


DRAFT BOARD MEETING Minutes	Monday March 27th, 2023 9:30-11:30 am ZOOM Meeting	 Cowichan Watershed Board
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Present: CVRD Chair Aaron Stone (meeting Chair), Chief Lydia Hwitsum, Stuart Pagaduan (until 11) Alison Nicholson, Shannon Waters, David Slade, David Froese, Tim Kulchyski, Kristine Sandhu, Michelle Staples, and Oliver Brandes (Advisor). **Absent:** Linda Higgins, David Anderson (tech issues). **Staff/Project Leaders:** Jill Thompson, Lisa Maria Fox, Tom Rutherford, Heather Pritchard. **Guest Speakers:** Cowichan District Hospital Replacement Project Team members: Westley Davidson, Chief Project Officer, Sean Quimby, Alliance Project Manager, Joe Elliott, Director of Indigenous Engagement, Warren Fleenor, Environmental Consultant.

1	Welcome	Chair Stone called the meeting to order.	
2	Agenda Review / Revisions	Request by Kristine Sandhu to add agenda item to Other RE Interim Executive Director.	Agenda approved with addition by consensus.
3	Review Feb 2023 Minutes	Kristine Sandhu moved to approve the February minutes, seconded by Tim Kulchyski. No opposition.	Carried
4	Announcements & Correspondence	The <u>BC Water Security Strategy Intentions Paper</u> was released in March. Comments accepted until April 17 th . Chief Hwitsum noted that the intent is to co-develop a water security strategy with indigenous voices and she encourages everyone to read the Intentions Paper. [See Agenda item 9 for discussion.]	See item 9.
5	Public Input	None	
6	Reflections from XPey' workshop & language lesson	A Xpey' (cedar) workshop was hosted in January at Cowichan Lake Center by Cowichan Connections. Attended by Tom, Alison, Shannon, Heather, and Lisa. Chief Hwitsum expressed regrets that she had a conflict and could not attend.	Learning

		<p>Qwiyahwult-hw (Stuart) shared teachings and pronunciation of Xpey'. Chief Hwitsum and Tim added their perspectives.</p> <p>Tom and Alison reflected on the Xpey workshop and the recent Speaker Night on the same topic.</p> <p>See Detailed Discussion notes below.</p>	
7	<p>Project Updates</p> <p>a) Targets - Revisit/Revise New Targets and Indicators</p>	<p>Heather revisited the discussion around the Fish Health Target, which had been rushed at the end of last month's meeting.</p> <p>Heather proposed editing the Fish Health Target and Indicators as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - move reference of developing an indigenous indicator to the beginning. - ensuring the reference to the 'western science' chart made it clear that these numbers are likely too low to reflect indigenous needs. - adding an indicator RE Koksilah. <p>There was robust discussion about the value of taking time to capture the collaborative approach of this Board in our targets, and the need to integrate the knowledge and needs of Cowichan Tribes for fish within this target.</p> <p>See slide and detailed discussion notes below.</p> <p>Chair Stone concluded the discussion, referring the decision to a future meeting</p> <p>A subcommittee was nominated to work with Heather to bring something back to a future meeting. Recommended members were Tim, Tom, Dave F, Linda, and Stuart.</p>	<p>Action for Staff: Heather to convene a committee, per Board recommendation at left, to re-work the language for Indicators in the Fish Health Target.</p>
	<p>b) Weir and WSP - Water supply</p>	<p>Tom provided an update on the Koksilah Watershed Planning and Cowichan Weir processes.</p>	<p>Actions for Staff:</p> <p>1. Tom to provide One-Pager on the WSP.</p>

