

To the Co-Chairs of the Cowichan Watershed Board;
Chief Lydia Hwitsum, Elected Chief of Cowichan Tribes First Nation
Chair Aaron Stone, Mayor of Ladysmith and Chair of the Cowichan Valley Regional District

February 24, 2023

Dear Chief Hwitsum and Chair Stone

Uy skweyul', hello,

I'm writing on behalf of the [Columbia Institute](#), an organization dedicated to supporting people elected to local governments in BC, to advance justice related agendas in their communities, including finding ways to work respectfully and collaboratively with the indigenous nations within whose territory these governments exist. The overlapping authorities of local governments with the rights and authority of indigenous peoples' unceded territories is among the most challenging and potentially rewarding of these, and the Cowichan Watershed Board has been suggested as a model we might all learn from.

We would like to invite you to be part of a session at our annual "High Ground" conference, which is returning to an in-person gathering this year, from the afternoon of Friday March 24 to Saturday March 25th, at Harrison Hot Springs.

This year's conference theme is 'Home', and all that entails, from working to ensure that everyone has a safe, affordable place to call home, to learning to live in a reciprocal and sustainable relationship with our planetary home, and all things in between. The focus will be on examples and ideas to inspire people elected at the local level to bring back into their work and communities. We feel your example would be incredibly valuable to other regions.

We are planning several sessions that focus on different kinds of collaborations between First Nations and local governments, including:

- The City of Vancouver's UNDRIP Task Force, featuring Vancouver City Councillor Christine Boyle (confirmed) in conversation with a representative from the Squamish Nation (invitation pending) regarding the Nation's perspective on that work.
- Newly elected Chawathil First Nation Councillor Aaron Pete and the Mayor of the District of Hope, regarding joint services between the Nation and the district.
- Qathet, and the renaming of the City of Powell River, featuring newly elected Powell River Councillor, Trina Isackson (confirmed), and a representative from the Tla'amin First Nation (invitation pending).
- (Pending) The 12-year partnership between the Cowichan Tribes First Nation and the Cowichan Valley Regional District to work on mutual watershed concerns through the co-Chaired

Cowichan Watershed Board. The session could cover the history of this joint work, how the Watershed Board works, the accomplishments to date and what your goals are into the future. It could also talk to challenges along the way and how you have navigated those challenges.

We would be honoured if both Watershed Board Co-Chairs could join us to share your experience and perspectives or barring that (we understand you are busy!), a designated Watershed Board member from each government.

We are happy to cover travel costs to and from Harrison, all meals at the conference, and accommodation on the night of March 24th, along with a \$100 speaker honourarium.

I welcome any questions you may have and look forward to your response. For organizing purposes, I would appreciate a reply by March 8th.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Millsip". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "K".

Kevin Millsip
Executive Director