

**Indian and Northern  
Affairs Canada**

## **Fire Loss Report**

**2000**

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*Prepared for:  
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada*

*by:  
Real Property Services for INAC, Headquarters  
Public Works and Government Services Canada*



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Additional copies of this report are available from:

Elliot Rodger (819) 997 8267

Fax: (819) 953 9395

E mail: [rodgere@inac.gc.ca](mailto:rodgere@inac.gc.ca)

Web Site: <http://www.pwgsc.gc.ca/rps/inac/>

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report provides fire loss statistics in First Nation communities for the 2000 calendar year along with comparative information from previous years. Data have been interpreted and analysed in a manner consistent with previous years' reporting methods. It should be emphasized that the data is based on information reported by participating First Nations and, as a consequence, the report may not represent a complete picture. Assessing the proportion of First Nations reporting is difficult but over the years the level of participation has not improved.

Statistical information is presented in graph and tabular form and comparisons are made with fire loss statistics of earlier years to show trends. Fire losses associated with the forestry, mining, oil and gas industries are excluded from this report.

In summary, the 2000 statistics were as indicated in the following table:

Category	Number	% Change over last year	10 year average	% Change over 10 year average
Deaths	16	-40 %	21.4	-25 %
Injuries	30	-14 %	26.6	+13 %
Value of losses	\$17.6 million	+60 %	\$11.1 million	+59 %

There was a significant decrease in the number of deaths caused by fire in 2000 over previous years, with the exception of the extremely low figure in 1998. This appears to be a trend which consistent reporting in the future may confirm.

The drastic increase in property losses is disturbing, since a number of valuable First Nation properties have been lost. A band office, police station and community centre, each estimated at \$1 million and more, were destroyed. The band office and the police station were cases of arson. While arson appears to becoming an increasing problem there are also a large number of fires of suspicious and undetermined origin. In addition 241 dwellings were damaged or destroyed at a value of over \$9.6 million.

There is an increasing propensity, on and off reserve, for local fire services to become involved as 'emergency responders' answering calls to assist with medical emergencies, car accidents, and the like. This leads to the reporting of fires becoming only a portion of the fire services responsibility and is reflected in the high number of 'reported responses' when compared with the number of reported fires.

## **2.0 DEATHS AND INJURIES**

In 2000, 16 reserve residents (7 children and 9 adults) died in fires. This total was down significantly from 27 in 1999 (12 children and 15 adults). Reported fire injuries decreased to 30 (3 children and 27 adults) from the 35 (11 children and 24 adults) reported in 1999.

The 2000 fire death rate in First Nation communities, expressed as the number of deaths per 100,000 population, was 4.28. The rate has generally been declining, except for sharp increases in 1988 and 1993. The 2000 rate is more in line with the figures recorded from 1994 to 1996 but is a large increase over the 1998 figure of 1.7. The rate is 3.9 times higher than the 1998 Canadian national average of 1.1, (the latest available figure) which is considered high among first world countries. The Canadian 10 year national average death rate is 1.43 deaths per 100,000 population.

Over the past 20 years there has been a reduction in the fire death rate in First Nation communities. There is, however, a gradual levelling off in the rate. As in previous years most fire deaths occur in dwellings, meaning dwelling fires are more likely to result in death than other fires.

Figure 1 shows the annual fire death rate over the last 23 years. During this period, the death rate has fluctuated but, on average, it has decreased by approximately 7% per year.