	<p>projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chair Stone requested a copy of Tom’s one-pager on the WSP. <p>Weir - did not receive the \$14M as hoped from the Province to top up the federal funding. Concerned about encroaching deadlines.</p> <p>BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund will be announced soon. Need one or the other.</p> <p>Fund managers in the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund have found a way to improve flexibility, and will now provide resources before the structure has an owner if needed. We just need to demonstrate that the partnership agreement is in process. Still need the \$14k to release the DMAF funds though.</p> <p>CVRD Staff is meeting on April 12th to build understanding and affirm a mandate and explore roles. Another full day workshop is planned in May to reach a consensus on a recommendation to put forward to the decision makers of all partners RE: weir ownership and licensing. This is expected to be innovative.</p> <p>Senior staff in the WLRS ministry have been very helpful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chief Hwitsum added that Cowichan Tribes has been preparing to have the ability to receive the funds if it comes through. 	<p>2. Tom to provide an update on the Weir Funding and licensing/ownership decision in May.</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>Operational Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Direction on Setting the Course outcomes. b) Presentation of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) c) Lisa reviewed a workplan to follow up on Setting the Course and the associated Governance Manual updates. Recommendations from the Setting the Course workshop, and pre-engagement with the partners, included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Clarifying the role, scope and mandate of the CWB; 	<p>Action: Staff to present documents to Partner councils as discussed. Check with Aaron RE change to Business Plan.</p>

	<p>Business Plan to CVRD and Cowichan Tribes.</p> <p>c) Governance Manual update plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ensuring adequate Funding; → Providing clarity around membership of the Board; → Increased community engagement (youth and elders); and → Determining strategic priorities. <p>See Discussion Notes below for more detail.</p> <p>b) Lisa sought approval for staff to share the Draft 2023-2025 Business Plan, 2022 Annual Report, and the Setting the Course Final Report with the CVRD Board and the Cowichan Tribes Tumuhw Committee. Staff is scheduled to meet with the Cowichan Tribes Tumuhw Committee on the morning of April 17th and have confirmed that Chief Hwitsum and Tom Rutherford will present these documents to the CVRD on the morning of April 26th.</p> <p>- Chair Stone flagged that he would like to request a change to the Business Plan and would provide in 24 hrs.</p>	
9	<p>BC Watershed Security Fund and Strategy</p>	<p>Chief Hwitsum encouraged the Board members to review the Water Security Fund and Strategy Intentions Paper that is out for comment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● working to build a model where \$100M would be held by the REFBC ● commitment to co-develop the strategy with the First Nations Water Caucus. <p>David Slade noted that the CWB has been strong advocates for the creation of that Fund so that's a success. Now we need to ensure that some of that funding comes to the Cowichan Region and secure long term funding for organizations like the CWB.</p>	<p>Action for Staff: submit CWB input to the WSF intentions process by the deadline.</p> <p>Show the connection between the goals of the WSF and the needs of the CWB in order for the CWB to be sustained.</p> <p>Include request to address private land issues in the strategy, noting the additional pressures on watersheds on Eastern VI.</p>

		<p>Chief Hwitsum lifted her hands up for the great work done to have the province talking about watersheds in this way.</p> <p>Chair Stone noted that we need to continue to remind the Government of BC that this fund needs to grow to meet the goals. More is needed.</p> <p>David Slade moved that staff submit to the WSF intentions process, showing the connection between the goals of the WSF and the needs of the CWB in order for the CWB to be sustained. Seconded by Chief Hwitsum, Carried.</p> <p>Alison added that private land use and development puts huge pressure on our watershed systems. Responding to the Intention’s Paper could be an opportunity to advocate for funding regarding alleviating the impacts of private land use (including private managed forest regulation and agriculture).</p> <p>Chair Stone suggested that Oliver Brandes could assist with the submission.</p> <p>Chief Hwitsum noted she will speak to Larry George about work that is ongoing for Cowichan Tribes to support research on analysis of private land impacts and legislation, and will follow up.</p> <p>Chair Stone echoed the importance of including issues that are important (private managed land in the watershed), taking into account the land grant and its acute impacts in the Cowichan watersheds.</p> <p>Oliver congratulated Chief Hwitsum and noted that POLIS will gather with policy makers to streamline a submission framework provincially.</p> <p>Staff committed to working with Oliver on that to meet the deadline for submission.</p>	<p>Seek support from Oliver Brandes to help with CWB letter.</p> <p>Chief Hwitsum to advise RE Cowichan Tribes research on private land impacts.</p>
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10	Presentation: Cowichan District Hospital Replacement Project and wetlands/water impacts.	See detailed discussion notes below.	Information
11	Other: Change next meeting time? Setting Date River Cleanup Jill Thompson – Interim Executive Director	Decision to schedule the next meeting from 9:30 to noon. Decision items to be scheduled before 11:30 for those who need to leave. Jill noted that the tentative date for River Clean-up is usually Aug 26-27 th . Tim will work on securing a venue as the Little big house is currently under construction. Other options need to be considered. Kristine moved that we accept the recommendation of the Cowichan Watershed Society to contract Jill Thompson as Interim Executive Director of both the Cowichan Watershed Board and Society until a suitable applicant is hired. Seconded by David Froese, Carried.	Action for Staff: Schedule future Board meetings from 9:30-Noon. Tim and Jill to work on alternate location or date for cleanup. Decision: The Board accepted the recommendation of the Cowichan Watershed Society to contract Jill Thompson as Interim Executive Director.

