

LANDSLIDES AND DEBRIS FLOWS IN GRISE FIORD, NEAR AUSUITTUQ, NUNAVUT

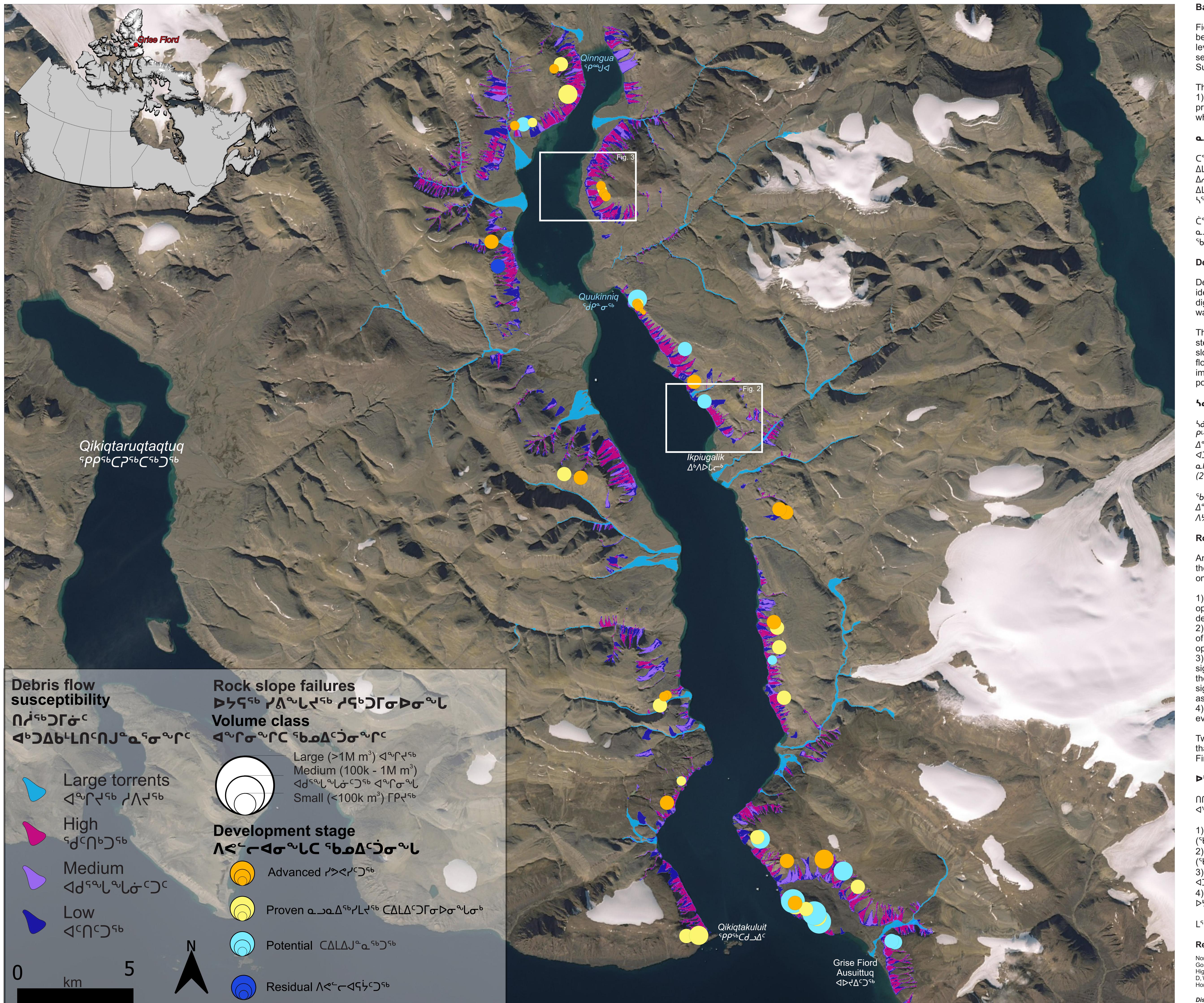
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Figure 1. Debris flow susceptibility and inventory of rock slope failures in Grise Fiord.

Background

Fjords are long, flooded valleys with steep walls above the water line that are formed as glaciers that once occupied the valley retreat landwards. Because the valley walls are no longer supported by ice, they can be inherently unstable. Landslides that occur in fjords may run out into the water of the inlet, possibly resulting in tsunamis (e.g., Higman et al. 2018). Communities in eastern Nunavut are typically at or near sea-level in fjord or fiord-like environments, and as such, consideration of these risks are important (Gosse et al. 2020). Ausuittuq is located at the mouth of Grise Fiord (the inlet), southern Ellesmere Island. It is one of several north-south oriented fjords that empty into northern Jones Sound, is 45 km long, and 1 - 4 km wide. Fjord sidewalls rise to 820 m above sea level and are generally steeper than tributary river valleys. Surficial geology is dominated by colluvium, occurring as blocks and rubble. Multiple alluvial fans protrude into the fjord from seasonal river outputs and provide sources of finer sediments.

