

# DRAFT Board Meeting Minutes

**Mon. July 31, 2023  
9:30-noon  
Siem Lelum Dining Hall**



**Meeting Chair:** Chief Lydia Hwitsum; **Participants:** Chair Aaron Stone, Tim Kulchyski, Stuart Pagaduan, Kristine Sandhu, David Slade, David Froese, Michelle Staples, Shannon Waters, Alison Nicholson

**Regrets:** David Anderson, Darin George, Linda Higgins, Oliver Brandes (Advisor)

**Staff/Project Leaders:** Jill Thompson, Danielle Paydli, Lisa Maria Fox, Heather Prichard, Tom Rutherford, Shiming Huang

**Guest Speakers:** Elodie Roger, 2022 Lower Cowichan Koksilah Water Quality Attainment Sampling Project; Jade Yehia, Risk to Resilience Project.

**Audience members:** Working group members, volunteers, interested public.

**Minutes/Tech Support:** Shiming Huang/Danielle Paydli/Jill Thompson

Meeting Start time: 9:31am

#	Item	Notes	
1	Welcome. Introduce Danielle Paydli, Finance & Governance Manager	Welcome by Chief Hwitsum; Meeting called to order at 9:31am.  Chief Hwitsum turned to Tim for opening words. Tim shared his grandfather's teaching "Uy' skewyul tun'u kweyul." (today is a good day); and the importance of prayer with intent and from the heart.  Chief Hwitsum then introduced Danielle Paydli, the new Finance and Governance Manager, to the Board.	
2	Agenda review/revisions	Motion to approve agenda by Stuart Pagaduan, seconded by Alison Nicholson. Approved with no changes.	Approved
3	Review of June 2023 Minutes	No changes to the minutes were requested. Motion by Aaron Stone to approve minutes without changes, seconded by Alison.	Approved
4	Announcements & Correspondence	Jill Thompson advised the Board to check the website for the meeting package for Announcements and Correspondence, including items added late to the agenda package. Jill also suggested meeting attendees visit the Sockeye Salmon puppet being built next door by Cowichan Women Against Violence Society.	Information
5	<b>Public Input</b> (Jade Yehia)	Jade Yehia provided an overview of the Risk to Resilience Project (R2RP). (See July Meeting package)  The project, led by the BC Ministry of Health's Climate Resilience Unit, examines the impacts of climate change on health. In particular, the project focuses on	Action: Jill to facilitate connection with the project. Tim, Michelle, and Shannon to engage with the R2R project.

		<p>health impacts related to extreme heat, drought, wildfire, and wildfire smoke. The project began last November, taking guidance from partners across the health system to develop a holistic view on health.</p> <p>She is here regarding the impacts of drought of its effects on health. She chose the Cowichan Watershed Board because the organization was frequently named as one to learn from. The CWB governance model is noted as one which Jade would like to showcase in the R2RP. The hope is to have a CWB story in the R2RPs public Summary and Technical Reports that could help other communities in their “whole watershed” planning processes.</p> <p>Chief Hwitsum thanked Jade for presenting, remarking that it is good to know that the Ministry of Health is thinking about how the surroundings are affecting health. Chief Hwitsum acknowledged how our well-being is connected to the world around us and the recognition of Cowichan Tribe’s inextinguishable rights and title. She reflected on the fact that Indigenous people’s historical connection to people and territory often goes unrecognized in decision making, yet better decisions are made when Indigenous authority is recognized.</p> <p>Chief Hwitsum thanked Jade for the presentation again and suggested the CWB follow up on the project.</p> <p>Michelle Staples moved to follow up with the project and provide a CWB story. Motion seconded by Shannon Waters.</p> <p>Michelle Staples and Tim Kulchyski both raised their hands as interested in being involved in the project on behalf of the CWB.</p>	
6	Language Lesson	<p>Chief Hwitsum led the Board through the pronunciation of “Hulitun tst tu qa” (Water is Life). Stuart Pagaduan led the Board through a language lesson.</p> <p>Stuart shared the creation story of the Gulf Islands and its people, which came from the salmon. Language learning included the Spaal’ (Raven), Yuxwule’ (Eagle), Wuxus (Frog), Ha’put (deer), Q’ul-lhanumutsun (Killer whale), Esqw’ (seal) all lived in harmony.</p>	Learning

