



Train Wreck and Storm of '78 News Reports

2 Feared Dead in Storm Wake

by Carol Volkart, Vancouver Express (Nov 3, 1978)

Furious wind and rain storms that blasted the Terrace-Kitimat area with 9 inches of rain in 48 hours have resulted in two suspected deaths, several injuries, numerous road closures and removal of a number of people from their homes. The storms began Tuesday and subsided Thursday. Two men were lost and presumed drowned after the Canadian National train they were in slid into the Skeena River. The railway roadbed had been eroded by an eddy in the swollen river. Two people injured in a motor vehicle accident were stranded overnight between washouts on Highway 16 west of Terrace. A helicopter from Stewart flew formula milk to Rosswood for a baby allergic to mother's milk, because roads were impassable, and another child in need of medical attention was flown out of Rosswood to Terrace. Voluntary evacuation was carried out from outlying communities into Terrace. Some of the communities were inaccessible by road, so residents were brought out by boat to escape anticipated flooding. A Region 5 highways conference scheduled to be held Tuesday through today in Terrace was cancelled. Highways Minister Alex Fraser, deputy minister Bob Harvey and senior minister staff who had been scheduled to attend stayed to direct recovery operations. There was a 10 hour power outage in Kitimat following a wind storm Wednesday night. Kitimat Indian Village, about 11km out of Kitimat was cut off from power and telephone following the storm. Road links were severed Tuesday between the village and Kitimat, leaving boats as the only means of travel between the two places. The flooding crisis reached its peak about 10pm Wednesday, but water levels began to subside Thursday, according to provincial emergency program director Robert Neale. By about 10am Thursday the flooding was over, he said. Neale said the water supply in some areas was contaminated and residents were advised to boil their

drinking water. Staff-Sgt Hank Dedish of the Kitimat RCMP detachment said local residents report they have seen similar storms, "but this is as severe as any they have seen before." The heavy rainfall, about 9 inches in two days, raised the level of the river so high that people in the Kitimat area were warned they may have to leave. However, the river is abating, so the evacuation never had to be carried out. Dedish said there was severe damage to Highway 25 between Kitimat and Terrace. The road 19 to 24 km (12 to 15 miles) north of Kitimat was completely washed out, and temporary roads are in use. Jess Ketchum, executive assistant to Fraser, said the minister was greeted by the storm when he flew in. Fraser had been scheduled to leave the conference Wednesday night, and could have left on a CP air flight, but decided he should stay, Ketchum said. The road to Prince Rupert was expected to be passable as soon as the waters recede, Ketchum said. However, the road east to Prince George will take at least a week to repair. He said 243 metres (800ft) of Baily Bridge and huge culverts were being brought in from Prince George to start repairs at one end, and more Baily bridging will be brought down from Prince Rupert by ferry to start on the other end. There were a dozen locations between Terrace and Hazelton where culverts were wiped out; leaving 15 metres(50ft) holes in the road, he said. Ketchum said 25 people were trapped between road washouts Wednesday night.

Search for CN workers abandoned

by Brian Gregg, Terrace Herald

The Daily News, Prince Rupert, BC, Friday, Nov 3, 1978

The search for two men who are missing and presumed dead after a CNR work train derailed three miles west of Usk at 3:30 am on Thursday has been abandoned. The two survivors of the mishap Terry Chupa and Fred Theriault, both of Smithers, were treated and later released from Mills Memorial Hospital in Terrace. The train was travelling east to pick up some men and spread ballast and fill in several sections of the CNR line when the first engine apparently went off the tracks after the train had stopped at the washout. The two engineers had apparently got out of the engine to

assess the damage. One of the two crewmen in the caboose also got out of the train. One of the engineers decided to get back into the train to try to back it up and get it back on the tracks. The embankment along the Skeena River suddenly gave way, taking the train and the two men inside it with it. Chupa and Theriault escaped with only minor injuries. The two men were picked up by CNR crews from Usk shortly after the derailment. They were brought across the river on the department of highways cable car system and then driven to Mills Memorial Hospital in Terrace. The rail disaster occurred two years to the day after another train travelling east with four crewmen derailed one mile east of Usk. The derailment occurred on November 2, 1976. There were no fatalities in that incident. Divers made two futile efforts to search for the bodies but were unable to find any sign of the missing men because the river was too high and moving too fast. All available crews in the area are working at the derailment site. There are 10 other washouts along the CNR line between Terrace and Kitwanga, the junction to the Stewart highway, a CNR employee said. A group of CNR officials were flown into Terrace by helicopter from Prince George and Edmonton. No official statement has been made by the railway. A CNR employee estimated it would take about a week to get the line open at the wreckage site. Work crews are expected to move west from Prince George repairing each washout before they move to the next one. Crews are also expected to be working on washouts on the Prince Rupert line and Kitimat line today and those lines should be repaired in two to three days.

