

ALBERTA FLOODS: Two Year Progress Report



Two years ago, floodwaters devastated properties and uprooted the lives of thousands of people across southern Alberta.

From Calgary to Canmore in the west, High River and Medicine Hat in the south, and all points in between, the flood destroyed homes, businesses, and farmland.

Canadian Red Cross knows that needs emerge over time following a disaster of this magnitude. Emotional, financial, and family stresses continue to challenge Albertans and we, along with our donors and supporters, are here to help with their on-going recovery and resiliency.

We are genuinely grateful for your trust in the Canadian Red Cross. We offer sincere thanks for the exceptional support shown to us and Albertans.

This report celebrates the resiliency of the people and communities affected by the flood, and some of the outstanding achievements of what can be accomplished by collaborating together to help build a better tomorrow.

We are inspired and encouraged by the strength of our fellow citizens and our communities.



RED CROSS RESPONSE: RECOVERY AND BEYOND

While much has been accomplished in the two years since the Alberta floods in June 2013, our work is not done.

As families, individuals, and businesses move forward with their recovery, Red Cross continues to have a steady presence in High River and the First Nations communities. Some southern Albertans are only now seeking assistance as their financial and emotional reserves are depleted. We are committed to continuing our work with Albertans as they recover from this disaster.



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS INITIATIVE OF CALGARY

Even groups that help others deal with disaster can better prepare themselves for future crises. The Alberta floods provided an important reminder of this reality.

Numerous Calgary non-profit agencies, which rushed in to help, soon realized their own offices, staff and volunteers were personally grappling with the disaster, facing evacuation, and were not fully prepared to help. Some groups discovered their emergency plans could be improved.

That's when the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (CCVO), established in 2004 to support the non-profit sector, stepped in to research the needs of non-profit groups as they work to help others. With funding from the Canadian Red Cross, United Way, Calgary Foundation, City of Calgary and in collaboration with the Federation of Calgary Communities, Calgary Emergency Management Association and Alberta Health Services a CCVO project called the Emergency Preparedness Initiative of Calgary (EPIC) was launched. EPIC aims to empower non-profits and provide them with the resources and tools to help them do their own emergency preparedness planning. It is also focused on increasing collaboration and coordination between agencies and the public sector.

CCVO already conducts an annual survey of non-profit organizations, so when the floods first occurred, they utilized their information-gathering expertise. The first of three surveys about the floods was sent out within two



days of the disaster. The surveys found that, in general, non-profits did a great job responding to the disaster, but some areas needed improvement. For example, 53 per cent of non-profits did not have emergency plans and 70 per cent did not have a plan to relocate, if necessary.

Now, the EPIC project is assessing future needs. "Most organizations right now have the realization they need to prepare themselves. The flood was an awakening to that," says Emergency Preparedness coordinator Matt Sawatsky.

Johanna Schwartz, CCVO's communications coordinator, says the non-profit sector in Calgary and area is "incredibly adaptive ... but can also find itself understaffed and under-resourced." She adds: "The idea of the website is to provide practical template pieces ... best practices and current information."

These resources and tools are open to any non-profit agency, and can be found at: www.getpreparednonprofit.com.



REBUILDING THE HIGH RIVER LIBRARY

When the High River library was destroyed by the floods, the town lost a welcoming space where the community could learn, celebrate and heal together.

That's why the Canadian Red Cross, Town of High River, Calgary Foundation and Government of Alberta's Disaster Recovery Program have come together to fund the repair and rebuild of the valuable community hub. Not only will the old library be restored, but improvements to the space are being made to make it an effective and modern building for the future.

When the High River Centennial Library renovation is complete, the place will boast new interior windows and doors, a new program area to host children's story time, seniors' knitting circles, summer reading and other programs as well as upgrades to improve accessibility for the disabled.

"This is a priority for the Town. We have an excellent library, and it's part of what makes High River such a great community to live in," says Janice Wesley, Acting Director, Corporate Services, Town of High River. "We want to thank all of our partners, including Red Cross, for helping to make it happen. It's going to be a wonderful space that will serve the needs of the community for many years to come."

The library is one of 70 projects being funded by the Red Cross Community Grants Program created to assist people in communities affected by the Alberta Floods of 2013. The grants program is assisting with projects, events and workshops proposed by communities to help with their residents' recovery and prepare for future disasters.