		<p>Stuart added, “We do not see things as objects, we see things as family. We are more likely to take care of things when they are family, not objects.”</p> <p>Chief Hwitsum thanked Stuart for sharing the lesson.</p>	
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>Project updates:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 2023 River Flow Situation</li> <li>b. Cowichan Weir Progress</li> <li>c. Koksilah Watershed Planning Progress</li> <li>d. River Cleanup, “Talk-to-Us” tent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 2023 River Flow Situation</li> </ul> <p><b>i) River Flow</b></p> <p>Tom Rutherford provided the Board with an update on the state of the river and weir progress. The water levels in the river are low, the rain last week added roughly five more days of water, but still distressing. It is estimated that, without significant rainfall in the next seven weeks, pumps will need to move water from the lake to the river to maintain the flow rate of 4.5 Cubic Meters/Second (CM/S). The flow was reduced to the 4.5 CM/S minimum at the end of June, giving enough flow and time for the fry to move out. The Catalyst Mill also reduced their outtake from the river by 80% at the end of June. Chief Hwitsum remarked on the need to recognize Tim’s work to advocate for fish health and ensuring the safe passage of fish.</p> <p>Tom reiterated the dire situation of the low water levels, the catastrophic consequences if the pumps fail, and the water temperature that is reaching distressingly high levels.</p>	
		<p><b>ii) Fish Kill in the Cowichan River</b></p> <p>Tom stated that although he was away, he managed to still get the update through emails. He provided the following update:</p> <p>The fish kill was first reported on July 10th, at Horseshoe Bend by a recreational swimmer. It was first reported to Catalyst and the Department of Oceans and Fisheries. The following day, another fish kill was found upstream of Horseshoe Bend, just below the Lake Cowichan sewage outflow. Tom remarked that Catalyst, Cowichan Tribes, and the DFO have people looking into the fish kill and have taken fish and water samples. The high water temperatures were not considered the direct cause, but considered one of the stressors in the case. The assumption is that there was some substance in the water that was the cause.</p>	

Tim added that Cowichan Tribes' Fisheries staff coordinated with the DFO to figure out the extent of the fish kill. Cowichan Tribes' Guardians confirmed the fish kill the day after it was reported. Tim stated he was unable to join the Guardians that day but went out the next day.

He noted that in the pools he swam in, the water temperature was 22.4 degrees at the top and bottom, which is "not great." He went from Horseshoe Bend to "Last Drop" at the bottom of Marie Canyon. Tim also noted that Kevin from the DFO went to look further upstream, and the province did the stretch from the lake down.

Tim noted that he found dead fish the entire way, with more found downstream. He found dead coho fry about 15-20 cm long lining the bottom of small pools at the edge of the river. In edge habitat along the river, barely any coho were found. Bigger rainbow trout (30-40cm) found at the bottom of the canyon. The dead fish were mostly found in large pools that they likely drifted into. Tim remarked that he did see healthy trout, but they were in very specific areas. He also noted that from Vimy pool down, the fish seemed healthy.

Regarding the water quality, Tim added that biologists from the province checked the oxygen and pH levels by the Lake Cowichan sewage outfall and found the levels to be higher than usual—however, more work is needed. There was also more effluent in the river and more of a tinge to colour.

Tim remarked that anything over 18 degrees is considered stressful to fish by Cowichan Tribes Hatchery Staff.

#### **Discussion**

Tom: Want to remark on two things. First, the response: Usually these things would be reported to the agency and then everyone criticizes the agency. In this community, it was different in that everyone was quick to jump in and work together without pointing fingers but figuring out what's needed. Made him realize the benefits of how we've all learned to work together over the years. Second: It is hard to assess the cumulative impacts on the entire watershed. However, the good work of Cowichan Tribes Fisheries and the DFO working together has generated large data sets over the years. This means next year we

	<p>should have a good idea of the impact on the watershed. We are fortunate that we have this, not a lot of watersheds have this kind of data.</p> <p>Dave S: Catalyst isn't taking water at the moment, but they are willing to bring in pumps. Is it a moral responsibility or legal responsibility to ensure the river is flowing?</p> <p>Tom: It is a legal responsibility to keep it at 2.8cms minimum. But also, never in doubt that they would commit to bringing the pumps.</p> <p>David F: What specifically was different at the outfall?</p> <p>Tim: The pH was 7.2pH above the outfall, and 9.2 pH immediately below. Oxygen levels were also lower [?] below the outfall as well. [The findings] are not a smoking gun, but important. It was clear that there was a difference and something to explore.</p> <p>David F: What about other critters- crayfish, insects, and other animals in the watershed that are a sign of river vitality?</p> <p>Tim: There seems that there might be more crayfish mortality, but not too sure—didn't see any on my swim. There might be different insect changes, but I did not notice it.</p> <p>David F: A multi reason fish kill is very concerning. There have been much higher river temperatures in the Chemainus and Koksilah. Here we have lots of dead fish and we don't know why. If it's bad for the fish it isn't going to be good for anything else. So, this specific fish kill is very concerning.</p> <p>Chief Hwitsum: It is hard to try to save enough water for the fish. I lost sleep in June thinking about it. I know everyone in this room cares about the river. I felt confident because Tim was out there checking.</p>	
	<p><b>b. Cowichan Weir Progress</b></p> <p>Tom provided an update on the Cowichan Weir progress: There was a leader meeting of the CWB co-chairs and Paper Excellence on June 30th. It was cordial, but more work needed to address concerns around the partnership underpinning licensing and ownership. One concern was the liability of the weir</p>	