Two Dead in Train Mishap

by Brian Gregg

Two men are missing and presumed dead after a CNR work train derailed three mile west of Usk at 3:30am on Thursday. Terry Chupa and Fred Theriault, both of Smithers, were treated and later released from Mills Memorial Hospital in Terrace. The train was travelling east to pick up some men and spread ballast and fill in several sections of the CNR line when the first engine apparently went off the tracks after the train had stopped at the washout, a CNR employee told the Herald. The two engineers had apparently got out of the engine to assess the damage. One of the two

crewmembers in the caboose also got out of the train. One of the engineers decided to get back into the train to try to back it up and get it back on the tracks. The embankment along the Skeena River suddenly gave way, taking the train and the two men inside with it. Chupa and Theriault escaped with only minor injuries. The two men were picked up by CNR crews from Usk shortly after the derailment. They were brought across the river on the Department of Highways cable car system and then driven to Mills Memorial Hospital in Terrace. The rail disaster occurred two years to the day after another train travelling east with four crewman derailed one mile east of Usk. That derailment occurred Nov 2, 1976. There were no fatalities in that incident. Divers made two futile efforts to search for the bodies but were unable to find any sign of the missing men because the river was too high and was moving too fast. All available crews in the area are working at the derailment site. There are 10 other washouts along the CNR line between Terrace and Kitwanga, the junction to the Stewart Highway, a CNR employee said. A group of CNR officials were flown into Terrace by helicopter from Prince George and Edmonton. No official statement has been made by the railway. A CNR employee said it would take a week to get the line open at the wreckage site. Work crews are expected to move west from Prince George, repairing each washout before they move onto the next one. Crews are also expected to be working on washouts on the Prince Rupert line and the Kitamat line today and those lines should be repaired in two or three days, a CNR employee said. Meanwhile, CNR officials are concentrating their efforts on searching for the bodies of the two missing men. Helicopters are patrolling the area as the Skeena River appears to be rising again. One employee says there does not seem to be any men in the units.

Community Mourns Two

1978 Interior News

A joint funeral honoring the memories of two Smithers CNR employees was held at St. Joseph's Catholic Church on Wednesday, Nov 8. Francis William Watson and Kenneth Scott Bateman were killed as the result of a railway accident near Terrace on November 2 at the height of the recent flooding of the Skeena River. Watson, born in Smithers in 1930, was actively involved in the Cancer Society, the United Transport

Union, the Nordic Ski Club, and the Bulkley Valley Fair Association. He is survived by his wife, Louise, and her children, Sandy, Patrick, and Fran, brothers Wilford and Joseph, and sister Wilma Spencer. Pallbearers were, G Rossignol, C Reid, L Thistle, L Thompson, D Palanio, and B Warmerdam. Born on January 14, 1933, in Prince George, Bateman was a dedicated railroader, commencing service with Canadian National in Prince George in 1950. He spent 11 years in Prince Rupert and the last 15 years in Smithers. Bateman was one of the original founders of the CN Rusty Rails hockey club. He enjoyed fishing, snowmobiling, and most outdoor activities. He is survived by his wife, Olive, and children, Ken, Denise, and Diana, of Nanaimo. Pallbearers were, Collin Foley, Fred Brine, Verne Jackson, Joe Bodnar, Ed Pollack of Surrey, and Irvin Mann of Kamloops. Honorary pallbearers were, Bill McAloney, Nick Usen, Al Chupa, Cam Bilodeau, Jim Gordon, and Rod Cunningham.

Acknowledgement

The Interior News, Nov 1978

Dear Sir;

The many friends so generous in their expressions of concern and sympathy at the time of our loss have been a great comfort to us. We would like to gratefully acknowledge the beautiful flowers, cards, and donations in Ken's name to the Cancer Society. Particularly we wish to thank Father Bill Walker of St. Joseph's and Reverend Hunter of St. James' for the memorable joint service. We deeply appreciated, too, the kindness of the members of the Catholic Women's League and CNRA ladies for the luncheon after the service. The visits and calls from Ken's co-workers at CN and from my colleagues at Human Resources have been a great support to us as well. In our time of sadness it is comforting to live in a community such as Smithers where friends like you are so richly found.