Meeting Locations (Rotating monthly)

- Siem Lelum Gym - Dining Hall, 5574 River Rd, Cowichan Tribes Reserve, Duncan
- CVRD - 2nd floor Boardroom, 175 Ingram St, Duncan BC
- Zoom webinar, link will be emailed. Request notifications via Jill@cowichanwatershedboard.ca

Meeting materials: <https://cowichanwatershedboard.ca/meetings/>

Detailed Discussion Notes

6. Reflections from XPey’ workshop

Alison reviewed the Speaker Night- Quw'utsun Cultural Connections Vision of planting 3000 cedar trees for the children who didn't come home from residential school. Cedar is under stress and we have logged the biggest ones. Heather spoke about creating landscape level sites that are good for cedar survival. Lise Van de Merwe presented on tree genetics and cedar at the Cowichan Lake Research Center.

Qwiyahwult-hw shared his thoughts about cedar and what he learned from his mother and grandmother. “Gran was one of the gentlest souls who had all the time to teach.” Translation can be very difficult. Stuart shared a funny memory of his ‘Gran’ flapping her underarm skin to try to communicate “bat”.

XPey’ - sound comes from the back of the throat. It is the tree of life. It brings multiple medicines to our community, our members. Vital and critical to the Quw'utsun people. Stuart offered to do a directed art lesson one day.

Chief Hwitsum spoke about her mom teaching her how to make the sound - a sound in your throat to scare the bees away.

Tom reflected on the XPey’ workshop at Lake Cowichan. It was an honour to be there. Great lessons. About 50-60 people. There aren’t many places where a group like that could be assembled to work together on something important. Met new people; learned new things.

Tim reflected that fluent speakers have entomology built into their understanding. The bat’s skin is connected to the word for bat in hul'qumi'num. This is an example of the knowledge and context lost when language is lost. Tim and son were recently in Shaw Creek and saw 7-8’ stumps. This is what we have to take photos of to represent what cedar used to look like. Building longhouses had to change; not built from cedar anymore. When Mosaic says they’re not going to plant cedar anymore, and ~77% of the watershed is theirs, this is a really big deal for us. Tim raised his hands to everyone working on this. He added that the XPey’ pronunciation sounds like you’re trying to clear the back of your throat.

8. Operational Updates

Staff has created a STC Operations Workbook to track actions and progress for the recommendations and have reviewed this briefly with the Leadership Team.

The next steps will be to engage the Leadership Team to review the operation plan in detail and provide advice and guidance during our next three Leadership Team Meetings. This work will coincide with the review of the Governance Manual to incorporate some of the recommended changes that occurred in the Setting the Course process.

Staff has created a timeline and work plan for this review process that will be shared with the Leadership Team at their next meeting in April. We hope to have a revised Governance Manual for presentation to the Board at the June Board meeting.

7. Projects. Fish Health Target Discussion with Heather Pritchard

Discussion:

Tim - Cheri Ayers did a study and noted that 6500 fish is the escapement that we want. But that was exclusively for the fall run. Issue is if you have a target, we need to be able to evaluate that number. The Chinook target is limited to what we can evaluate. If we have a steelhead target, that’s not Federal jurisdiction so they don’t want to reflect on provincial responsibility. So discussion about what does CWB do for aspirational health based targets for the whole watershed? It was an aspiration but now

we are exceeding that - need to update information and look more inclusively about watershed as a whole, and what are the numbers based on. Numbers that are 2 decades old don't necessarily reflect the watershed.

