

Community Government of Whatì
Disaster Resilience Plan

May 10, 2013

BACKGROUND

Disaster resilience refers to a community's ability to anticipate, and where possible, prevent or at least minimize the potential damage a disaster might cause. It involves how well the community can cope with a disaster by its ability to:

- maintain certain basic functions and structures during a disaster event,
- recover from the effects of the disaster, and
- adapt to the changes that may result.

However, disaster resilience is more than emergency preparedness, it also involves a wide range of community strengths including its people and all of its resources. Small remote communities often have characteristics that make them resistant to the effects of a disaster. There are personal characteristics (eg. self-reliance, wide range of skills, knowledge & abilities) and cultural characteristics (eg. caring for one another, ability to survive on the land).

These characteristics can be strengthened, resources can be constructed or acquired; such measures will make the community more resilient. Building community resilience is an ongoing year-round process aimed at strengthening the community's ability to respond to disasters.

(Rural Disaster Resilience Planning Guide, JIBC 2012).

INTRODUCTION

Whati's resilience assessment was the result of application of the Rural Disaster Resilience Planning (RDRP) framework in the community; specifically the Rural Resilience Index and Hazard Resilience Index tools. The process involved the Chief and Council, and other groups and individuals in the community.

This Community Disaster Resilience Plan (the Plan) is the result of that work and was formed into eight broad themes, which guided formulation of specific strategic priorities. These strategic priorities aim for enhancement of the overall resilience of the community, and address both areas of high and low resilience.

IMPLEMENTATION

The complete disaster resilience implementation plan for Whati is provided in Annex One.

RESILIENCE STRATEGIES

The following resilience strategies are arranged by category and dimensions of resilience as outlined in the RDRP's Rural Resilience Index and Hazard Resilience Index. This approach considered the positive and negative implications of different characteristics of resilience, and how they might interact with each other to improve resilience in some way in the community.

The high resilience dimensions of Whati as "a Community close-knit & involved" with "Strong leadership & governance" were of prime consideration in forming the first five resilience strategies which dealt with activities benefiting from a cohesive community with strong leaders. Building on progress already made, Council could work with youth and other groups to seek optimum measures for public information/engagement, health & social services support, economic diversification, collaboration and mentorships. The high resilience dimension of resilience of "a Comprehensive Emergency Plan" is the basis for the last three strategies which were concerned with disaster awareness, and emergency preparedness & response planning.

These activities would foster effective consultations, information sharing and awareness-raising; improve level of skills & knowledge; and acquire needed resources to enhance the overall level of resilience by either increasing capacity or lowering vulnerability.

The low resilience dimensions of Whati as a "Self-sufficient & resourceful", "Stable & sustainable" and "Strong health & social service support system" were addressed in the second, third and fifth strategy which considered helping those in need, volunteerism, health education, economic diversification, and social services support. The low resilience dimensions of "Community is disaster aware" and "Community has adequate first response capacity" address deficiencies in the sixth and eighth strategies, and interacts with the high resilience dimension of "Community has a comprehensive emergency plan" to improve the community capacity to coordinate emergency operations, respond to spills, and develop a responsive Fire Department.

Such measures aimed at improving areas of low resilience would reduce the level of vulnerability and make the community more resilient.

RESILIENCE STRATEGIES

1. Our community is close knit and involved

Dimension Rating: **High Resilience**

Engaging Residents

The Community Government seeks locally relevant public education material to better inform people on preparing for emergencies (ie what to do in emergencies, search & rescue prevention/preparedness, fire extinguisher training, maintaining functioning smoke/CO2 detectors in the home, preparing a travel kit).

Council continually seeks opportunities to keep people informed through providing information to residents and consulting with the community, including:

- Scheduled community meetings and special Gatherings provide an opportunity to communicate with everyone at one time on important matters.
- Council supports the Community Government Building foyer serving as a drop-in for young and older residents and is committed to an expansion of the foyer in 2013.
- Community Government staff consider the feasibility of operating the Community Radio Station to provide music, news and information for adults & youth.

Engaging Youth

High school students are encouraged to assist Council engage residents and improve the community:

- Encourage volunteerism through social media and other promotion activities.
- Seek opportunities for youth involvement in volunteer organizations or activities.
- Create a “Whati” Page on Facebook to serve as a Community Page for helping in the sharing of information and communication between Council and the people.
- Post information to advance community/individual resilience on the School Facebook Page.

Whati School looks to become a focal point for awareness raising, knowledge & skills development for youth, and/or partnering with other agencies to increase resilience on matters of current concern, areas of interest or health/safety issues for youth. Whati School seeks opportunities for enlisting specialized support from residents trained in counseling and TEP graduates to enhance the overall resilience of young people.