Olive Harris and the Bateman family.

Disaster area declared, homeowner compensation possible

The Interior News, Nov 1978

VICTORIA - The provincial cabinet Monday night declared all areas affected by last week's storm to be part of a disaster area, the teams of appraisers will begin to assess the damage soon in preparation for compensation to private owners whose property was damaged in the flood. Robert Neale, director of the Provincial Emergency Programme, said yesterday that the cabinet had, identified a disastrous set of circumstances." He said the identification would apply to "the entire area affected" by the flood. He said the process has started to examine "personal damage reports" with the possibility of those affected could receive compensation from the federal and provincial governments. Once the appraisals are complete, a cost-sharing formula for compensation will be instituted. Neale said the first dollar per person in the province comes from the provincial government. The next \$2 per person is split equally between the provincial and federal governments. The next \$2 million is split 75 per cent federal and 25 per cent provincial, and all the monies beyond that are 90 per cent federal and 10 per cent provincial. Neale said no complete assessment of the damage has been compiled. He said the figures between \$5 million and \$25 million have been mentioned merely to get the communication and transportation systems back in working order. Then further work must be done to completely repair the damage. "Your guess is as good as mine," he said. Neale said continued high water has meant about 40 or 50 families put out of their homes by the flood cannot return. He said the water has gone up and down in the last week, but hasn't hit the peak it hit on November 1 and 2, the peak of the flooding. Neale said a helicopter system is in operation by the emergency programme, alleviating food shortages, taking people to hospital, and evacuating those still threatened with flooding. He said large helicopters are flying stores into normal commercial outlets in isolated areas, such as Nass Valley. He said there are still some remote parts of the disaster area that have not yet been contacted to determine the extent of the damage. All that can be done is being done at the present moment, and it was "just a case of sitting and watching the elements."

Disaster area slowly recovering - railway to open December 8

Unknown journalist/publisher or newspaper

SMITHERS - Disaster areas in northern BC are slowly recovering from the battering of a sudden storm that struck the area during the first week of November. Heavy rain and melting snow swelled the rivers with rushing waters that ripped out a number of bridges and washed out highways, roads, gas and rail lines, leaving two men dead and many communities isolated. The railways seem to have been affected most by the flooding and are still closed between Smithers and Terrace. C.F. Armstrong, CN vice-president for the mountain region, announced that the mainline damaged by the flood will be open December 8. CN spokesman Alex Rennie of Edmonton said that work crews were working around the clock in the washed out sections between Terrace and Hazelton. On November 3 a washout was repaired at mile 73 west of Smithers and the crew almost completed work on two major washouts at mile 91.2. Another crew was filling a washout at mile 113.2. CN also discovered a bridge span out of alignment at mile 113.8, just .6 of a mile west of the washout, slowing down the repairs considerably. A new road bed was completed and new track lay at mile 121, the site of the accident that took the lives of two Smithers CN employees. Crews working east and west are expected to meet at mile 103.7, the site of a big washout where rock fill will have to be used. In the meantime CN is operating the aqua-train between Vancouver and Prince Rupert with priorities on shipments of chemicals and fuel, most of which is destined for Alcan in Kitimat and various lumber companies. CN is also utilizing space Eurocan and Cancel rail barges. Ministry of Highways spokesman Francis Martin of Smithers said that all highways were open with bridges installed where required and work continuing on minor side roads. Highway 16 was open to only one lane traffic in many places, however. Martin said that "thanks to logging" in the area extra heavy equipment became available and contributed considerably to the speed of the highway repairs. Martin reports that an extended programme will have to be established to restore the highway to its original condition. The work may have to be abandoned for the winter season if the weather doesn't cooperate and this will slow down restoration considerably, he said. Costa Polysou,

manager of the Smithers - Houston area for Pacific Northern Gas Ltd said that the main break in the gas pipeline in the Telkwa Pass near Terrace has been temporarily repaired. A two inch gas line replacing a ten inch. "The break in the main can't be repaired," he said. The two inch connection, however, is not nearly adequate to provide full service. Polysou said he expects there will be a switch over to a 4 inch or 6 inch pipe and should be installed by press time. Another break, 12 miles east of the original break was repaired. Polysou said that a major section of the gas pipeline will have to be replaced and moved away from the Copper River, which he described as one of the wildest in Canada. According to Polysou, it was the river that was responsible for slowing down repairs to the line. Dale Elander, emergency fund chief for Canadian Independent Adjustors said that approximately 200 claims have been registered so far. Emergency claims can be registered at 3219 Eby Street in Terrace or call 635 7104 before the November 30 deadline, he said. Elander said that the majority of register claims have been from the Lakelse area, which seems to have been hardest hit but they are accepting claims from the whole region. Elander said that a full assessment of the extent of the damage in terms of dollars will not be available for some time. Chief Health Inspector.

