



Challenges When Evacuating First Nations' Coastal Communities

LAURIE PEARCE, PH.D.
BRENDA MURPHY, PH.D.



Indigenous and
Northern Affairs Canada

Affaires autochtones
et du Nord Canada

LAURIER 
Inspiring Lives.

JUNE 14 2019





Thank you to the
Songhees and
Esquimalt First Nations
for allowing us onto
their territory today

Thank you as well to the Eskasoni Mi'Kmaq Nation, NS; the
Cormorant Island, Namgis First Nation, BC; the Long Plain First
Nation MB; and the Kanaka Bar First Nation & Lytton First Nation,
BC

RESEARCH PURPOSE



- foster resilience & support for Indigenous communities to become better prepared in case they have to be evacuated;
- provide guidelines and recommendations to government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the steps that can be taken to maximize support for displaced populations and minimize the negative impacts of displacement

RESEARCH PURPOSE



- provide host communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, with advice and recommendations on how to welcome and provide support to displaced populations until they are able to return home.

FINDINGS

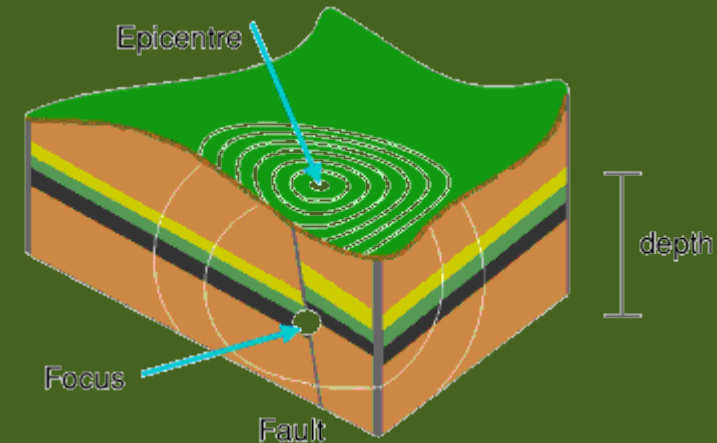
- Indigenous families and communities faced continued suffering during and post-evacuation
- Displacements resulted in social isolation; lack of access to traditional food; repeated moves; job insecurity; lack of, or inconsistent, access to education; and poor psychological health outcomes



FINDINGS

First Nations administrators and Band Councils:

- Were concerned about their communities
- Were generally aware of the risk of potential hazards but unaware of the specifics
 - e.g., recognized the earthquake threat but were unaware of liquefiable soils



FINDINGS

Community members:

- Were generally unprepared
- Were generally unaware of what to do if a warning was issued
- Were not prepared for evacuation re: possessions & cultural items



FINDINGS – EVACUATION & RELOCATION

- Family is important
- Pets are important
- Placements are usually in urban communities with few linkages to the reserve
- Lack of traditional food was an ongoing theme, across the country



FINDINGS – HOST COMMUNITIES

- Host communities were often not well-prepared for their role
- No standards or protocols for becoming a host community
- Often little local engagement with evacuated Indigenous communities prior and during their stay



*Cormorant Island,
Namgis First Nation, British Columbia*

- Be prepared for the long haul
- Role of social media in disasters
- Importance of maintaining community and cultural events
- Transitioning from an oral tradition to meeting bureaucratic expectations

**SHANNON
ALFRED**



PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

First Nations administrators and Band Councils:

- Complete Hazard, Risk and Resiliency analyses to identify:
 - Potential hazards
 - Available warnings
 - Areas of safety & evacuation

As host communities & impacted communities



PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Need to have community residents aware of the plan
- Exercise the plan
- Promote the importance of building capacity
- Identify host communities for sheltering evacuees and to consider how the required transportation would be provided



