




## 2023 in Review

### Reflecting on 10 Moments of Achievement, Learning, Leverage, & Love for The Cowichan Watershed.

#### Legend

Achievements 

Learning 

Leverage 

Love 

1. Xwulqw'selu/Koksilah Watershed Planning is formally launched as a first-of-its-kind whole of watershed G2G (government-to-government) process between Cowichan Tribes First Nation and the Province.  Learn more: [www.koksilahwater.ca](http://www.koksilahwater.ca)
2. A tragic loss of aquatic life in a 10 km stretch of the Cowichan River results in heightened focus and commitment to better manage summer low flows. While this is devastating, much is learned about the risks of low River flows, and partners begin working on better monitoring, management, infrastructure, and local collaboration systems.  Learn more: [New York Times article](#);
3. Catalyst Mill runs a record-breaking 20 pumps for 36 days to keep Cowichan River flowing after Lake Cowichan water supply drops too low to flow naturally. This leads to an extremely stressful summer, with ongoing risks of catastrophic conditions in a Canadian Heritage River. Cultural and financial impacts for Cowichan Tribes, Catalyst, and others, gain the attention of the BC Premier, Ministers, media, and others. Help seems imminent to finally rebuild the Cowichan Lake weir. We are grateful that former CWB Executive Director, Tom Rutherford, fisheries biologist, has remained on contract as our Strategic Priorities Director to lead this work. We also thank the volunteers of the Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society for their "Weir Writing Letters" advocacy campaign.  Learn more: [SUN FM interview with Tom Rutherford](#).
4. Target Working Groups are active again, providing collaboration between about 30 organizations and agencies working on the CWB's primary goals (targets). The members of these groups provide invaluable technical and subject matter knowledge to inform the CWB staff and Board, and each other. In particular, the Working Groups and Board have been updating the language in our Targets and Indicators to better reflect Indigenous knowledge and the current technical goals of our watershed community. We are thrilled to have Heather Pritchard's thoughtful leadership as our part-time Targets Coordinator to keep this work progressing.  Learn more about our Targets [here](#).
5. A "Setting the Course" Collaborative Governance project provides advice, interviews, and a workshop to highlight goals for the partnership moving forward, clarify and strengthen the governance arrangement, and re-confirm the CWB's role. Subsequent improvements to the Governance Manual to capture the

learning are underway, including formalizing Oliver Brandes's role as an Advisor to the Board. We are thankful to Lisa Maria Fox and Jana Kotaska for leading this important work. 🍷📁💙

6. The Speakers Series is about to begin our 10th year, after a break during CoVid. The quality of free watershed education being offered by our volunteer guest speakers is phenomenal. We are thrilled that Elder Philomena Williams starts each event off in a good way with a cultural lesson, and CWB members have taken on the role of MC. Thanks to Vancouver Island University Cowichan Campus for hosting, our Communications Director Jill Thompson for organizing, and all our guest speakers for their generous in-kind support to make this possible. 🍷🍀 Read about all our past Speakers [here](#).
7. Progress is made on the difficult question of how watershed knowledge, information, and data can be shared and networked between partners to improve analysis and support better decision making. Collaborative dialogue, surveys, and desktop research result in a workshop and recommendations. Thank you to Lisa Maria Fox, Cheri Ayers, Tom Gleeson, Pamela Williams and Elodie Rodgers for their work and contributions on this to date. 🍀
8. Reporting on the 2022 Water Quality Attainment Sampling in the lower Koksilah and Cowichan Bay is completed and presented. This is the 3rd round of BC Ministry of Environment prescribed sampling, testing for specific values every 5 years to monitor trends. The results indicate ongoing failures to "attain" the recommended water quality standards, but also improvements in most areas over time. Thank you to Elodie Roger, Chris Steeger, and the Shawnigan Basin Society for their contributions to this work. 🍀 Learn more here about our [Water Quality Target](#).
9. On a provincial scale, the BC Government made its first steps toward creating a Watershed Security Fund. We hope this fund will grow and one day support more local, Indigenous led, watershed collaborations like the CWB, reflecting the Elders' teaching that "When we take care of the watershed, the watershed takes care of us." We thank our colleagues in the Watershed Security Coalition for their persistent and effective support for this cause. 🍷📁💙 Learn more: [watershedsecurity.ca](https://watershedsecurity.ca)
10. Cowichan Valley Regional District votes to increase its contribution to the CWB's core funding after 10 years. This added support confirms an ongoing commitment to partner with Cowichan Tribes over water stewardship in the Cowichan Watershed. Together the partners can now sustain a full time CWB Executive Director, and enthusiastically welcome Danielle Paydli into that role. Core funding also supports coordination of the annual River Cleanup, which this year saw ~100 fabulous volunteers remove 2 tonnes of garbage from the lower Cowichan River. 🍷📁💙 Learn more: <https://cowichanwatershedboard.ca/river-cleanup/> and <https://cowichanwatershedboard.ca/about/staff-team/>

*Huy tseep q'u to our 2023 funders for making all of this possible: Cowichan Tribes First Nation, Cowichan Valley Regional District, the Real Estate Foundation of BC, Pacific Salmon Foundation, Canada Summer Jobs, BC Freshwater Legacy Initiative (MakeWay), and the BC Ministry of Environment. 🍷🍀📁💙*