Disaster area slowly recovering - railway to open December 8

Unknown journalist/publisher of news report

SMITHERS - Russ Selternich of Prince Rupert said the danger of water contamination due to flooding was still present. Bacteria drifting with the flood water can contaminate wells and if the water is not treated or disinfected in some way it could become a health hazard. Water testing by health inspectors is being carried out continually but more isolated farms and dwellings that are most likely to be infected, should get in touch with their local health unit and have the water tested and treated if necessary, he said. Local dairyman, Jim Davidson, said milk shipments to the

Bulkley Valley were only slightly affected by the road closure. "Milk shipments were diverted to Prince George during the flooding," he said. Although there will be some loss in revenue, Davidson did not anticipate a great loss. "It will probably work out even in the end," he said.

Highway Damage in the Millions

Newspaper Unknown

"It is a lot worse than we thought and we estimate it will cost \$15 million to bring this area back to previous standards," said Cyril Shelford, Skeena MLA, and Thursday. Shelford said that Highway 16 East will probably not be open for traffic until Wednesday, Nov 8. There are about 44 washouts between Terrace and Hazelton, Legate Creek Bridge, Chindemash Creek Bridge, and Little Oliver Creek Bridge are all washed out and another 8 culvert bridges are washed out, he said. Shelford said he flew over Lakelse Lake and the sight he saw was a "real shocker." He said dozens of houses are standing out in the lake in about six feet of water. First Ave. is flooded in several places. He estimated it would take about 10 days to bring Highway 25 between Terrace and Kitimat to previous standards. Traffic is moving on the highway and an old logging road is being used to bypass the Williams Creek flooding. That logging road is also under water but Shelford said he saw vehicle making it through the flooded area. Alex Fraser, Minister of Highways, left Terrace at 4:30 pm Thursday after visiting Kitimat Village. The biggest problem in the village is lack of power, said Shelford, and the Dept. of Highways ordered 50 gallons of naphtha gas flown into the village. The 900 residents of the village are using camp stoves to cook their food. "I am asking that Kitimat be declared as a disaster area," said Shelford. He said the department of highways is doing everything it can to assess the damage done by the heavy rains in the last few days. He said he will be watching the Prince Rupert highway very carefully in the next few days. "As far as we know there is no major damage on the highway to Prince Rupert," he said.

Milk, food and gas coming

Reported News by unknown reporter or newspaper

Terrace-Kitimat residents were unable to buy milk late Saturday afternoon and early today but supplies were expected to be in the stores by early this afternoon. Bill Ingles, district manager for Dairyland, said some people panicked when they heard there was a milk shortage and bought more than they needed. A barge carrying 48,000 lbs of milk for Terrace and Kitimat was expected to arrive from Vancouver at Kitimat about 3 am today for the two communities. An estimated 3,000 lbs of milk are needed each day. Similar barges are expected to arrive at Kitimat on Tuesday and Thursday, he said. Milk for this area is shipped from Smithers on Highway 16 but the highway is not expected to be open until Friday. Ingles said there should be enough Vancouver milk to supply Terrace and Kitimat, if people do not panic and buy more than they need. Terrace's biggest problem seems to be for customers of Pacific Northern Gas who have been asked to keep their furnaces at 60 degrees to conserve fuel during the present outage. Crews are working around the clock to construct a bypass line near the mainline which is broken 26 miles from the Copper River Bridge, said John Low, manager of sales and service. He said the biggest problem is going to be the weather but under fair conditions the bypass should be completed by Tuesday or Wednesday.

