Cowichan River Weir Replacement Initiative
Reconciliation through Climate Change Adaptation
Protecting Chinook and Orca populations
THE COWICHAN VALLEY

- National and Provincial Heritage River
- Home of Cowichan people for millennia
- 5 species of anadromous salmonids
- Economic Driver – Tourism, Catalyst Mill, Agriculture, forestry all dependant on river/watershed
- The Cowichan River defines the landscape, ecology, cultural heritage and the people of the Cowichan Valley
WATER SUPPLY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

- PCIC generated climate change forecasts – Hotter and drier in summer, warmer and wetter in winter. No snowpack, more floods more droughts.

- 97cm of storage licensed to Catalyst in 1957. Adequate to provide industrial and E-flows for first 40 years; failure rate now 80% – and trending down.

- Extreme drought year now = average in less than 30 years.

- Culture, ecosystem, and jobs are all at risk.

- Lack of adequate water management capacity jeopardizing salmon populations and CT ability – and right – to harvest fish in their traditional territory.
CLIMATE CHANGE...

- Lake inflows have decreased by over 30% since 1980’s
- PCIC generated downscaled climate change projections call for significantly lower inflows April – November in the future.
WE HAVE BEEN WORKING HARD...

- First detailed engineering report defining solutions – calling for more storage (KPA Engineering, 1991)
- Cowichan stewardship roundtable formed in 2003
- Valley partners worked together from 2004-2007 to produce award winning CBWMP – calling for more storage
- Cowichan Watershed Board formed in 2010 – ensuring adequate water supply top priority
- Cowichan WUP process carried out 2017/18 – Consensus on 70CM additional storage
- We have a strong track record of over 25 years of working together as a community on this issue. The CWB epitomizes the partnership approach being taken to address our water challenges
CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

- Climate change impacts on the river are obvious and will become more so
- Flows required for cultural, ecological and economic sustainability are all at risk – now.
- The community is ready – we have established unique and effective mechanisms for working together as partners towards water sustainability – this is what reconciliation looks like
- We can fix this. Unlike many other watersheds in SE Vancouver island, we have the ability to address this situation. Cowichan could become a Chinook refugia over the next decades
- This is time sensitive. The situation has worsened significantly over the past decade and will continue to do so.
THE SOLUTION....

- Implement the recommendations of the Cowichan Water Use Plan
- Replace the natural storage of snowpack with increased weir capacity in the lake.
- Work with us to mitigate the affects of climate change on our watersheds, communities and ecosystems.
THE BOTTOM LINE

• First Nations, local government or industry are not well positioned to lead on climate change adaptation – we are looking for leadership and support from senior government.

• We need assistance to:
  • assume the liability associated with a water license to store 70cm of water
  • finance this project – estimated at approx. 15 million dollars.

• Our community has demonstrated leadership, cooperation, diligence and patience, on this issue over the past 25 years – we need some support at this time.

• This is an opportunity to show Canadians – and the world - how all levels of government can work together to demonstrate a reconciliation approach to climate change adaptation.
Huy ch q’u