Centrally located beside a park in downtown High River, the library sustained major damage and hasn't reopened since the floods. In fact, when the disaster struck several people were rescued from the building as flood waters rose. A local senior recalled that staff members were forced to pile books on upper shelves before two women waded, almost shoulder-deep, to notify firefighters of trapped people in the library. They were eventually evacuated by a massive combine that shuttled them to safety.



Now, one local resident says: "To see that once vibrant and bustling building sitting vacant and derelict is a daily reminder of June 20, 2013. The impact of that is not to be underestimated."

An interim library has operated from a temporary building on the edge of town, but the location and small space means far fewer people can use the facility. It's anticipated the restoration project will not only bring attendance back to pre-flood levels, but also increase it because there are plans for improved accessibility and additional community spaces in the building.

"Since the flood, we have heard consistently from residents in High River about the importance of coming together as a community to heal and recover," says Melanie Soler, Red Cross director of Alberta floods operations. "The library is that place. It is a hub that fosters community connection and we're very proud to be part of its restoration."



FIRST NATIONS STUDENTS HEAL WITH THE HELP OF AN OUTDOOR ADVENTURE PROGRAM

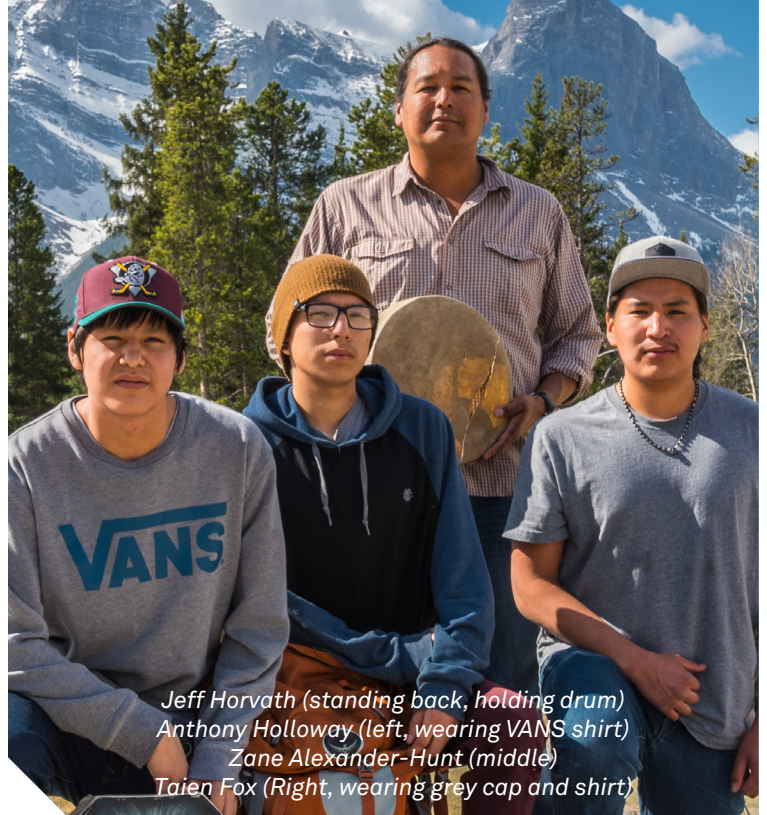
Although water is sacred, its power of destruction was also overwhelming for 17-year-old Taien Fox. Surging floodwaters forced his family to flee their home in Morley, Alberta, and it was 18 months before they could finally move back.

The only thing that helped Fox cope, kept him in school, and firmly connected to his community was being part of the Stoney Adventure Group Experience (SAGE) at Canmore Collegiate High School. SAGE is a special outdoor program for First Nations students in partnership with Outward Bound Canada, a wilderness school. Using outdoor experiences in the mountains, lakes, and on the land, SAGE teaches students about leadership and resiliency. Now, a grant from Canadian Red Cross is helping SAGE expand and offer the program to other First Nation students.

These days, Fox is pushing toward graduation and hopes to pursue a career in the culinary arts.

Jeff Horvath, a SAGE coordinator, says his own work with Outward Bound helped form his education philosophy and SAGE. He believes it's important to stay connected to the land.

Horvath says they are now seeing post-traumatic effects from the floods on students. He adds SAGE is helping put the focus on healing and building a relationship with water again. Horvath says while the floods showed how destructive water can be, it is also sacred and an important part of their lives. "We must now reconnect with the power of water and land," says Horvath.