Everyone Coped

Editorial comment - The Interior News, November 8, 1978

Roads and railways, pipelines and flooded basements can be repaired but lives cannot be replaced. It is ironic that, while Smithers and area, the most minor of damage from the storms of last week, it suffered the loss of three of its citizens, the only deaths recorded in the adversity. The community

grieves the deaths of Cheryl May Halwas, who died from injuries suffered from a tree knocked down a week ago last Monday by high winds that presaged the storm; and the deaths of two long time community residents who were caught by the wrath of raging flood waters while on the job with their employer, the CNR. If there is any oddity arising from this freak of weather it must be that, while many millions of dollars of destruction was caused to the works of man, very few were injured by it. That there has been a great deal of inconvenience, that there are notable disruptions to the normal patterns of living is obvious but, unlike the last great early winter flood of some forty years ago, when many in small communities were close to starvation and food and essential supplies were being packed on backs over treacherous trails, modern alternative transportation systems -the helicopter- virtually eliminated that consequence. Of great significance is the fact that the financial services, power and telephone held up remarkably well and the service crews had the breaks The gas line to Terrace, Kitimat, Prince Rupert regions suffered the most damage but here again, all going well, it was expected to be restored repaired just as the last reserves were giving out. Perhaps, however, there is something of a moral in the whole episode - people living on the frontier can cope. If this weather violence had occurred in the more densely populated regions, it is a question as to whether or not the people affected, geared as they are to the conveniences of modern urban living, would have been able to handle it as well.

“Hopefully' CN line may be through by Dec. 1”

Nov 10,1978 - The Daily News, Prince Rupert, BC

Railway operations in this area are gradually returning to normal, according to John Kehoe, CN's trainmaster, who has just returned from Terrace where he has been for nine days, helping clean-up and repair operations. "We got most of our work done before the weather firmed up," he said, "and hope to commence normal operations on the Terrace-Kitimat run tomorrow. And hopefully - emphasize that 'hopefully' - the Terrace-Smithers section might be through by Dec 1, but could possibly be delayed until Dec 15." Kehoe said he and Earl Matheson, superintendent of CN's BC North Division, toured the area several times by helicopter, touching down to ask householders in isolated communities how they were faring and even giving packages of cigarettes out of their own pockets to one fellow who said he was short of smokes. He said there were several humorous incidents during the storms aftermath, including one in which he went to take a bath to wash the mud and dirt off him and found the water running from the tap into the tub was blacker than he was. No - he didn't take a bath, he reported. The Prince Rupert-Terrace line is in good condition, with normal operations and no holdups, he said. Kehoe also reported that many of CN's personnel had travelled to Smithers on Wednesday to attend an inter-denominational funeral service held that morning in St. Joseph's Catholic Church for the two crew members who died in last week's derailment, Frank Watson, conductor, and Ken Bateman, engineer, both of Smithers.

Rail line out until early December.

Grain, freight re-routed south - The Daily News Prince Rupert, BC, Nov 6, 1978

Grain and other freight originally bound for Prince Rupert have been diverted to Vancouver because of the extensive washouts on the CN line between Kitwanga and Kitimat. According to Alex Rennie, CN's public relations officer in Edmonton, Railroad company engineers travelled over the line by helicopter on Thursday and Friday to assess the damage and found 25 washouts in the 53 miles of track between Kitwanga and Kitselas. Work started at both side of this section on Friday, with approximately 100 men on the job. He said they plan to meet at the point 103 west of

Smithers, where there is the worst part of the washouts and it will be a major undertaking to replace the line there, either by rock fill or a bridge. He said he hoped to reach this point by Nov 24, and have the line open by early December. The Prince Rupert-Terrace line and the Terrace - Kitimat line were both open Saturday. The two CN employees killed in the accident just east of Terrace Thursday morning have been identified as Francis William Watson, 48, and Kenneth Scott Bateman, 45, both of Smithers. Divers reached the bodies in the partially submerged locomotive as high waters receded this weekend. To fill in until the rail line is fixed, aquabarges belonging to Washington Tug and Barge Co. which operate between Whittier, Alaska and here, will be used on the Vancouver-Prince Rupert run, or the Vancouver-Whittier run. Capt. Gordie Walker, local agent for the company, said "trips of the barges are hampered by the Canadian Shipping Act, which states that Canadian cargoes can't be carried between two Canadian ports on foreign ships" and both the barges and the tug towing them, the 127ft "Mogul" are registered in the states. The "Mogul" which left here last Sunday with 26 loaded box cars and one empty for Whittier, is now anchored at Port Etches, 75 miles southwest of Whittier, waiting for 60 to 70 knot winds and 25 to 30ft seas to subside, so she can continue her voyage southbound here 27 cars onboard. When she starts taking loads south from here she may have to go to Seattle, rather than Vancouver, Capt. Walker said, depending on her loads and Canadian regulations. He said a freighter; the "Temple Inn" is due in here Nov 25 to take on some of the 10 million feet of lumber stockpiled at Fairview Terminal.

