher, Interagency Prescribed Fire Coordinator, Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange

Summary: In the times before European colonization, fire was widely understood to be a necessary process, facilitating new life, new habitat, and an abundance of food for humans and animals alike. In more recent times, our society has grown to fear fire and view it as a threat to our very existence. This fear has manifested in an over suppression of fire, and the result is a loss of prairie and rangelands, an immeasurable loss of biodiversity, and uncontrollable wildfires. So how do we find balance? How do we harness and control something that in another form can cost us our livelihood?

We start by acknowledging that while fire deserves our respect, it too can be understood, and under the right conditions, can be controlled and used as a tool. We don't fear campfires, because we have a clearly established perimeter, have a bucket of water on site, and we don't light them in the middle of a drought in August. By these same principals, prescribed fires can be planned and executed in a manner that ensures a safe perimeter, has emergency resources on site, and will not be lit unless the perfect predetermined conditions exist.

We recognise that the North American Prairies only exist because of fire, grazing and climate, and that cultural burning has been a part of this landscape for thousands of years. Fire is one of many available tools in our conservation management toolboxes, and when used safely and effectively, can be a true asset to landowners and communities alike.

Whether you're new to prescribed fire or have been using it for years, we encourage you to take a look at our website at www.grasslandfire.ca and join us for this webinar where we discuss fire as a natural process on the Canadian prairies.

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About Dinyar:

My career in fire started as a provincial wildland firefighter in Alberta, although, like many others, my relationship with fire started many years before that. Holding a warm beverage while basking in the glow of a crackling campfire is a sensation that transcends age and needs no explaining. It’s noteworthy that for most of us, our earliest memories of fire evoke feelings of security, comfort and community, even in light of fire’s destructive capacity. Through the years my role has changed from Crew Member to Fire Operations Coordinator for Grasslands National Park, to my current role as Prescribed Fire Coordinator for the Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange.

My role is to help facilitate learning and prescribed burning opportunities for agencies, communities and landowners alike. Through a combination of fire and grazing, we can help maintain and re-establish native prairie; one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world.

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