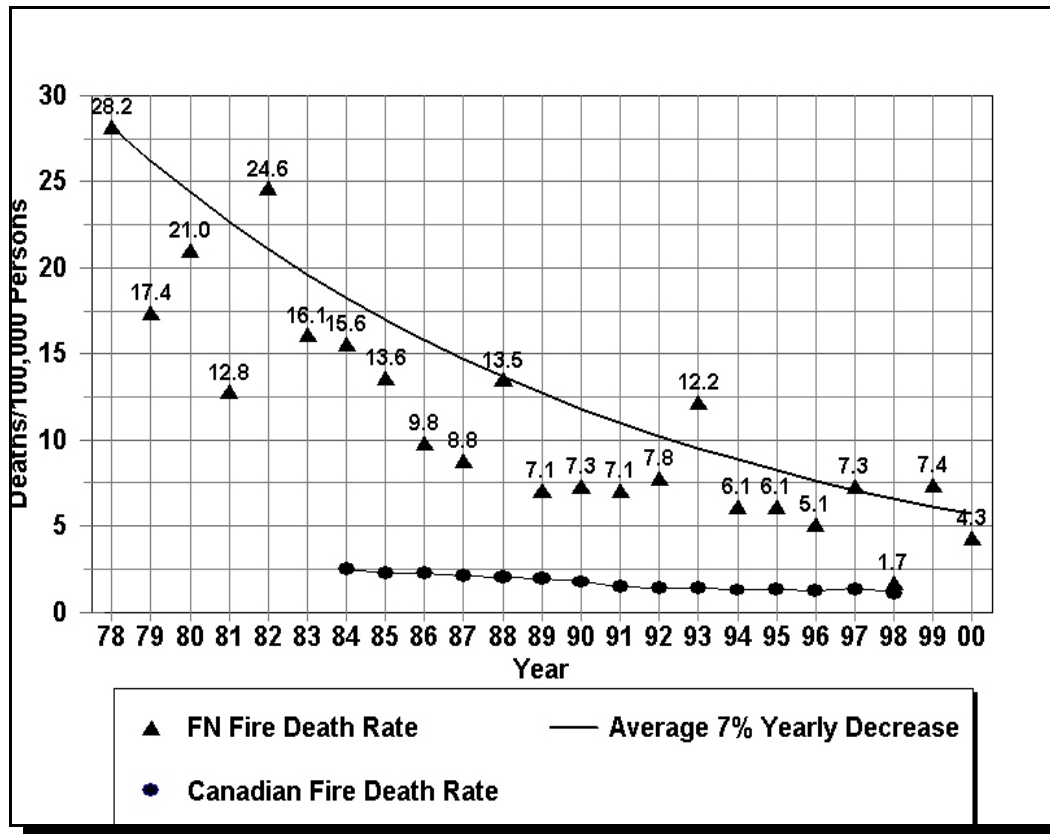


Figure 1. Fire Death Rate in FN Communities (1978-2000)

Table 1 provides breakdowns by year, showing the number of reported fire related deaths and reported fire injuries for children and adults, over the period 1979 to 2000.

**Table 1. Reported FN Fire Deaths and Injuries**

Year	Fire Deaths			Fire Injuries		
	Adults	Children	Total	Adults	Children	Total
1978	21	34	55	14	3	17
1979	25	9	34	15	5	20
1980	27	14	41	9	7	16
1981	17	8	25	7	3	10
1982	30	18	48	17	10	27
1983	22	16	38	13	2	15
1984	28	10	38	10	4	14
1985	28	6	34	8	4	12
1986	17	9	26	8	6	14
1987	13	10	23	18	1	19
1988	15	22	37	22	13	35
1989	15	4	19	17	7	24
1990	16	4	20	24	7	31
1991	14	6	20	11	4	15
1992	16	7	23	19	4	23
1993	18	19	37	11	9	20
1994	13	6	19	14	6	20
1995	13	7	20	22	5	27
1996	11	6	17	9	5	14
1997	16	9	25	38	7	45
1998	5	1	6	26	7	33
1999	15	12	27	27	11	38
2000	9	7	16	27	3	30

Figures 2 and 3 display this same information in bar graph form.