Crews scramble to make repairs

A great hope that gas line repairs hold – Reporter and Publisher unknown

TELKWA PASS - Pacific Northern Gas crews are fighting today to restore natural gas flow to Kitimat, Terrace, and Prince Rupert, after a mudslide in the treacherous Telkwa Pass ruptured the 10 inch pipe and cut natural gas to the west last Wednesday. John Low, sales and service manager for PNG's Terrace district, said Monday that he was, optimistic, " crew will have completed a temporary

reconstruction by today. He said supplies of gas to residence are expected to run out today. But the temporary patch is only the start; Low said over 6000 feet of line in five spots along the Copper River are actually floating in the river after flood rains changed the rivers course. No final estimate of the flood's damage to the line has been compiled; Low said they're talking in the range of \$1.5 million. After the line was cut, existing gas supplies in the northwest were rationed severely. Major industries cut back on consumption, and schools were temporarily closed to divert supplies to home heating. Unless the service is restored Wednesday, the area will find itself without a major source of home heating. Low said the major break in the line occurs about 26 miles upriver from Copper River Bridge on Highway 16. Twelve men - as much as the site can hold - have been flown in by helicopter, and they face the task of building a four inch bypass line 200 feet up a 70 degree slope, across 1000 to 1500 feet on top of the ridge, and back down the slope. Machinery has no access to the area, and Low said the men are doing all the work by hand. Two welding machines are the only equipment being used on the site. The line has been looked at, and major damage spots identified. Low said there are about 15 spots that will have to be assessed for strength when the water subsides. Low said this storm is the worst since the pipe was installed about 10 years ago. Four years ago, there was a similar situation, in which four inches of rain fell in 24 hours. At that time, a slide blocked a creek which backed up and then let go, sending a flood of water down the Copper River, washing out and breaking the pipe. When temporary repairs were done, PNG will pressure the pipe and see if it holds. "We just hope the line will hold," Low said.

Chapman Lake area devastated

The Interior News, Nov 1978

Smithers - Near hurricane force winds uprooted thousands of acres of prime spruce and pine timber around the Chapman Lake area during the height of the recent storm that caused over \$30 million damage to the north central BC area. "More than 6000 acres are affected with more than 60 per cent uprooting," said deputy forest ranger, Ken Pratt. Forest Ranger Al Pement concluded that the winds were definitely part of the storm and that most of the damage appears to have been caused between October 31 and November 2. "To cause so much damage the winds must have gusted close to

70 mile an hour," he said. The loggers working in the area reported trees falling all around them and many of them were trapped when falling trees blocked the roads. "Crews were sent with chainsaws to rescue some of them and were in turn trapped themselves," said Pratt. Pement said it was one of those freak storms that no one can predict but the most important and crucial priority now is to salvage as much as possible of the timber before it starts to deteriorate. "We might as well face it: we can't replant these trees and they will be wasted if we cannot log them soon. We might as well get all the revenue we can out of it," said Pement. He felt the logging will definitely create an excessively large opening and he agreed it was "certainly not good management" but there are several reasons for logging as quickly as possible.

Open To Disease

First of all, the trees will deteriorate, dry and more breakage will occur and as a result the logs will lose value. Secondly, lowdown areas are prime target for Spruce Bark Beetle which thrives under such conditions and reproduces in two year cycles. Lastly, as the trees dry, the fire hazard increases tremendously. "Human carelessness or lightning could result in a major disaster such as the Chapman Lake fire in 1961 that destroyed nearly 20,000 acres," said Pratt. A logging operation of this size with a short time limit presents difficulties to loggers. "The logging is a much slower pace and the danger of springing logs is always present as they criss-cross as they fall," said Dick Groot of Groot Logging of Smithers, the company logging in the area. Groot estimated that between 350 and 400 cunits were involved or approximately 35 million board feet. Groot's will concentrate nearly 75 per cent of all their logging over the next two years in the area but PIR was called to help with the operation to ensure that logging is completed within the next two years. The stumpage rate is presently under negotiation but will probably be decreased due to the difficulty involved and the resultant revenue loss, said Pement. Allan Edie, habitat protection biologist for the Skeena Region said the effects on fisheries and wildlife is varied but very difficult to assess at the present time. Some shorelines were affected but not many stream sides according to Edie. Habitat staff will constantly be looking at the situation and working closely with the forestry department, he said. Some authorization for stream cleanup is likely to be given but it will be based on individual circumstances.