The Community Government seeks employment opportunities for youth through community service, casual employment and job/skill mentoring to provide positive work experiences.

Council engages elders, officials and informal leaders in exploring how the Tlicho Community Services Committee can be best supported in its work with youth on traditional knowledge and language education (Tlicho language education for youth and young people in school, passing on traditional skills & knowledge to children/youth, encouraging parents to help in traditional knowledge activities).

Supporting Families, New Mothers & Their Children

Council engages elders, officials and informal leaders in exploring how the community can support the Tlicho Community Services Committee in its work in providing information, education, support services and intervention action on matters such as:

- Proactive prenatal care
- Positive parenting skills
- Day care support
- Fostering & custom adoption
- Child safety & nurturing
- Addictions counseling

Council promotes the implementation of positive parenting activities through negotiating arrangements to utilize trained community residents to undertake support activities and examine options for space for programming activities.

Seek options for “safe house” locations for individuals or families with immediate safety needs. Consider means for community support to a youth/child intervention unit to best serve high risk individuals and youth.

2. Our community is self-sufficient and resourceful

Dimension Rating: **Low Resilience**

Food Security: Encourage individual or collective community gardens where produce can replace commercially bought food and can be used to create food hampers for those in need.

Volunteerism:

- Engage new volunteers with experienced volunteers increases commitment and prepares them to take on more senior roles as required. Plan events that involve old and new volunteers.
- Keep volunteers 'in-the-loop' during quiet times to help keep their interest (eg. including them on email broadcast lists or sharing meeting minutes).
- Ensure potential volunteer groups are not lost by blending different work styles that exist (eg. participating through coffee break chats, meetings, social media or other web-based options).
- Use different ways (eg. on-line, through the mail, in person) for training volunteers to help increase capacity to conduct training, resulting in an increase in the size of the volunteer pool.
- Consider adopting incentives for volunteering (eg. volunteer lunches, public announcements and thank you letters/cards). This is also essential to volunteer retention as poorly acknowledged volunteers often don't stay as volunteers.
- Consider how best to support the community's Recreation Coordinator with volunteers in organizing/promoting Tea Dances and Hand Games competitions for local adults and youth.
- Utilize trained community residents to implement a community positive parenting program through negotiating arrangements for providing support activities and examine options for space for conducting program activities.

3. Our community has a strong health and social support system

Dimension Rating: **Low Resilience**

The causes underlying crime rates, substance abuse, disease, suicide, poverty and violence are complex and intergenerational and often require the actions of many generations, levels of government, and organizations to fix. Community meetings, informal coffee breaks discussions, forums or workshops can open up the discussion about where problems exist and what resources (both internal and external to the community) might be used to help.

Collaborate with the RCMP on the feasibility of and opportunities for Intervention/Prevention programming in the community.

Health education can be useful so invite public health nurses or other health professionals (e.g., local, regional or territorial HSS/medical official) to participate in local health education programs.

Discuss with local and regional partners how your community might establish support services for residents in need. This might include establishing a local/regional transition home to provide safe shelter for women fleeing violence in relationships, anger management programs, addictions counseling, or Neighborhood Watch.

4. Our community has strong local leadership and governance

Dimension Rating: **High Resilience**

Future leaders need to be cultivated through education, training, skills development, and mentorship. Council considers creation of youth leadership mentoring opportunities drawing on RCMP, Canadian Rangers, nurses, teachers, Community Government officials, formal and informal leaders in the community, the local priest and elders as mentors.

5. Our community is stable and sustainable

Dimension Rating: **Low Resilience**

Diversifying the local economy can require significant time, funding and investment.

- Consider the feasibility of hiring an economic strategist to work with the community to identify economic diversification options and opportunities.
- Work with local/regional leaders and organizations to develop strategies for creating and sustaining local entrepreneurship and jobs, and for retaining skilled workers in communities.
- Cultural and eco-tourism can supplement traditional commerce in communities. Regional and community-based partnerships, such as cooperatives, can be effective to develop and promote tourism and cultural activities to benefit many communities in a region (e.g. arts festivals).

Consider strategies to increase recreational opportunities for all residents, but youth in particular. One first goal is approval of a budget and implementation plan for the repair of the Arena to maximize usage.

6. Our community is disaster aware

Dimension Rating: **Low Resilience**

Education: Individuals who participate in disaster preparedness education and training programs are more likely to have a strong awareness and understanding of hazards faced by the community and how to respond and deal with them.