*Jeff Horvath (standing back, holding drum)
Anthony Holloway (left, wearing VANS shirt)
Zane Alexander-Hunt (middle)
Taien Fox (Right, wearing grey cap and shirt)*

Beginning in Grade nine, students can progress through SAGE to Grade 12, taking two trips a year: backpacking in the fall and canoe-tripping in the spring.

Eighteen-year-old Zane Alexander-Hunt says the program helped him finish school. He's graduating with better social skills, and says the best thing is being able to interact with other people and going outside of his comfort zone. Alexander-Hunt hopes to be a member of the RCMP in the future.

Anthony Holloway, 18, calls SAGE more than an experience. He says it's about the bigger picture and the journey. SAGE helped Holloway cope and heal from the flood. The program taught him to work hard and get through tough patches in life. Now, he wants to give back to his community and is considering joining the army or becoming a fireman.

Horvath is proud of his students and SAGE. He says this year they have the largest contingent of First Nation student graduates, but believes the post-traumatic impact of the floods is now evident. "A lot of our guys, I think subconsciously, have really been affected. We've got to heal that," adds Horvath. It is hoped SAGE can be instrumental in that healing and with an expanded program, reach many more students.





STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY

“If we want to live in an amazing community, it is up to all of us to create it” – this is the mandate driving an initiative called Our High River.

Residents of High River are coming together to build a strong, more resilient community, where every individual can thrive. The intent of the initiative is citizen engagement through “connecting citizens to their community, to each other, and supporting citizen-driven collaborations,” says Jodi Dawson, a community impact consultant working to support this initiative.

With additional funding from the Canadian Red Cross, the group is more determined than ever to unite the community and make a positive difference.

Prior to the floods, dedicated citizens had already been working together to better their town. Since the floods, they have intensified their efforts.

Although tensions in the community run high during flood season (May and June), Dawson believes more residents are returning to a “new normal” and re-engaging with the community.

The community, citizens, non-profits and the private sector continue to work together to identify community issues and not just those that related to the flood.

As residents connect with one another, Dawson says they are “building capacity within the community and then



moving forward with various projects that come out of that.”

One of the priorities for the group is to re-establish a community hub where people of all ages can meet. “We just need a place to be together as community members,” Dawson explains.

In the meantime, the group has been hosting rotating community cafes at various locations. The first was held at the local recreation centre. These are not formal meetings, but simply a time to connect with one another.

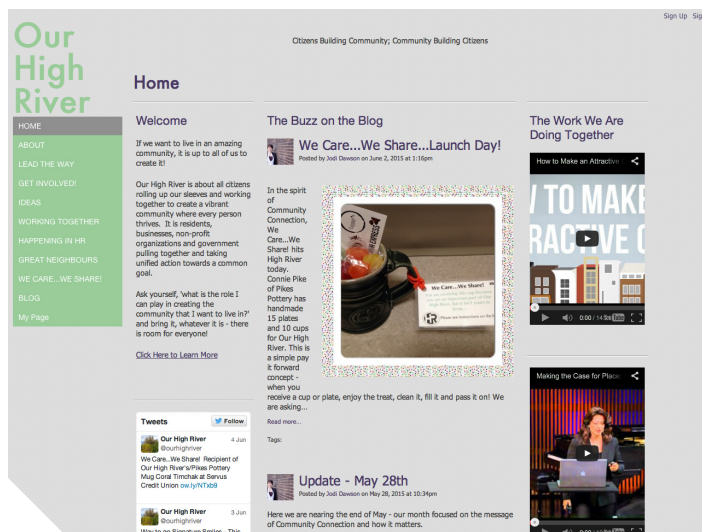
An elderly resident of High River feels that attending community events such as this has had such a positive influence and that “people have really put me back in touch with the community.”

The initiative aims to engage and empower residents in strengthening their community. Shelly Koot, manager of the town’s community support services, says it is about “building social capital” and focusing on the value of community connections and relationships. “It is a community response, not a flood response,” Koot says.

While the town and its citizens continue to recover and navigate life after the floods, Koot says “High River has always been a very proud community – and that still shines through.”

Some of the projects for this year include: establishing a community hub, building a central communication process, developing strategies for building strong neighbourhoods, and energizing youth.