Disaster aid likely for soaked Terrace area

Rail men lost, roads cut in record downpour - The Daily News,
Prince Rupert, Nov 1978

TERRACE (CP)- A severe fall storm which resulted in record rainfall in some areas of west-central BC caused extreme hardship for many residents as travel was restricted Thursday in most communities. Many roads were blocked by washouts and rail travel was disrupted in the wake of heavy rains and rising flood waters. Divers were forced to abandon their search for two Canadian National Railway crew members who were carried into the rain swollen Skeena River east of this city. The two men, an engineer and a conductor, both of Smithers, were lost in the river when a saturated roadbed gave way under their train. Two brakemen, T. A. Chupa and H. F. Theriault, also of Smithers, escaped with minor cuts and bruises. The unidentified lost men were on the four car work train on the way to the scene of a washout on the line. The engine and caboose had been uncoupled from a car and engine because the roadbed had started to give way under them. A CNR spokesman said it plans to move cranes into the area within the next three days to haul the cars from the water, but they will have to wait until the ground is more firm. Record rainfall, combined with melting snow, caused a runoff Wednesday which swelled rivers, severed most highway and telephone links into the area. Three major bridges were washed out, cutting off travel in and out of this community and nearby Kitimat. Power was cut off for more than 10 hours in Kitimat after high winds knocked out power lines. Flood water also threatened the main power lines to the Aluminum Company of Canada smelter in Kitimat, but a company spokesman said there was no immediate danger. An estimated 257.9 mm of rain had fallen since Monday in the Kitimat area and about 218mm fell in Terrace. "I've never seen anything like this," said a highways maintenance worker foreman from Hazelton. "It's the heaviest (rain) I've seen in the 10 years I've lived here. An

RCMP helicopter rescued 20 persons stranded near here where they were trapped between two bridges washed out by flooding on highway 16. Two motorists were injured when their car plunged into a washout on the highway. They were flown to hospital here suffering from minor injuries. Some residents of Remo, southwest of Terrace, were forced from their homes and RCMP moved out people from the Lakelse area, 25km south of here, because of rising water levels. In Victoria, the provincial government will decide next week on whether to provide financial aid to the region. Economic Development Minister Don Phillips said cabinet had been briefed on the situation and had dispatched a team of investigators to the area to survey the damage. A decision may be made by Monday, he said, adding he was confident the government will grant aid. He said there was \$5 to \$10 million in highway damage that will have to be repaired.

Reconstruction may take year and half - Damage estimated pass \$20 million

RECOVERY SLOW FROM BATTERING – The Interior News,
Nov 1978

Terrace - One of the worst storms in northern BC history has left two Smithers men dead and caused more than \$15 million damage to the area. Since early last Tuesday more than 260mm of rain has fallen on Terrace and the surrounding area from Prince Rupert on the coast to as far east as Smithers. Two Smithers CN workers perished when the work train they were on was swept into the Skeena. At least three major bridges and many culverts have disappeared and isolated many communities. Floods and washouts have cut Highway 16 between Smithers and Terrace and Terrace and Prince Rupert. CNR mainline west of Hazelton is cut in 25 places. Terrace has established a rescue response centre for anyone requiring evacuation, food and lodging. After a special meeting of Cabinet, acting Premier Grace McCarthy announced early Tuesday, November 7, the area has been officially declared a disaster zone. Heavy precipitation combined with warm temperatures devastated north central

