July 2017 float plane “near-miss” incident

• Some cheap lessons for similar research with small aircraft
Geological research on the Slave Craton

- Small float plane charters from a remote base camp
- Multiple takeoffs/landings daily on unfamiliar lakes
- Small field crew (1 faculty, 2 MSc, 1 undergrad, 1 pilot)
What happened?

- Float plane wasn’t able to take off due to water in floats
- Students used our InReach to initiate pickup from Yellowknife
- Pilot and students built shelter, found water, consolidated food
- Communication delays and group separation increased anxiety
- Rapid mobilization; group reunited within 12 hours
What we did right:
• Extra communications (1 sat phone, 2 InReach)
• Extra food and shelter for all trips away from base camp
• Established daily communications plan between groups

How we got lucky:
• No injuries; good weather
• Both students were field-savvy and experienced
• Lots of available aircraft at charter base in Yellowknife
• Suitable landing spot relatively nearby

What we should’ve done:
• Establish a protocol for communicating vital information during an emergency (e.g. took over an hour to confirm no injuries)
• Carry portable charger for InReach / phones
• Prepare a small dedicated dry bag with emergency shelter/food/necessities
• Confirm emergency procedures with charter operator (including self-rescue threshold)