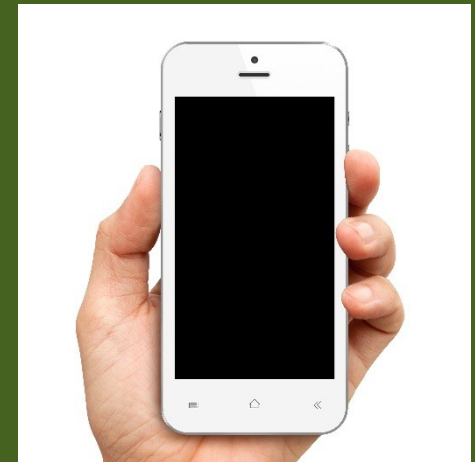
FINDINGS – PLANNING FOR RECOVERY

- In many cases recovery plans were non-existent prior to the event
- Strategies and priorities for rebuilding were not established & not linked to hazards, risks and vulnerabilities
- Community engagement was not always in place
- Often communicating recovery planning efforts was difficult



EVACUATION & RELOCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Address the special needs of older persons (including the need for accessible medication); children, youth, women and girls; & men and fathers
- Loss of communication devices (e.g., cell phones, tablets) was a huge limitation, especially for youth - replacement of electronic communication devices should be considered a priority



EVACUATION & RELOCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Indigenous-sensitive programs for emotional wellness was a key finding for host communities
- Engage with the Elders
- Develop strategies to use Traditional Knowledge: Healing Circles, smudging, & other healing cultural customs
- Identify whether translation services are needed

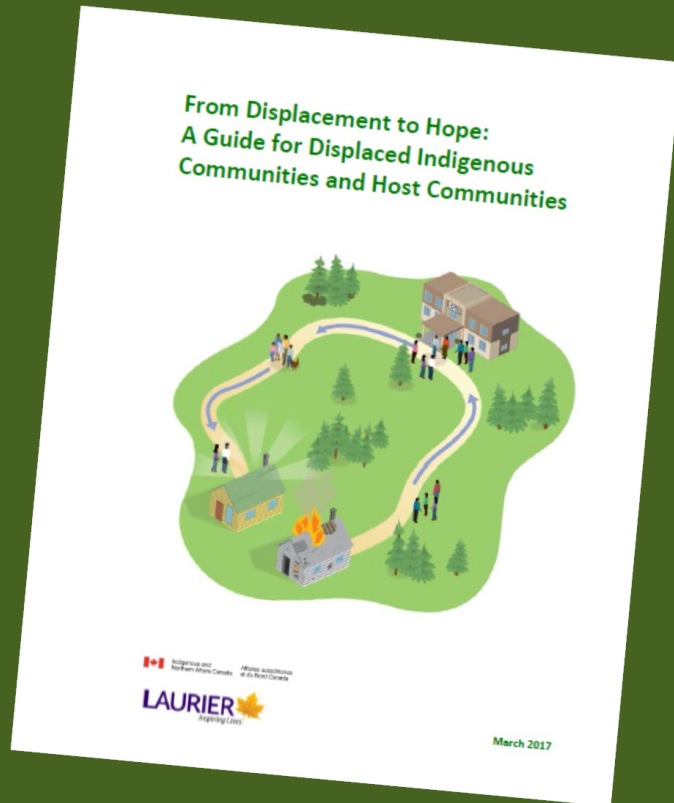


TIPS FOR HOST COMMUNITIES

- Appoint a First Nations Liaison
- Link with Aboriginal Friendship Centres
- Hold a Welcoming Ceremony
- Develop a Resource Guide (e.g., location of parks, pharmacies, clinics, stores, transportation routes)
- Plan for a Walk-Around Orientation



OUTCOME



- A Guide with recommendations for:
 1. Pre-event planning strategies;
 2. Processes to address the evacuation process itself;
 3. Initiatives and services to provide meaningful support to evacuating communities; and
 4. Strategies to improve relationships with host communities.

Than

Keys available at:
<http://crhnet.ca/>

Guide (EN/FR) available at:
<http://www.resilientresearch.ca/research-publications/>

lpearce@jibc.ca
bmurphy@wlu