- Find ways of engaging residents in community disaster awareness sessions and drills.
- Disaster awareness education can be linked to other community/public education campaigns and activities, local school curricula, and included in brochures on a community website and on notice boards in the Community Government Office.
- Develop community-specific information brochures regarding hazard warnings, evacuation processes and routes, and emergency preparedness. These can be adapted for the local community from more generic material made available through territorial/regional or the federal government.

Households:

- Consider incentives and community-wide initiatives to encourage household disaster preparedness.
- Install smoke, fire and carbon monoxide detectors in key community buildings and encourage all households to do the same.
- Seek opportunities to offer CPR/First Aid training in the community and encourage residents to attend training.

Schools:

- Schools and daycares have up-to-date contact lists for parents or other primary caregivers, including alternate caregivers if parents or primary caregivers are unavailable or otherwise unable to take their children under their care during an emergency.
- Similarly, parents should know what school protocols are in place during an emergency; what can be provided for children who are at school during an emergency, and have contact lists for school officials.

7. Our community has a comprehensive disaster plan

Dimension Rating: **High Resilience**

Conduct a feasibility study and approve a budget & implementation plan for the repair or replacement of the community siren.

Design & implement an emergency alerting plan to establish the warnings that can be given, so all residents are aware of the emergency advisories that can be transmitted over the siren.

Protecting the Community Against Forest Fires

Whati enhances its forest fire resilience:

- Council consideration of a By-law to Ban Fires within the community during a high risk of forest fires.
- Implement all Fire Smart measures called for within the community in the Whati Forest Fire Protection Plan on public land.
- Encourage residents to protect their own property through carrying out all Fire Smart measures called for on residential property.
- Seek opportunities for assistance from Community Service volunteers to help elders and others in need with Fire Smart measures on their property or on public land.
- Complete a community evacuation plan as an annex to its Community Emergency Plan.
- Plan for community involvement in forest fire operations including prevention, suppression & monitoring, and forest fire response with ENR.
- Consider alternatives for a community siren and educating residents on its use.

8. Our community has adequate first response capacity

Dimension Rating: **Low Resilience**

Improving Overall Community Emergency Response Capacity

Maintain an enhanced community emergency response capacity:

- Encourage first responders and volunteers to regularly renew and update related certifications.
- Maintain an inventory of special skills and knowledge of various individuals and groups within the community, and seeking their help in emergencies or other times of need.
- Encourage agencies designated with local emergency responsibilities to recruit new, younger staff/volunteers to be trained and mentored under current trained staff to help them fulfill agency designated emergency responsibilities.
- Identify the specification requirements and acquiring an emergency generator for the Community Government Office as the primary Emergency Operations Centre (EOC).
- Designate Community Government Works staff to operate the ambulance service in collaboration with the Health Centre.
- Confirm evacuation routes from the community for different seasons and under different circumstances (ie airport closed due to forest fire smoke, hazardous material spill).
- Establish an emergency plan for dealing with pets during an emergency evacuation.
- Consult with individuals outside normal community or family networks to ensure all residents are considered in planning for emergencies so no one's needs or abilities to help are overlooked when dealing with a significant threatening situation.
- Conduct regular tabletop exercises to test arrangements for the greatest risks.

Maximize opportunities for training, education and awareness-raising with partners (ie Mining companies; School; Tlicho Regional Government; MACA; other GNWT departments; JTFN; RCMP).

The Community Government seeks opportunities for offering people training in First Aid/CPR and fire extinguisher training to make families more resilient.

Improving Community Emergency Response to a Hazardous Materials Spill

Enhance Whati's capacity to respond to a hazardous materials spill through:

- Joint planning between the Lac La Martre Development Corporation and Petroleum Products Division to confirm roles and available resources to respond to a spill on land and on water.
- Identify any additional resource requirements for Community Government support to any land or marine spill response in the community.
- Identify individuals for spill response training and search for appropriate training programs.

Establishing and Maintaining a Responsive Fire Department

Develop a responsive Fire Department:

- Work with MACA to identify local opportunities to exploit under the new territorial Firefighter Recruitment & Retention Strategy.
- Consult with the Assistant Fire Marshal on development of a training plan for new recruits and identification of immediate equipment & supplies requirements of the Fire Department.
- Council approval of an acquisition plan to acquire the necessary equipment & supplies.
- Inform residents of the training available to a volunteer firefighter.
- Council raises the issue of the need for volunteers for the Fire Department at public gatherings and in the Drop-in.
- Explore options for offering First Aid/CPR training to local residents and staff of various organizations.
- High school students support the Fire Chief in the development of an effective Fire Department through active participation in training and skills development.
 - Students work with the Fire Chief to determine ways young people can help the Fire Department until they are able to be trained and serve as active members of the Fire Department.
 - Students encourage young people in the community to take certified fire fighter training so they are able to serve on the Fire Department.
 - Students encourage young people to take First Aid/CPR training and retain their certification to support those under medical distress In the community or their family.

