

LUNZAYA NLANDU



The Red Cross Rebuild programs created many opportunities for youth to excel and become instrumental in bringing their communities back from the wake of destruction the fires had left behind.

Also thankful for these opportunities are people like Lunzaya Nlandu who have long had a passion and interest working with youth and was able to play an important leadership role thanks to the Red Cross Rebuild. Lunzaya says it was perfect timing for him as far as giving back,

"Being able to help on a bigger scale and to be involved with young people. That was great for me"

The initial response call to youth was "overwhelming" with over 100 youth applicants looking to get involved. Lunzaya was aware of the trauma many of these youth went through seeing their own homes or those of their close friends and neighbours burned to the ground.

"Everybody was emotionally engaged. There was a lot of empathy in the community and it was great to recruit so many young people to be involved in the program."

Born in the Congo, Lunzaya, grew up in Montreal and called Fort McMurray his home for over 4 years. The ability to engage with the community and make a difference in a time of need was a very satisfying experience.

"It was a really difficult time for the region itself and obviously Fort McMurray so when I heard about the position I was really interested because it was about giving back to the community during this time."

"We recruited about 70 young people, we trained them, provided safety certificates and then provided job placements by partnering with local employers here in Fort McMurray."

Lunzaya was witness to the transformation and growth of the youth he worked with first-hand,

"they are working and they are more independent. They have more transferable skills and they willing to stay in the community and give back."

And with the Rebuild program complete, the work for the youth who have gained these skills continues.

"Now it's more the maintaining the community and the city. We have new apprentices that are going to stay in



the region now...I think that the rebuild opened the doors for those that may have though to work in the industrial fields and didn't know they had an opportunity in the residential and commercial fields."

"It was all about building a local workforce. Starting to engage them when they are a little bit younger and they will stay in the community and hopefully have a future in the community."