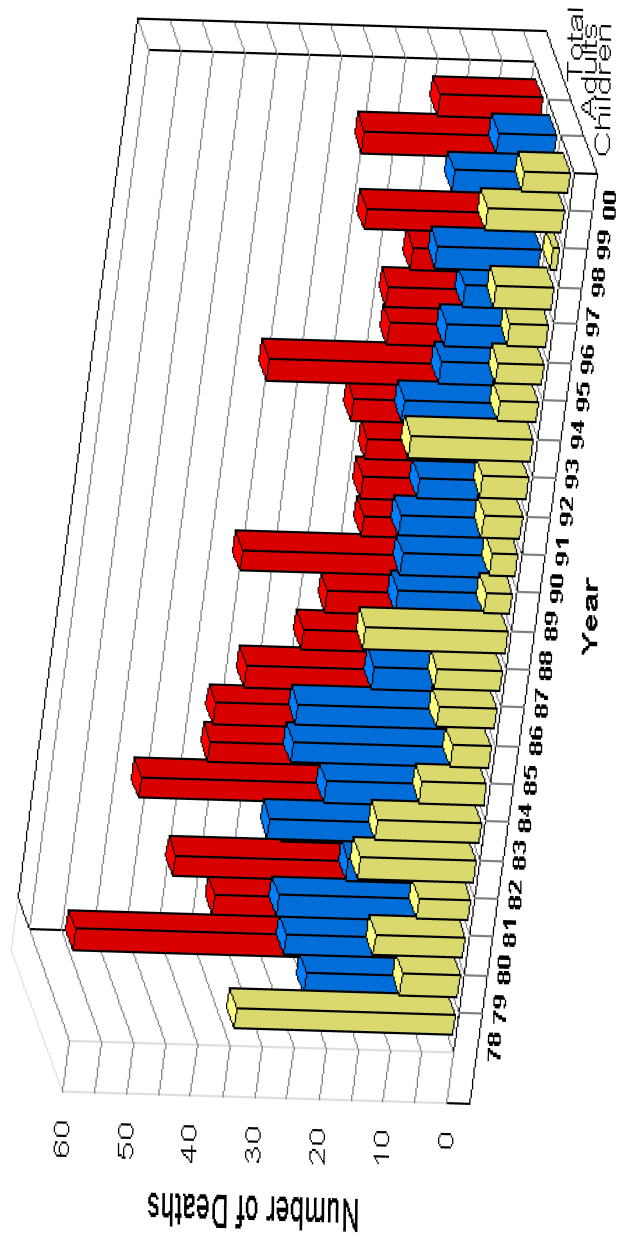


Figure 2. Reported Fire Deaths (1978-2000)