ANNEX ONE

COMMUNITY DISASTER RESILIENCE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Chief and Council of the Community Government (the Council) have assumed responsibility to lead a community-wide approach in enhancing the resilience of Whati through design and implementation of a community disaster resilience plan. The leadership involves providing support for various individuals, public/private sector agencies, or other community groups in advancing their own action or working together on the planning and implementation of the community's Disaster Resilience Plan.

Implementation of the Plan will address specific strategies to enhance disaster resilience by improving community capacity or lowering vulnerability.

Chief and Council

Initial planning for Whati's Disaster Resilience Plan starts with the Chief and Council formally appointing members to resilience planning committees and assigning roles in accordance with the provisions under the Plan.

Community Resilience Steering Committee

To fulfill this responsibility to provide leadership in community resilience, Council has established a Community Resilience Steering Committee (the Steering Committee) to support the resilience enhancement work of various individuals and community groups by approving plans for implementing specific resilience strategies.

In providing this leadership in enhancing community resilience, the Steering Committee will:

- consult with stakeholders to identify tasks for implementing each of the Plan's eight resilience strategies;
- appoint a Champion for each resilience strategy to oversee multi-stakeholder planning and coordination; and
- invite participation from involved individuals, companies and organizations in undertaking specific tasks where value can be added.

Community Resilience Executive Committee

Council designates key community government officials to serve as an Executive Committee responsible for overall coordination of action in advancing community resilience:

- the Chief is the Chairperson of the Executive Committee (the Chair);
- the Senior Administrative Officer (SAO) is the Community Disaster Resilience Director (the Director); and
- the Assistant Senior Administrative Officer (ASAO) is the Community Disaster Resilience Plan Coordinator (the Coordinator).

Resilience Committee Chair

The Chair leads the Executive Committee and the Steering Committee by chairing all meetings, approving meeting agendas for both committees, determining consensus on decision-making, representing both committees to the public and media, or delegating any of these responsibilities to an appropriate community government official or other individual/agency.

Resilience Committee Director

The Director supports the Chair by preparing Executive Committee and Steering Committee meeting agendas, keeping both committees informed on issues to facilitate decision-making, and providing recommendations for action on strategies identified in this Plan. The Director manages community government resources, coordinates planning and action with outside individuals and groups with resilience enhancement strategies, and supervises the Coordinator.

Resilience Committee Coordinator

The Coordinator supports the Director by gathering information/preparing briefings for Executive Committee and Steering Committee meetings, and recording decisions and proceedings from meetings of both committees. The Coordinator works with stakeholders in coordinating new resilience enhancement activities or linking with existing agency/individual activities which enhance resilience. The Coordinator seeks opportunities to collaborate with other governments, local residents, community groups or businesses in maximizing local capacity to enhance resilience, and will communicate with local and outside stakeholder individuals, organizations and groups.

The Coordinator is responsible for the overall implementation of the Plan through advising the Director on the use of community government resources to address resilience strategies.

Members-at-large

Council will appoint members-at-large to the Steering Committee for representation of different areas of interest in making decisions to enhance resilience. The number of members-at-large appointed to the Committee will be determined by Council.

Resilience Strategy Champion

The Steering Committee appoints an individual with an active involvement/interest in a specific resilience strategy outlined in the Plan as Resilience Strategy Champion. A Champion is identified for each resilience strategy to recommend appointments to the specific task group, submit a work plan for the planning period, oversee multi-stakeholder planning and coordination, consult with the Executive Committee on progress and planning, and represent the views of the specific resilience strategy task group in Steering Committee meetings.

Resources

There are no dedicated financial and other resources specifically assigned by the Council or any stakeholder agency to advance the resilience strategies of this Plan. Implementation of any resilience strategies will be achieved through established agency budgets agencies participating in related action. Any work undertaken or support provided in addressing resilience strategies must be accomplished through use of existing and available financial and/or human resources, and volunteerism.

Reporting Back

The Steering Committee will report back to the community on progress made in advancing work on the Plan's resilience strategies on at least an annual basis, through the Executive Committee. This reporting can occur at regularly scheduled meetings of Council or at specially scheduled community gatherings.

The Coordinator will act under the direction of the Executive Committee in organizing the planning and conduct of all scheduled Council or community. The Director will report to the Executive Committee on progress in implementing resilience strategies.