



Information Release to the Community of Mount Currie regarding the Capricorn/Meager Creek Landslide

Issued by: Lil'wat Nation Emergency Operations Committee

Date Issued: Tuesday, August 10, 2010

On Friday August 6th, 2010 at 5:30am one of the largest landslides in Canadian history was released from the Capricorn Glacier in the Upper Lillooet Valley. More than 40 million cubic meters of rock and ice fell to the valley floor and created a massive earthen berm which completely blocked the flow of Meager Creek into the Lillooet River. During the day the waters of Meager Creek backed up behind the berm creating a large lake the pressure of which threatened to push through the dam. The communities of Pemberton and Mount Currie were both threatened and late in the evening the upper Pemberton Meadows area, as well as Mount Currie, were evacuated.

Since the cancellation of the evacuation notice, there have been many questions from Mount Currie community members about the chain of events that led to the evacuation order. The purpose of this brief is to answer some of those questions.

Early in the day the Lil'wat Nation Emergency Operations Committee (EOC) was called together and proceeded to make decisions based on expert information from the Ministry of Forests and the Ministry of the Environment. Beginning at 11am the EOC was included in several calls with provincial and federal agencies as well as the Squamish Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) and the Village of Pemberton (VoP). Through these calls, the EOC received the most up to date information and worked with the other local governing bodies to decide how best to handle the situation and inform the community. The EOC did not want to risk a re-enactment of the situation Mount Currie experienced in 2003 where information was sparse and people were not given adequate notification.

The following is a summary of the series of events that the Lil'wat Nation experienced in relation to the emergency.

Friday August 6, 2010

- 8:45 am Senior Administrator (SA) was advised of the potential threat.
- 9:00 am Numerous phone calls conducted by SA to follow-up.
- 10:00 am SA issued notice for an Emergency Planning Meeting for 12 noon.
- 11:00 am Conference Call with SLRD, VoP, Pemberton Search and Rescue (SARS) and Provincial/Federal Agencies.
- 12:30 pm Lil'wat Emergency Planning Committee Meeting.
- 1:00 pm Emergency Planning Committee decided to issue an Evacuation Alert for all of IR 1, 2, 3, 8 and 10. Notice is drafted
- 1:30 pm Lil'wat Nation issues Evacuation Alert Notice which is hand delivered to areas at risk.
- 3:00 pm Conference call with SLRD, VOP, SAR and Provincial/Federal Agencies.
- 7:00 pm Conference call with SLRD, VOP, SAR and Provincial/Federal Agencies. This call was delayed as it relied upon input from geotechnical experts who were not available. Call rescheduled for 8pm and then delayed again.
- 9:02 pm Notice received from VOP that breach of landslide dam was likely imminent. Given an estimate of less than 1 hour before breach.
- 9:08 pm EOC disbursed into community to order evacuations door to door.
- 9:20 pm Reps from Lil'wat Nation were briefed at SLRD Emergency Operations Centre (SLRD EOC) that breach was likely to occur by 9:45 and that water could take less than 3hrs to reach Pemberton.
- 10:30 pm All homes in Mount Currie community had been notified and most evacuated.
- 11:00pm Registration, Referral and Retail forms started to be filled with the assistance of Emergency Social Services Volunteers.
- 12:45 pm Last communication from SLRD with an update that no water had yet reached the village.

During the night there were no further alerts or notices from the Village of Pemberton

Saturday August 7, 2010

- 2:30 am Volunteers at the Xit'olacw Emergency Centre went home for rest
- 7:00 am Registration, Referral and Retail forms started to be filled out again
- 10:00 am Conference call with SLRD, VOP, SAR and others - threat diminished
- 10:30 am Lil'wat Emergency Operations Committee cancels evacuation order

The decision to evacuate was made based on the best available information from Provincial Geoscientists regarding the potential breach of the Meager Creek dam created by the landslide. The possible scenario involved the release of a massive amount of water in a catastrophic dam failure which could potentially travel at a rate of up to 4m/sec. Without the protection of a 200 year dyke, the community of Mount Currie was incredibly susceptible to extreme flood damage which was estimated to be equivalent to the 2003 floods. Unlike the 2003 flood event, this water would include massive amounts of mud and debris.

Fortunately nature worked out a different scenario and instead of a catastrophic failure of the dam, Meager Creek carved itself a 25 – 40m channel through the berm. This channel released the water behind the dam at a more manageable rate resulting in a peak flow of Lillooet River at approximately 4am.

The Capricorn Creek area remains extremely active and the threat of more landslides has not passed. More information will become available as crews are able to access the area safely.

It is a requirement of the Provincial Emergency Program that forms be filled out by each family who are impacted in the event of an emergency. These forms are used for reimbursements for billeting and groceries. Volunteers at the Xit'olacw School assisted those affected in filling out the necessary documents throughout the day on Saturday. 184 homes were evacuated and we currently have 114 forms filled out.

On Monday August 9th, the Lil'wat EOC held a de-briefing where a number of next steps were identified:

- Update to community (provided here)
- Update Emergency Contact List
- Review Emergency Operations Procedure
- Update telecommunications devices
- Create a communications strategy
- Replenish Emergency Supplies

Over the next weeks these issues will be addressed so that we are more prepared in the event of a future emergency.

The members of the Emergency Operations Committee who were involved during this event are:

Vaughan Gabriel – Acting Chief

Councilor Maxine Joseph-Bruce

Councilor Joanne John

Mike McGee – Senior Administrator

Calvin Jameson

Carolyn Ward

Sylvia Dan

Frank Andrew

Charles Frank

Tracy Howlett

If you have any questions regarding the event please contact Mike McGee at 604-894-6115.