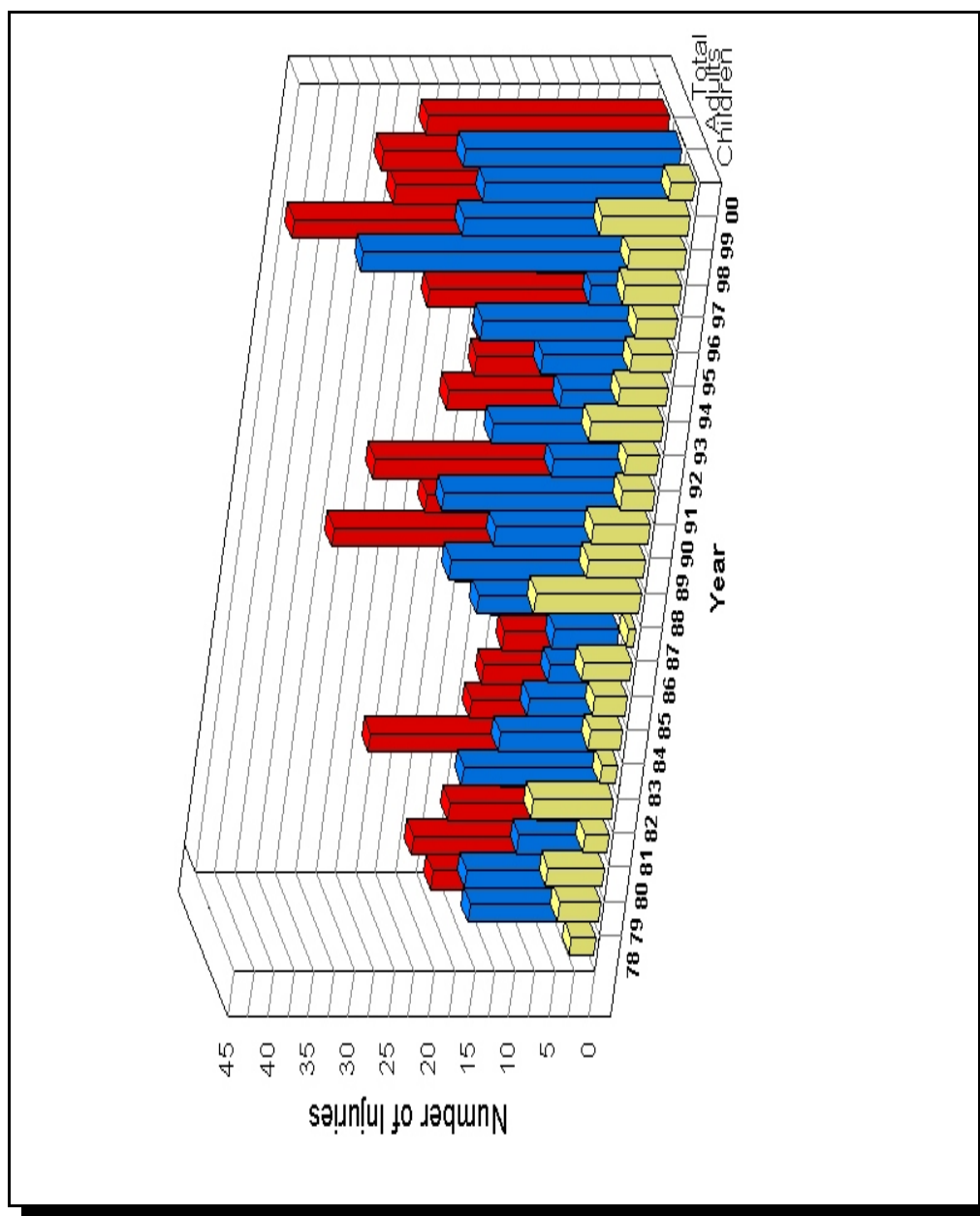


Figure 3. Reported Fire Injuries (1978-2000)

Table 2 provides information on the number of reported responses, the number of reported fires, the estimated property loss, the number of injuries to adults and children, and the number of deaths of adults and children by province for 2000.

**Table 2.**  
**Reported FN Fire Losses**  
**Summary by Province/Territory**

Province	No. of reported responses <small>*see note</small>	No. of reported fires	No. of reported fires with financial losses	Estimated value of property losses	Injuries		Deaths	
					Adult	Child	Adult	Child
Newfoundland	0	0	0	\$0	0	0	0	0
New Brunswick	29	29	29	\$2,775,500	10	0	0	0
Nova Scotia	12	12	12	\$498,000	3	0	1	1
PEI	0	0	0	\$0	0	0	0	0
Quebec	8	8	8	\$198,000	1	0	0	0
Ontario	1362	320	111	\$5,714,970	4	0	1	0
Manitoba	136	136	32	\$1,538,797	0	0	4	1
Saskatchewan	35	35	32	\$2,027,000	3	1	0	2
Alberta **	147	147	126	\$4,194,024	6	2	2	0
British Columbia	67	24	11	\$643,250	0	0	1	3
Yukon	4	4	1	\$3,000	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1800</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>\$17,592,541</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>

\* A "response" is where a fire department is called out to an incident that may or may not involve a fire or financial loss. The level of detail of reporting varies. Some First Nations report all "responses" including false alarms, vehicle accidents, grass fires etc. while others report only fires involving financial loss.

\*\* Fire statistics for Alberta have been supplied by the Fire Commissioner's Office, Alberta Labour. They exclude grass, brush and forest fires.

### 3.0 REPORTED FIRES

There were 715 reported fires in 2000, 362 involving financial loss. Of this total, 241 were dwellings.

The method by which fires are reported each year varies with FN, Tribal Council, and Region. As a consequence, the reported fire loss summary shows the number of responses, as well as the number of reported fires, and the number of reported fire involving financial loss. Not all FN's report responses, while others report in insufficient detail to allow an assessment to be made. The number of FN's reporting is not improving. It is difficult to assess whether this is because there are no fires or FN's do not wish to report.

The number of reported fires involving financial loss between 1978 and 2000 is shown graphically in Figure 4. The number increased from 325 in 1999 to 362 in 2000, while the number of reported responses was 1697 and 1800, respectively.