Chief Hwitsum- noted this is a healthy conversation. What we're trying to do here is the indigenous co-collaboration. The previous reference was to a colonial government standard. We need healthy discussion, and not an 'other' for indigenous indicators. This is about mainstreaming Quw'utsun Mustimuhw values. It's a governance process piece.

- With respect to the target- how do we measure this indicator? How do we frame up "indigenous flows"? We've never called it that before. We need to incorporate it into our measuring. Appreciate the language that we will develop but can we see the incorporation of indigenous knowledge across the work of the CWB? Developing the targets is much appreciated.

Chair Stone - how do we express that support and then quantify what it means for the targets themselves?

Tom - we don't want to discard the best western science guideline but add to it.

- Koksilah - when we started developing that indicator, no one knew much. There was little science in the Koksilah until recently under Cowichan Tribes guidance.
- Likes the 3 indicators.

David S - noted that indicator 3 is a goal rather than indicator.

Heather - could use an interim Indicator - temporary in nature.

Chair Stone - when I hear that the best western science is outdated, are the targets actually reflective of healthy fish population? Is the goal to restore the health of the watershed to reflect pre-colonization fish abundance?

Tom - the question is how dated are they? Agencies are constantly looking at these. They aren't stagnant but they aren't perfect. How do they compare to historic abundance? My take is that it's nowhere close. As a fisheries biologist, my opinion is that the river is no longer capable of restoring those levels due to habitat conditions, especially with climate change layered over.

Tim - escapement numbers don't move. Steelhead - escapement numbers aren't based on current info. Has asked how the number was derived - spawning habitat potential in the channel below the lake. DFO doesn't change; hasn't changed in 30 years. Targets should be an aspirational step. Chinook was based on a situation when 90% of Cowichan chinook was returning to Cowichan and we were still getting fish. Health of the system is impacted for another 100 years and we're trying to move to something healthy.

[Process: Chair Stone asked Tom and Lisa to move their agenda items to after the presentation to allow time for this discussion. No opposition.]

Chief Hwitsum reflected on the Fish Health slide. How do we measure indicators?

Tom - 2 indicators are 'interim'. What are the options for a measurable indicator?

Alison - is it possible to create numbers for ourselves that are collaboratively updated on a regular basis?

Chair Stone spoke about using a preamble statement: fish abundance exceeds the higher value of Can we set up the indicators to reference the higher value? There is frustration over these numbers not reflecting healthier targets based on indigenous knowledge and the growing set of data.

Chief Hwitsum -changing the provincial target would be a measure of success in and of itself.

Chair Stone -populations are returning over time but nowhere near what we need. We're pursuing that level of abundance and health.

Stuart - talked about what an indigenous indicator might look like. E.g. In Cowichan right now there are very few smokehouses. We're not practicing our culture and passing down our traditions. We are not getting fish in the abundance of our parents and grandparents' needs. Feeding our family can't be done. Our members need the food and need to practice culture so we are the first to reduce our fishery to not wipe out the stock. How much is enough? 1) basic need - food. 2) practicing culture-taking the time with your aunties and uncles and events.

David S - perhaps a FN target could mean that there is a satisfactory harvest by FN fishers?

Shifting Baselines typically move in a "negative" direction. It would be nice to be able to shift a Chinook baseline in a positive (larger numbers) direction.

Tim - sees a danger of endorsement of the current agency targets. These are used to set harvest opportunity limits, and open up fishing in the marine environment, which is at the expense of river harvest for indigenous people.

Michelle - disappointed to find the same conversation after years of not being involved. She remembers a presentation about passing down stories as a way to be stronger about the expectation for targets. Western science allows an ability to keep changing the goalposts.

Tim - There is a recreational harvest happening in April that we have been opposed to but our concerns have not been addressed. Mark recapture opens next week on Cowichan chinook for rec fishery for retention

Chief Hwitsum - Cowichan access and need is not a reference point or priority after decades of Cowichan Tribes work to revive the Chinook population. This was the first challenge under the repatriated Canadian Constitution - do we have the right to our fish? What we are doing here at the CWB is addressing the historical lack of priority for indigenous rights.

- Look at DFO but with an indigenous reference point and really recognize the value of that. As we look at these numbers, we need to incorporate and reflect the indigenous values. We need to model that. Very thankful for the conversation.