This poster follows a similar analysis performed for Pangnirtung Fiord (Normandeau et al. 2022). It describes the distribution of landslides and debris flows in Grise Fiord. The objectives of this poster are two-fold: 1) provide a preliminary assessment of the area susceptible to debris flow processes, defining potential source zones and propagation zones, and 2) map the distribution of potential rock slope failures. These preliminary results do not address the causes of slope failures or monitor movement of slope, but simply illustrate the areas that are most exposed to landslide processes. We do not provide a risk assessment, which would require a thorough monitoring of slopes.

Debris flow susceptibility

Debris flow susceptibility maps were produced at a regional scale to best represent Grise Fiord. They identify potential source and propagation areas for debris flows. The entire analysis is based on a 6 m digital elevation model (DEM) and high-resolution satellite imagery. The debris flow susceptibility map was completed following the steps of Horton et al. (2013) using Flow-R.

The resulting susceptibility map for debris flows is illustrated in Figure 1. It shows the potential areas on steep slopes where debris flows can occur and how far they could travel, and are particularly focused on slopes with intense gullying or existing stream valleys. Many streams show a high potential for debris flow occurrence, and the modelling was very consistent with observations retrieved from satellite imagery (Figure 2). All of the existing debris flow deposits observed on satellite imagery correlate with a potential debris flow zone.

Rock slope failure inventory

An inventory of 55 rock slopes with signs of deformation were identified in the study area (Figure 1) and their runout areas modelled. The development stage expresses the level of certainty of the observations on the DEM and aerial imagery and is divided into four classes.

- Advanced:** the rock slope shows clear signs of postglacial deformation. This includes a clear opening of the back-scarp, but also the development of one or more other morphological criteria (flank development, open internal fractures, irregular morphology, depressions, graben, etc.)
- Proven:** where the rock face shows clear signs of postglacial deformation, includes a clear opening of the back scar, while other morphological criteria are not present or are uncertain (flank development, open internal fractures, irregular morphology, depressions, graben, etc.).
- Potential:** the rock slope has a favorable structural arrangement to form an instability but shows no signs of postglacial deformation. However, rock avalanches have occurred in the immediate vicinity (with the same structural arrangement). This development stage also applies to rock slopes with uncertain signs of postglacial deformation. For example, if the opening of the back-scarp is uncertain but can be assumed or if the rock mass is highly fractured.
- Residual:** the rock slope has a favorable structural arrangement to form an instability but there is no evidence of postglacial deformation, past rock avalanches in the vicinity, or highly fractured rock mass

Two additional potential sackings (large-scale, deep-seated gravitational slope deformation structures) that fall outside this classification scheme due to their large size and complexity were also documented. Finally, the runout area from these instabilities were also documented.