BC. Warm air melted snow and in combination with 260mm of rain, caused sudden rises in the rivers resulting in flooding and road, bridge, and rail washouts. In the CNR mishap at approximately 3:30 am Pacific daylight time, Thursday, November 2, a work train consisting of two locomotives, a caboose and an open, air dump car were heading east of Terrace to investigate and repair a reported washout. An engineer, Kenneth Scott Bateman, 45, a conductor, Frank William Watson, 48, and two brakemen, Fred Theriault and Terry Chupa were on board. Approximately 10 miles east of Terrace they encountered another washout which derailed the air dump car and one of the locomotives. No one was seriously injured and the two brakemen were trying to recover a reverser switch to reverse the locomotive when the track gave way, sweeping the other engine and caboose into the Skeena with Bateman and Watson on board. RCMP divers recovered the bodies late Saturday afternoon, said Alex Rennie, of public affairs office for CN in Edmonton. Bridges crumbled and roads disappeared under the heavy, overflowing rivers along Highway 16 and the surrounding area from Telkwa to Prince Rupert. Although Martin wasn't sure when the highway would be open, he said that by this weekend they had hoped to have it at least partially usable. The complete restoration of the highways could take more than a year and a half according to Martin. Martin said the cost of repairs won't be known until all repairs have been completed but some estimate the damage upwards of \$15 million. The latest release from the highways office lists Highway 37 closed 12 miles north of Kitwanga; Highway 16, Cedarville to Terrace, closed; Highway 16 Smithers to Cedarville open to 4x4 vehicles and trucks; Highway 16 Terrace to Rupert open to single lane traffic (water on road); Highway 25 Kitimat to Terrace open to trucks only (lots of water) and the highway from Nass to Stewart open to trucks only. 53 miles of CNR mainline between Kitwanga and Kitsalis have been cut or washed out in 25 places, said spokesman Rennie. So far only survey crews have been out checking the extent of the damage with the restoration to begin on Friday. Two crews of 50 men each will be working on that stretch of rail alone. The line is not expected to be open until before early December or even later. The total cost is hard to estimate, he said, but it will be in the millions. Lay-offs of CNR workers are another result of the disaster. Last week about 50 workers were laid off in Smithers with others expected in other areas. Lay-offs in related industries is also to be expected.

CNR line opens ahead of schedule

Interior News, Dec 1978

SMITHERS -On Sunday, December 3, at exactly 6:55 pm the first test train left Smithers station travelling west to Terrace. The train was the first to go through in over a month, since the heavy storm and flooding devastated the north-central BC area and washed out the rail line in 25 places between Smithers and Terrace. Alec Rennie of the CNR's Edmonton office said that the first schedule for the reopening of the line was set for December 23 but was later moved ahead to the eighth because of accelerated repairs to the line. Rennie said even though the line is open now, the complete reconstruction won't be completed until August 1979. The estimated cost of the rebuilding of the rail line so far is in the neighbourhood of \$2.5 million, he said. Another \$2.5 million will be spent before the line is in its original condition. The opening of the line is just the first phase of rebuilding. Bank protection and reinforcing along with stream restraining is to follow. "The flood re-routed many streams and they have to be restrained to follow their original course," he said. Train number 9 is the first passenger train scheduled to leave Smithers for Terrace on Tuesday at 1:00 pm.

Work Progressing, roads opening

Unknown newspaper report

Work is progressing on the reconstruction of Highway 16 East and the Department of Highways expects it will be open for traffic late Friday afternoon, said Neville Hope, regional maintenance operations manager. The Chindemash Creek Bailey bridge was completed on Wednesday and men and equipment moved east to Legate Creek that afternoon to work there. The Section of the highway is still not open to the public, but people who had to abandon vehicles between the two creeks during last week's storm were allowed in to remove their vehicles. The Bailey bridge at Price Creek is completed and crews have moved west to Little Oliver Creek and are working there. Hope said the highway between all the bridges is passable but there will be single lane

traffic at some sections. Highway 25 is open and crews are working on the badly washed out section of the road two miles south of the Kitimat River Bridge. Nass Road is open to Cranberry Junction but driving conditions are muddy and rough after that point, but the road north to Stewart and the Yukon is open. Cars should stay off that section of the road. Highway 37 is open 37 miles north of Kitwanga where a bridge is washed out. Hope said a Bailey bridge is expected to be completed there today.

CN Scholarship Awarded

Source unknown

Smithers, BC - The first annual Bateman-Watson scholarship was awarded by CN to Minh Truong, a graduate of Smithers Senior Secondary School. The \$500 scholarship was instituted last year in recognition of the 60th anniversary of the incorporation of the Town of Smithers and the important role Smithers has played, and will play, in railway development in northern BC. The scholarship is named in honour of Kenneth Scott Bateman and Francis William Watson, both Smithers-based CN Rail employees who lost their lives in a tragic railway accident in November 1978. The most deserving student in Smithers Senior Secondary School, chosen each year at the discretion of the faculty, will receive the scholarship to be used for post secondary education. Mr. Truong received a letter of congratulations from Mountain Region vice-president Ross Walker along with the \$500 cheque. Mr. Truong is now attending the University of British Columbia, in Faculty of Science.