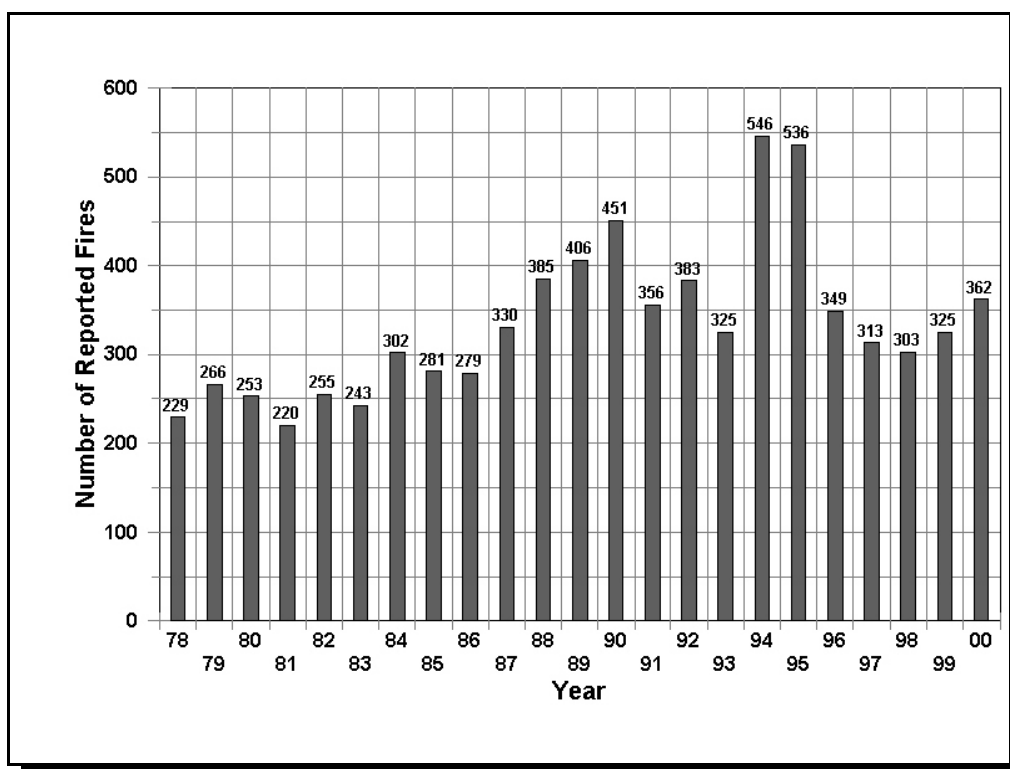


Figure 4. Number of Reported Fires with Financial Losses (1978 - 2000)

## 4.0 PROPERTY LOSS

### 4.1 General Remarks

The fire losses in this report include buildings and their contents as well as other band, federal or private capital assets located in First Nation communities.

The total reported property loss due to fire in 2000 was estimated at nearly \$17.6 million, considerably higher than in recent years. Nationally there were more major fire loss incidents this year. The value of property losses reported during 2000 represented an approximately 60 % increase over the 1999 losses. Figure 5 shows the trend in fire related property losses in constant 2000 dollars for the period 1991 to 2000. A breakdown of the 2000 reported fire losses by province can be found in Table 2 on page 7.

### 4.2 Dwellings

As can be seen from Table 3, 241 dwellings were reported to be damaged or destroyed by fire. This represents a decrease of 4 dwelling units from 1999. The estimated value of reported dwelling losses totalled \$9.6 million, representing a 22% increase. The value of the reported dwelling losses over the past 10 years are shown in Figure 6.

**Table 3**  
**Reported Property Losses by Region**

Province	Number of dwellings damaged or destroyed	Estimated value of dwelling losses	Estimated value of total property losses
Newfoundland	0	\$0	\$0
New Brunswick	23	\$666,000	\$2,775,500
Nova Scotia	11	\$493,000	\$498,000
PEI	0	\$0	\$0
Quebec	8	\$198,000	\$198,000
Ontario	78	\$2,036,775	\$5,714,970
Manitoba	27	\$1,265,520	\$1,538,797
Saskatchewan	28	\$1,532,000	\$2,027,000
Alberta *	57	\$2,840,946	\$4,194,024
British Columbia	8	\$604,250	\$643,250
Yukon	1	\$3,000	\$3,000
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>\$9,639,491</b>	<b>\$17,592,541</b>

\* Fire statistics for Alberta have been supplied by the Fire Commissioner's Office, Alberta Labour. They exclude grass, brush and forest fires.