For more information on the Our High River project you can connect through social media or their website: www.ourhighriver.com.





PRESERVING A HOME AND A LITTLE PIECE OF TOWN HISTORY

Chuck Shifflett's house stood for more than a century in High River until Alberta Floods 2013 nearly swept it into the history books. The two-storey home, built in 1907, was the community's first "cottage hospital" operated by local midwives.

But with a lot of love and determination, and some help from the Canadian Red Cross, Shifflett and his wife, Fay, are finally back in their historic home. They moved back in just before Christmas, 18 months after they were driven out by the flood.

Shifflett says his neighbours were happy to see them in their home. "When we came back, a lot of people stopped by to shake hands and say, 'Really glad you're back.'" He adds, the block will work together to get their neighborhood back in shape.

While the couple relied on savings and credit as they worked to get their life on track once again, Shifflett is grateful for the help from the many non-profit agencies who continue to work in the community, including Red Cross.

Like many in the hardest hit regions, Shifflett and his neighbours are still recovering from the disaster. Down his street, four homes were eventually torn down, and just two have been rebuilt so far.



"There are lots of people still carrying some emotional baggage. I know I am," says Shifflett. "We'll get through it. We stick together, as a couple and as a community."

While the house is essentially completed, the yard is another story. "It looks like a war zone," says Shifflett, and is the next step. The entire neighbourhood is still recovering. "It's part of the journey here, really," adds Shifflett's wife, Fay. "We made a commitment to stay ... I don't think we realized what a big commitment that was when we made it."

"Red Cross has been really good to us and so many others in town," says Shifflett. "Whether it's been cash for gas in the early days or supporting these construction projects now, Red Cross help has been timely and appreciated."

The Canadian Red Cross continues to offer a range of programs and services to people affected by the floods in 2013. This includes funding for Samaritan's Purse, Habitat for Humanity, Mennonite Disaster Services and World Renew to help hundreds of families in High River and the Calgary area as they rebuild or repair their homes.



\$43.3 MILLION RAISED

95 cents of every dollar helps to support impacted individuals and communities

PROJECTED ALLOCATION OF FUNDS:



Assistance to individuals and families **\$23.6M**

- Distribution of 945,000 relief items
- Assisted 55,000 people through the registration and information line
- Confidential personal assessments to identify immediate and additional unmet needs including personal support, coaching, assistance and referrals
- Financial support for food, clothing, medical equipment, childcare, household goods, rent or mortgage payments, utility bills, community celebrations, transportation and occupational items to help people return to work



Shelter and home clean-up, repair and rehabilitation **\$9.9M**

- Shelter management and support
- Home clean-up
- Repair and rehabilitation of homes
- Initiatives that support families and individuals returning home
- Creating sustainable funds for development of affordable housing



Community initiatives and support to small businesses **\$7.2M**

- Community grants to assist with projects, events and workshops that contribute to recovery
- Support to small business
- Community partnerships



Community resiliency and disaster preparedness **\$2.6M**

- Disaster preparedness education
- Community capacity building
- Community outreach campaigns
- Provision of disaster preparedness kits

To date, the Canadian Red Cross has spent **\$36.2 million** of the total amount raised. Since the flooding occurred, the Red Cross has assisted more than **7,700** families, funded **70** community projects, and has **helped hundreds** of people with housing repair projects.

Emergency Response

Returning Home

Stabilizing

Building Back Stronger

LOOKING FORWARD

Two years after the Alberta floods, individuals, families, and businesses continue to work toward recovery. Along with rebuilding their homes and livelihoods, many people are coping with the emotional fallout from the stress that resulted from the disaster.

While the total number of people requiring Red Cross assistance continues to slowly decrease, new people seeking help continue to come forward.

The Red Cross is committed to:

- Continuing to provide assistance to individuals and families still struggling to recover
- Managing the ongoing work in community projects and shelter repair
- Working with Southern Alberta communities to recruit, train and support volunteers to increase readiness for future disaster responses
- Providing disaster education and preparedness activities to communities
- Working with partner agencies and communities to explore ways in which affected communities can become more resilient

We anticipate that Red Cross flood operations will continue through 2016.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP

The Canadian Red Cross continues to help those affected by Alberta Floods 2013. If you would like to talk to someone about your situation you can call us toll-free at **1-866-696-6484**



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