

May 8, 2024

Update on Old Crow Flood Preparedness and Response

There is a high risk of flooding in Old Crow this year due to record snowpack. Old Crow has experienced many damaging floods, and citizens have shared their experiences from major floods in 1991 and 1973. In both cases, ice jams led to rapidly rising water that caught the community off-guard.

In line with best practice, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, in collaboration with the Government of Yukon and other partners and agencies, is developing preparation and response plans for a range of scenarios, including a worst-case flood event that could result in the community being without water, power, transportation, or communications for 72 hours or longer.

As a small, fly-in community, flood readiness and response requires significant preparation. Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, the Government of Yukon, and partner agencies, are working together to protect the community of Old Crow, and facilitate effective response and recovery.

Overview of Work to Date

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation's objective is to support as many citizens as possible to stay safely in community during a flood, and to put resources in place to ensure the community can recover effectively.

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation has been working with the Government of Yukon (YG), the Government of Canada through Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs (CIRNAC), and other partners in community, to be prepared for and able to respond to a flood. This includes:

- ongoing removal of unprecedented snow from community to reduce the flood risk from local snowmelt;
- procuring Tiger Dams, in collaboration with CIRNAC and YG, that will be deployed to protect critical infrastructure;
- developing a robust 24/7 flood monitoring plan, and working with YG hydrologists to share information;
- developing a community evacuation plan, including 10 on-call Community Safety Officers to support any evacuations needed alongside RCMP;
- community meetings, office drop ins, and door-to-door discussions to share the evacuation plan and preparedness actions;
- pre-registering citizens with their plans for the month of May, any additional support they require, and their plans in the event they need to evacuate their homes or, in a worst-case scenario, the community;
- a plan to use the school as a reception centre and as group lodging in the case of evacuation, with support from YG's Emergency Social Services. If a flood happens, anyone who has to leave their home would register at the school. The school would also be a place to stay for those who do not have another location to evacuate to (such as another family's house on higher ground or up the mountain);
- a pre-staged helicopter fuel cache, to enable emergency supply delivery and evacuations if the airport runway is impacted; and

- undertaking a preventative shutdown of Sree Vyàa (the Old Crow Solar Project).

With Government of Yukon's support, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation is preparing to care for citizens for 72 hours and will be prioritizing care for elders, children, and people who need extra support. If support is needed for longer than 72 hours, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation will continue working with YG and CIRNAC to take care of all citizens and assess any damage in the community. We will provide regular updates throughout the breakup and any flooding.

As Old Crow prepares for a potential flood, residents and non-residents are asked to be prepared to take care of yourself and plan to help others. This includes:

- making your evacuation kit;
- storing valuables and important items or documents in water-tight containers or in higher places, like on a tall shelf or upper floor;
- taking photos of your property and your belongings (if Old Crow does flood and there is damage, these photos may assist in assessment of the damage and recovery) including:
 - appliances,
 - traditional foods in your freezer,
 - traditional regalia, and
 - important papers;
- helping your neighbours by:
 - checking in on your neighbours to see if they have their evacuation plan and emergency kit and to see if they need help packing or moving their valuables, and
 - helping to ensure your neighbours are informed;
- making an evacuation plan with your family:
 - plan to meet at the school if you are not altogether when an evacuation occurs,
 - consider how long it may take you and your household to get to safety, especially if the flooding occurs in the middle of the night, like it did in 1991, and
 - register your evacuation plan with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Emergency Response Team; and
- stay informed on flood preparedness and response plans as well as ice breakup conditions through:
 - Facebook – “Vuntut Gwitchin Government”, “Yukon Protective Services” and “Porcupine River Breakup 2024”
 - [yukon.ca/emergencies](https://www.yukon.ca/emergencies),
 - posters around Old Crow, and
 - stop by the Administration Office.



Photo 1: Community Meeting on Flood Preparedness held at the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School on April 23, 2024.



Photo 2: Removal of snow from community to reduce compounding the flood risk. Funded by CIRNAC and coordinated by VGFN.



Photo 3: Clearing of Mountain Road to increase access up the mountain for storage of critical infrastructure and assets and to support that it could be used as an evacuation route.



Photo 4: Moving old fuel tanks from the fuel tank farm to prevent damage to critical infrastructure in the event the empty tanks are moved by flood waters.



Photo 5: Pre-staged helicopter fuel cache. Funded by CIRNAC and coordinated by VGFN.



Photo 6: VGFN and YG coordinated a site visit on Monday, May 6th to assess risk and plan for critical community infrastructure, and coordinate a plan for emergency preparedness, response and recovery.



Photo 7: Old Crow flood 1973.

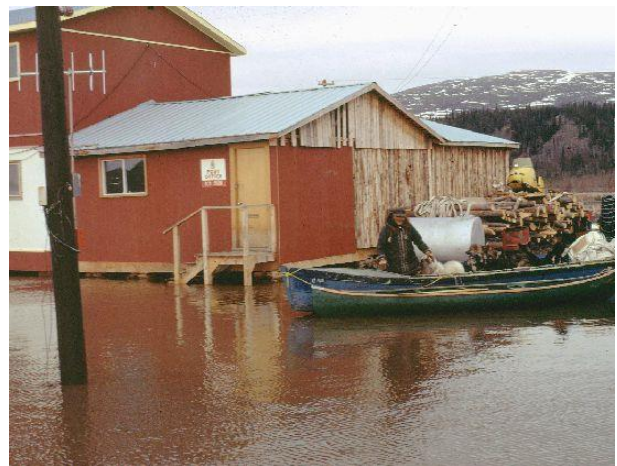


Photo 8: Old Crow flood 1973.