		<p>and the cost of insuring the weir. If we can find out the cost of insurance, that may remove one of the big concerns.</p> <p>Moving forward, Tom suggested that the CWB take on the following roles to support the progress:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A secretarial role in governance</li> <li>2. Government Relations coordination</li> <li>3. Researching the hurdles and challenges (ie. Liability concerns)</li> <li>4. Communications (coordinating with Cowichan Tribes and CVRD)</li> </ol>	
		<p><b>c. Koksilah Watershed Planning Progress</b></p> <p>Jill Thompson remarked that the Koksilah team is currently taking a summer break and getting ready for September. She encouraged people to apply to the Community Advisory Table for the Xwulqw’selu (Koksilah) Watershed Plan. She asked for people to send interested persons who would be a good fit for the project to her, Tom, or Alison. There is also a parallel table with the Cowichan Tribes for input to the planning table. Chief Hwitsum added that the advisory table is seeking people with lots of different perspectives.</p>	
		<p><b>d. River Cleanup</b></p> <p>Shiming notified the Board that initial outreach has been done, and the initial advertising material had been sent to the Cowichan Valley Voice. Shiming reiterated the date of the River Cleanup this year will be on August 27th. Moving forward, a volunteer team leader’s meeting will be held next week to get moving on the rest of the pieces.</p>	
		<p><b>e. “Talk-to-Us” tent</b></p> <p>Shiming provided a brief introduction to the project, remarking that his classmates at Vancouver Island University helped make it. The project aims to gather feedback from the community about the watershed and work being done in the watershed by CWB project partners. The “talk-to-us” tent will be hosted in three to four locations over the summer.</p>	
8	<p><b>Presentation:</b> 2022 Lower Watershed Water Quality</p>	<p>Elodie Roger Presentation (see <a href="#">Board Meeting Package</a> for presentation): <b>2022 Lower Watershed Water Quality Attainment Sampling Results</b></p>	<p>Action: Refer report to WQ Working Group for consideration of next</p>

	<p>Attainment Sampling results</p>	<p>The water quality objectives were set 10 years ago. First set of samples were collected in 2012/13 and have been done every five years. For the 2022 Sampling, the Shawnigan Basin Society helped analyze the data and create the report.</p> <p>Some highlights from 2022 sampling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 of the selected sites were too dry to sample.</li> <li>• 40% of the sites met the water quality objectives, compared to 2012 when none of the sites met the objectives. Over 10 years, there was an increase in water quality, but water samples near floating homes remain high in fecal coliforms.</li> <li>• lower Koksilah samples shows that none of the sampling sites met the E.coli water quality objectives.</li> <li>• For sites in the Cowichan Bay tributaries, the water quality for recreation have been met, but not for drinking.</li> </ul> <p>Following the presentation, Chief Hwitsum thanked Elodie.</p> <p>Tom acknowledged and thanked the authors and all those involved in the report, remarking that it was an excellent and professional report. He suggested that the Board task the Water Quality and Estuarine Health Working Group to look into the next steps and make a recommendation to the Board.</p> <p>Aaron moved to adopt the suggested action, seconded by Stuart.</p> <p>Chief Hwitsum thanked all those who worked to bring the report forward.</p>	<p>Steps (passed)</p>
<p>9</p>	<p><b>Operational Updates:</b></p> <p>a) June Meeting Follow up: Watershed Security Letter</p> <p>b) Governance Manual: postpone final draft to September.</p> <p>c) Date - Family picnic with Working Group</p>	<p>a. June Meeting Follow up:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">i. Watershed Security Strategy Letter</p> <p>Jill informed the Board the Water Security Strategy feedback letter is ready for the Co-Chairs to sign and be sent out. There is also a letter for the Ministry of Environment thanking them for the funding and support of the working group.</p> <p>b. Governance Manual: postpone final draft to September.</p> <p>Jill stated that the final draft review has been a bit delayed. A clean copy will be sent out for the Board to review.</p> <p>c. Date - Family picnic with Working Group members in September.</p>	

	members in September.	<p>Commitment for the location at Hecate Park following brief discussion. The time and date will be confirmed via email later.</p> <p>Chief Hwitsum thanked Jill for the operation updates and recognized the hard work of the CWS staff.</p>	
<b>9</b>	<b>Other</b>	<p>Co-Chair Aaron remarked on the importance of the work needed in the watershed, stating he has not seen the earth on his property this dry before, and that it is hard not to feel distressed.</p> <p>Chief Hwitsum: Jill has done some good work organizing the press who we will meet with after this meeting.</p>	
<b>10</b>			
<b>11</b>	Adjourn: Next CWB meeting-	Next meeting is Sept 25th. Chief Hwitsum adjourned the meeting at 11:34am	Meeting adjourned.

Meeting materials available at: <https://cowichanwatershedBoard.ca/document/cwb-Board-meeting-package-july-2023/>; <https://cowichanwatershedBoard.ca/meetings/>