Tim - Cowichan's allocation of Cowichan Chinook is 250 fish but Ottawa must agree to a change and everyone agrees that it should change but discussion and good will has not actually change the number.

Chair Stone - can we write something that states we achieve the values necessary to meet the uses without allowing a level of harvest that would preclude...?

Chief Hwitsum - maybe we have taken this discussion as far as we can today?

Tom - suggested a small working group.

Heather - it would be nice to have something updated on the website - could take what I presented and call it done for now while another group works in the background?

- Keep the old target for now?
- Keep working on a new target?

David F -we all want an abundance of healthy fish in order to be able to responsibly enjoy this resource now and for future generations .

Alison - it would be important for the DFO Board rep to be on that Board.

Chief - we have a strong position here to frame this up with Natsumat. Governance and technical. Would appreciate Tim, Stuart, Linda continuing to work on this.

Whole of Watershed discussion was deferred.

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10. Presentation: Cowichan District Hospital Replacement Project and wetlands/water impacts by the Nuts'a'maat Alliance.

Westley Davidson opened with a land acknowledgement and introduced the team.

Sean Quimby reviewed the map of water routes through the parking areas. He said that the parking and hospital runoff would be filtered before entering ponds, forest.

Warren Fleenor said there was no direct fish use on the site. They received approval under the Water Act to infill wetlands. Salvaged some amphibians with the help of biologist Elke Wind.

- The project was required to compensate for lost wetland - approx. 3000 m² of wetland was eliminated. 2:1 restoration ratio required, therefore 6000 m² needed to be restored.

- The state of the wetlands on the site did have debris in some areas. The restored areas provide better habitat. Should be within the same watershed of impact.
- Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society has been very helpful and brought forward candidates for offset wetland restoration.
- Warren reviewed site options. Planting in red osier dogwood and hardhack to outcompete grasses.
- Trying to manage bullfrog by focusing on colder waters that they don't prefer.
- Additional site - storage facility by highway - is being considered.

Dave F - asked how they will manage higher temperature of runoff from parking lots in shoulder season.

Warren - no definitive answer - runs into swales first. Don't expect a lot of flow in summer (due to low rain) but acknowledged shoulder season.

Tim - Somenos and Quamichan lake already suffer greatly due to phosphorus levels. Spoke of a volunteer landowner in Somenos system experimenting to perhaps use bentonite clay baffles to sequester phosphorus. If we left Somenos creek on its own for 300 years, it would still kill fish because of the current levels of phosphorus. Other issues include a nursery that requires fertilizer in Averill Creek, vineyards, and residential gardens. Love the swale idea and the more vegetation that the flows pass through the better.

Warren - that did not come up. Have talked a lot about parrots' feather but this is the first I've heard about phosphorus. Trying to meet deadlines. Hard to find all the studies. Could talk about it more but "I'm under the gun".

Chief Hwitsum - trying to understand being 'under the gun' and connecting that with Tim's comment about the level of contamination in the watershed. Do you mean it's too late?

Warren - can't overpromise. Would like to talk and to look into it further. It's a train leaving the station.

Sean - told Chief Hwitsum that the team would take this as a takeaway for the landscapers to consider.

Chief - asked about monitoring moving forward.

Warren - under WSA - 5 year monitoring program. Not very fleshed out yet. Water temp, establishment of native vs invasive species, amphibian utilization include invasives. Hopeful that Cowichan Tribes and SMWS will participate. Throughout - cultural monitoring.

Chief Hwitsum - that's in keeping with your title. It's a very powerful word in our language. You have adopted it so that would reflect an understanding that everything is connected. You recognize the impacts. How can we leave it better than we found it? Using the word reflects a powerful commitment.

Warren - truly an honour to work in the Cowichan Watershed. Doing my best to make an impactful change. Invited Tim to contact him about phosphorus concerns.

Tim - I was a part of the task force to look at the issues and potential solutions for Quamichan and Somenos Lake and there were a number of projects there that might be helpful. Oxygenation and phosphorus sequestration projects were two potential solutions that I remember. That info should be available through the North Cowichan office.

Chair Stone thanked the group for their presentation.

David F - noted that the reference to not finding fish on site negates the interconnectedness downstream.