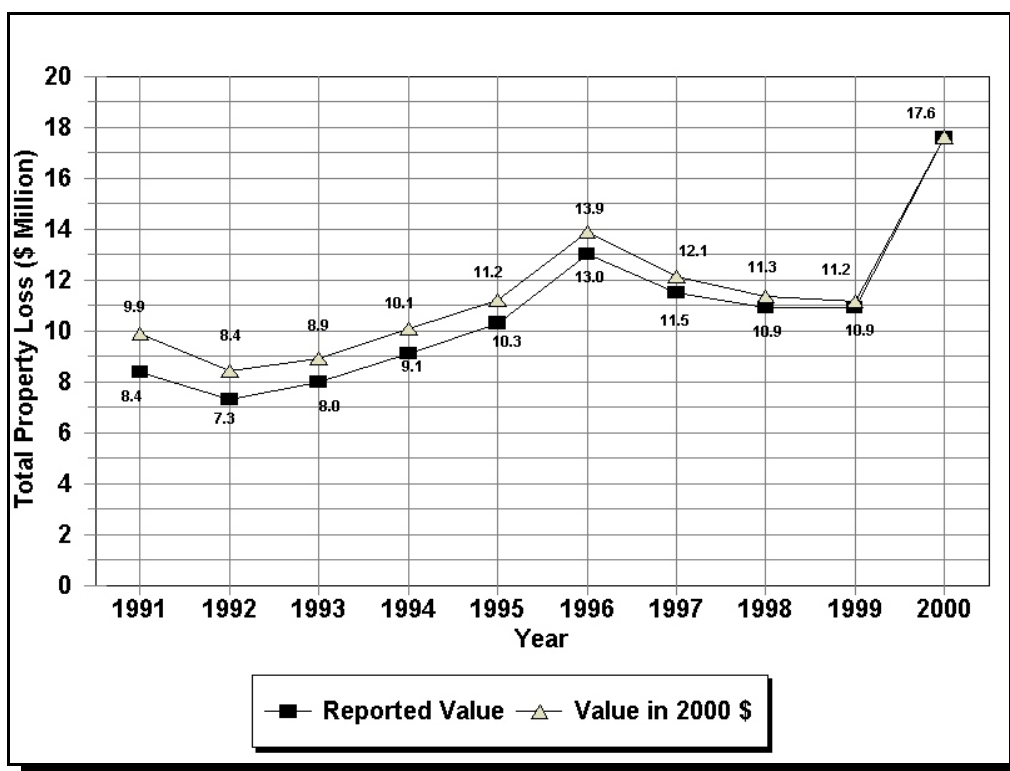


Figure 5. Total Reported Property Losses (1991 - 2000)

