

# Xwulqw'selu/Koksilah Watershed Planning NEWSLETTER

November 2023



## We are getting started!

Welcome to the first newsletter of the **Xwulqw'selu (Koksilah) Watershed Planning Project**, a partnership between Cowichan Tribes First Nation and the Province of BC. Huy ch q'u (thank you) for reading!

We plan to publish bi-monthly to share what the various planning and advisory teams are learning, exploring, struggling with, and eventually proposing as solutions.

We will highlight new resources, studies, and other information guiding the work. We will seek your input on specific questions, and we always welcome your feedback and concerns. These newsletters will also be available at [www.koksilahwater.ca](http://www.koksilahwater.ca).

## About this Project

The Xwulqw'selu (Koksilah) Watershed Planning process formally began in May (see timeline on p.2) to help Cowichan Tribes and the Province realize their vision and priorities for a healthy watershed, healthy communities, and climate-resilient future, as articulated in the S-xats-thut tst ("We Agree") Agreement.

S-xats-thut tst is a government-to-government agreement that commits Cowichan Tribes and BC to work together to create a whole-of-watershed plan, drawing on both provincial legislation and Cowichan Tribes' laws and teachings. Eleven Quw'utsun teachings are embedded in the agreement. You can find "The 11 Teachings" brochure at [koksilahwater.ca/resources](http://koksilahwater.ca/resources).



Xwulqw'selu Watershed Planning Team with G2G Leaders  
June 2023, Bright Angel Park

## Message from the Planning Team

Hello everyone! We look forward to working with you over the next few years. We all recognize that there are no 'silver bullets' to fix the situation in the Koksilah watershed, or many other watersheds, *but* through the WSP process, we can develop, research and choose options that will redefine our future.

In future editions of the newsletter, we will bring updates from the Workstreams as we work with community members, knowledge holders, cultural advisors, industry, technical experts and others on topics relating to long term watershed sustainability, and developing options.

We will also let you know about events and ways to get involved or to learn.

Huy tseep q'u! (Thank you all)

Natasha Overduin  
Jointly Appointed Executive Director  
Xwulqw'selu Watershed Planning Process

## Who are We?

This is a "Government to Government" (or G2G) process, meaning that two levels of government, Cowichan Tribes First Nation and the Province of BC, are sharing decision-making. **Diagram below.**

We are working hard to bring together representation from both decision-makers and those affected by decisions. Our tables include elected leaders, First Nations, Provincial staff, local people, and a facilitation team skilled at navigating hard conversations. What holds us together is captured in the historic S-xats-thut tst (We Agree) planning agreement described on p.1.

The day-to-day work (including this newsletter) is lead by a Planning Team comprised of:

- Jointly appointed Executive Director (Natasha Overduin, Compass Facilitation)
- Cowichan Tribes' Lead (transitioning)
- Provincial Lead (Devin Sullivan, Min. Land, Water and Resource Stewardship)
- Local advisors and support, Cowichan Watershed Board (Tom Rutherford, Jill Thompson)
- Super support staff!

Two advisory tables representing local interests and voices will provide input and advice throughout the process. (See p.4)





# What have we done so far?

Discussions began between Cowichan Tribes and the Province in 2019 to explore a Koksilah “whole of watershed plan” in recognition of the poor current conditions, and poor outlook for this watershed. Three years of listening, learning, research, collaboration, and negotiation between the First Nation and the Province followed to establish how the two governments could share their respective legal authorities over watershed decisions. (See summary report at [koksilahwater.ca](https://koksilahwater.ca).)

## Feb 2020

An Interim Letter of Agreement was signed to “scope” what a co-governed approach could entail. Partnerships and collaborations are fostered.



## Jan 2022

Scoping led to BC signing a Ministerial Order for a Water Sustainability Plan in the Koksilah. This creates a legal mandate for the planning process. This is the first planning process of its kind in BC!

## May 12<sup>th</sup> 2023

The historic *S-xats-thut tst* (We Agree) planning agreement was signed by Chief Lydia Hwitsum and Minister Nathan Cullen in the Quw’utsun Cultural Centre. The event was accompanied by a feast with Quw’utsun elders, children, and community, Tzinquaw Dancers, and speeches.



## May-June 2023

- Presented the freshly signed Planning Process at a Cowichan Watershed Board Speaker Night at VIU-Duncan.
- Participated in an online Koksilah Watershed Public Info Night (Zoom).
- Participated in a public Koksilah Watershed Meet & Greet at The HUB in Cowichan Station.
- Hosted the first Planning Team workshop.
- Hosted a “Fish, Farm and Forest” bus tour for the G2G partners to get them out in the watershed with community representatives.



## July-Sept 2023

- Selecting membership for the Cowichan Community Guidance Group and Collaborative Community Advisory Table. Drafting workplans.



## Oct-Dec 2023

- Presentations to Regional District, Agricultural meeting.
- Developing tools for communication (like this!)
- Cowichan Tribes Community Guidance Group in development. Collaborative Community Advisory Table holds its first full day meeting.



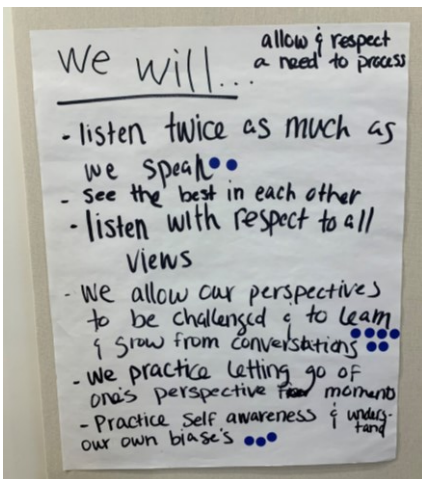
# Sister Advisory Tables

Two community advisory tables have been established to provide input and advice to the development of the Watershed Plan over the next three years. We look forward to introducing the advisory table members in the next newsletter.

- 1) Cowichan Tribes Community Guidance Group:** This group is under formation and will include elders, knowledge holders, and other community members to support the development of the plan in keeping with Quw'utsun teachings and ways of being.
- 2) Collaborative Community Advisory Table:** This group is comprised of diverse watershed interests and sectors. They will meet quarterly to provide input and advice, and to help identify and evaluate options for land and water management, policy and legal measures.



Scenes from some of the 2023 Xwulqw'selu Watershed Planning events.  
Huy tseep q'u to all the photographers!



Collaborative Community Advisory Table notes  
Nov.2023

## Talk to us!

This is the beginning of a three-year process. We respect that everyone is busy, information overload is real, and your attention is an asset we don't want to waste! We also believe that this planning process can only succeed with significant community understanding and input.

So we'd love to hear:

- What do you want to be updated about?
- What other ways should we reach out that are easy for you, or the people you know?

Email the Planning Team anytime via Maya at  
[MayaGuttman@compassrm.com](mailto:MayaGuttman@compassrm.com)

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**[www.koksilahwater.ca](http://www.koksilahwater.ca)**