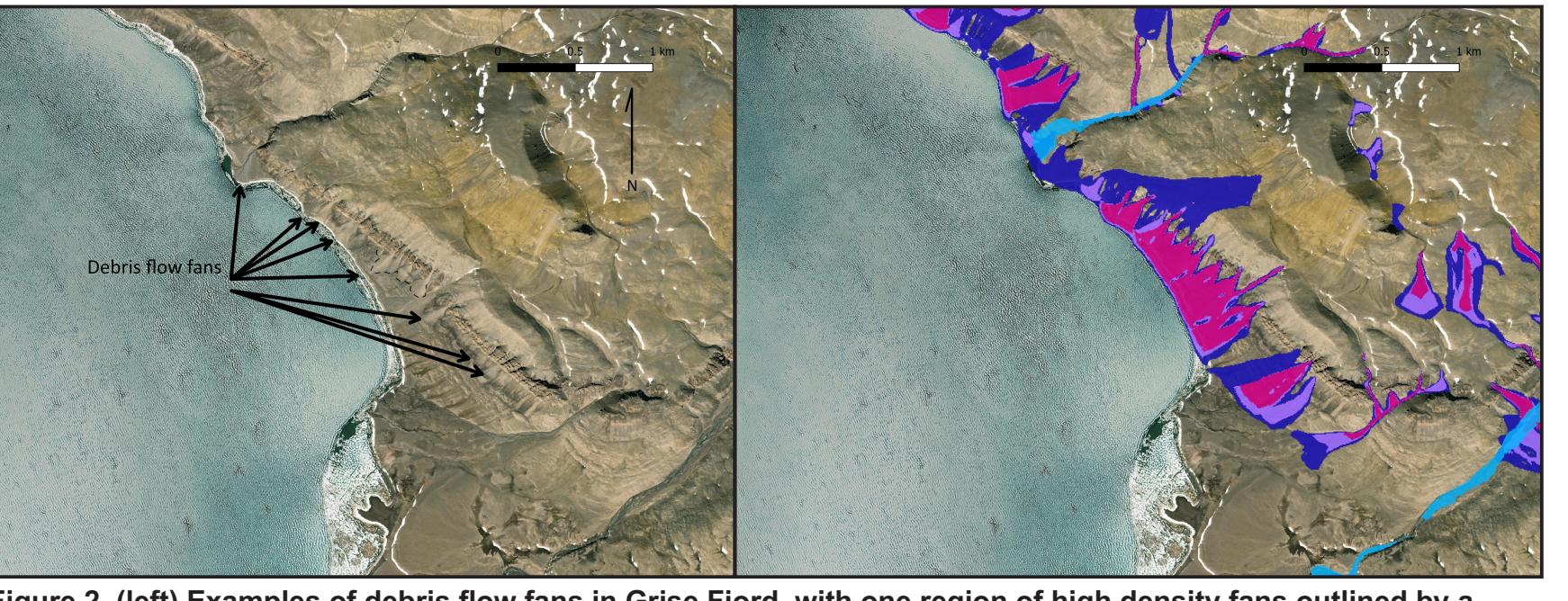


Figure 2. (left) Examples of debris flow fans in Grise Fiord, with one region of high density fans outlined by a dashed line. (right) Example of debris flow susceptibility modelling results in the same region. See Figure 1 for legend.

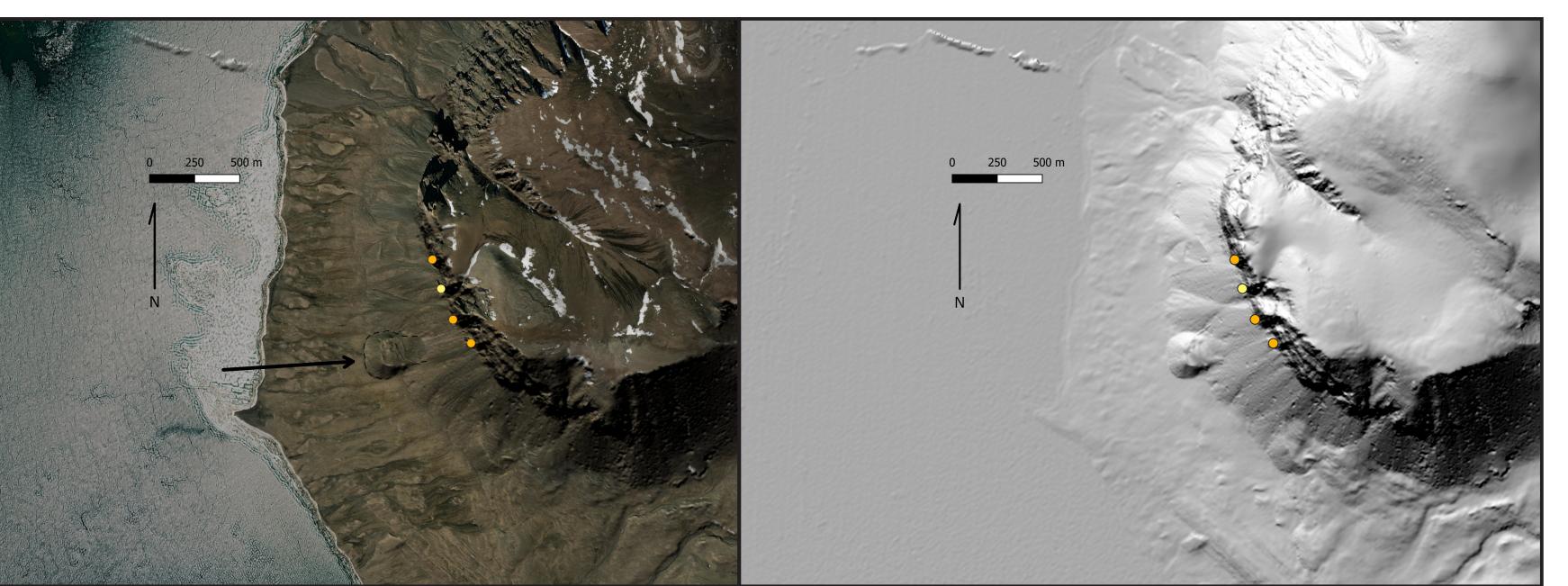


Figure 3. (left) Example of Advanced (orange) and Proven (yellow) landslides from the rock slope failure inventory results. Arrow points to a landslide deposit, outlined by the dashed line, supporting the inventory results that this slope is unstable. (right) Hillshade relief image of a digital elevation model of the same area.

References

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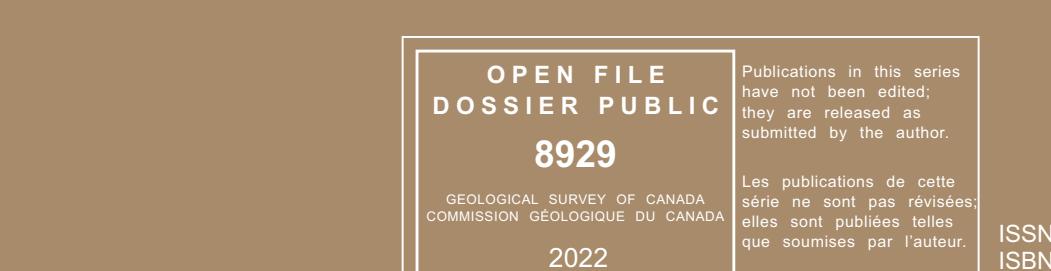
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