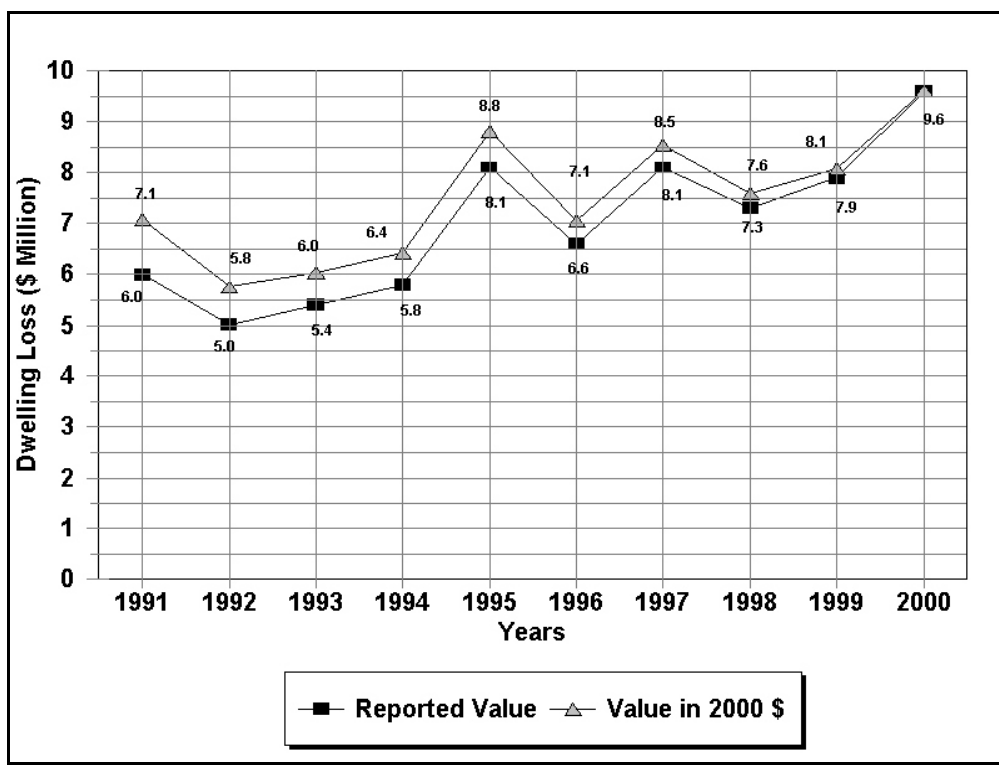


Figure 6. Total Reported Dwelling Losses (1991 - 2000)

### **4.3 Band, Federal and other Property**

The reported fire losses in 2000 are categorized as major and minor fires. For minor fires the variation in level of detail between regions is a reflection of regional reporting accuracy rather than actual regional fire losses. It is not possible to distinguish between FN owned and “private” property at this level of reporting.

#### **Major fires (\$250,000 and above)**

##### **Atlantic Region**

Burnt Church Band Office estimated value \$1.3 million

Burnt Church Bingo Hall (unoccupied) estimated value \$800,000

##### **Ontario Region**

Wapekeka Lake Community Centre estimated value \$1.3 million

Wapekeka Lake Recreation Building estimated value \$750,000

Lac Seul FN Police Station estimated value \$1 million

#### **Minor fires (under \$250,000)**

##### **Atlantic Region**

Kingsclear Apartment Unit (10 units) estimated value \$115,000

Eel Ground School estimated value \$2,500

Big Cove Apartment Unit estimated value \$8,000

Membertou Day Care Centre estimated value \$5,000

Membertou Apartment Unit estimated value \$10,000

Big Cove Apartment Unit estimated value \$5,000

Eskasoni Apartment Unit estimated value \$2,000

Kingsclear Apartment Unit estimated value \$4,000

##### **Ontario Region**

Cat Lake School estimated value \$7,000

Pic River Band Office estimated value \$1,000

Lac Seul Band Office estimated value \$90,000

Sachigo Lake Nursing Station estimated value \$75,000

Moose Cree School estimated value \$1,060

Nickickousemencan Recreation Building estimated value \$32,000

Sachigo Lake Warehouse \$15,000

##### **Manitoba Region**

Berens River Church estimated value \$247,026

**Saskatchewan Region**

Red Pheasant Band Office estimated value \$200,000

Pheasant Rump Band Office estimated value \$200,000

**Alberta Region\***

Morley School estimated value \$20,000

Assumption School estimated value \$30,000

Assumption School estimated value \$20,000

Saddle Lake Church estimated value \$185,000

Morley Apartment estimated value \$100,000

Store estimated value \$10,000

Woodland Cree Service Station estimated value \$13,000

Enoch Sawmill estimated value \$60,000

John D'or Prairie Storage estimated value \$30,000

John D'or Prairie Vacant Property estimated value \$35,000

Assumption Vacant Property estimated value \$15,000

Wetaskiwin Vacant Property estimated value \$27,000

Wetaskiwin Vacant Property estimated value \$90,000

Morley Vacant Property estimated value \$100,000

Standoff Vacant Property estimated value \$25,000

Frog Lake Vacant Property estimated value \$10,000

Morley Vacant Property estimated value \$18,000

Ermineskin Water Supply System estimated value \$8,000

\* Fire statistics for Alberta have been supplied by the Fire Commissioner's Office, Alberta Labour. They exclude grass, brush and forest fires.

**5.0 CAUSES OF FIRE**

The predominant causes of fires in First Nation communities during 2000 were: grass, brush, and shrub fires; followed by arson and suspected arson; child related; electrical; heating; and cooking. In terms of value arson appears to be the cause for a much higher proportion of fire this year. The vast majority of fires had unknown or unreported causes.

It must be emphasised that the level and detail of reporting varies greatly, which hinders a better understanding of the differences between causes, and may result in large annual inconsistencies. Variations in reporting may also account for the large difference in the number of grass/brush/shrub fires from year to year.