



## Draft Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 24th, 2025 at Si'em Lelum Dining Hall (5574 River Rd, Duncan)

**Meeting Chair:** Michelle Staples (Chairing for Kate Segall) **Participants:** Chief Cindy Daniels, Christopher Alphonse, Calvin Swustus Senior, Alison Nicholson, Shannon Waters, David Slade, Tim Kulchyski, Kristine Sandhu, Jenna Sutherst **Advisor:** Oliver Brandes **Regrets:** CVRD Chair Kate Segall, David Froese, Arlette Malcolm. **Staff/Project Leaders:** Danielle Paydli, Heather Pritchard, Tom Rutherford, Jill Thompson **Guest Speakers:** None — Working meeting! **Audience members:** Working group members, volunteers, interested public.

### 1. Welcome (9:00 am)

Happy Birthday to Chief Daniels! Find out how to sing in Hul'q'umi'num' [here](#).

### 2. Agenda Review / Revisions

Agenda approved by consensus.

### 3. Review January 27th, 2024 Draft Minutes

Minutes approved by consensus.

### 4. Announcements & Correspondence (see below agenda)

- a. Jill – announced upcoming Speaker Nights and Walk the Weir tours.
- b. Michelle will be speaking on the work of the CWB at the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC)
- c. Chris, Shannon, Calvin, Danni – will be presenting on the CWB at BC Association of First Nations Water Forum on March 3 & 4th in Richmond.

### 5. Hul'q'umi'num Watershed Lesson

Councillor Christopher Alphonse led us through a lesson.

We will utilize [these maps](#) for the coming lessons.

ACTION: Danni to circulate to Board Members.

### 6. Updates & Discussion on CWB Projects and Initiatives

Danni provided key updates and questions for consideration and guidance from the Board. See the [Staff Report](#) in the meeting package.

UPDATES:

There are no decisions needed from the Board this month on behalf of staff. A few quick highlights recognizing the Board's engagement:

- FNFC Visitors: Shout out to Tim and Tom for the guided walk and to David, Alison for coming to the presentation to share more about the work
- Thanks to David for his ongoing, monthly work as the CWS Treasurer - he reviews all our contracts, signs the cheques, approves banking transactions, supports with insurance conversations — it's a lot of work every month so a definite shout out is needed!
- Kate: Visited Francis Kelsey Grade 12 Environmental Studies Class to share about CWB's work.
- Shannon, Calvin and Chris: BCAFN conference to share more about the CWB as one of the collaborative watershed governance models in BC as we look toward how to implement UNDRIP through shared decision-making frameworks based on respect and free, prior, and informed consent.
- Hot off the press, Minister Randene Neill will be coming for a short visit at the end of the month to learn more about the Weir — update on that visit to come to the next meeting.

Thank you to our Board members for being so active in all this work.

## 7. Impact Plan Working Session (9:45 am)

Based on [FIRST](#) Draft Impact Plan.

Question 1: Have we identified the correct priority projects?

Input:

- State of Watershed Report is really key. First CWB coordinator — Rodger Hunter — emphasized that need. The baseline keeps moving – would require grant funding and consultants.
- it's what ties the priority projects together. We have been reactive. Long term we don't want to refer to 'fish kill' response – deficit standpoint. Targets – need to be knit together to see how it helps the watershed overall for the health of the whole watershed.
- a lot of our energy has been on replacing the weir, and we're still doing it, and it's sucking energy away from the whole watershed, and the targets, and we need a monitoring system. Lack of funding is an issue. We are just chasing problems. We don't have a picture of the whole watershed – some members didn't even know we had another outfall in the river (Lake).
- Eflow (Environmental Flow) needs assessment; targeted volume and timing assessment. More than rule curve – need Mean Annual Discharge (MAD). We need to understand this system and understanding MAD and minimum ecological needs. It's a gap the Board could fill in.
- where and when is Somenos Creek going to choke up? We need to understand that.
- Sewage Treatment plants in Lake Cowichan and Duncan needed = get that out of the river. Wish list. Prioritize understanding of where sewage treatment issues are.
- Town of Lake Cowichan is looking at getting rid of the outfall; but don't have the funds. If we get all hands on deck then maybe we'll get funding.

- we have been divided. We aren't set up to look at whole of watershed. We can take that bird's eye view. So important for us to look at the map with the village sites and integrated Elders' knowledge. Put outfalls and wells and drinking water, harvesting places all on a map. The current priorities are perhaps western focussed – how can we complement those basis of knowledge?
- 5 indigenous indicators of watershed health. Integrate those.
- Whole of watershed, state of watershed is part of that. We need to take a look at Raincoast work on contaminants. Fish kill has helped us realize that there is a lot of work happening here and we aren't always fully aware of what our partners are doing. Highlight deficits, even if we can't incorporate them. Hard for people to picture the impacts to the watershed. We don't have the Ecosystem based plan for the Cowichan like we do for the Koksilah. Use the plan and the state of the watershed.
- flagged that Quamichan Lake doesn't have a community group stewarding it.
- bring the Koksilah watershed into the state of watershed.
- big frustration of looking at things as if we are a region, even with this we still get siloed. How do we create something that ends that way of thinking? The health of the ecosystem is important to all of us. We have to pool resources to move forward.
- XWP process – think that they have fallen into the same problem. All the energy is going into water allocation instead of whole of watershed. Our job isn't to be the doers, we are the pullers-together, the cheer-leaders, the persuaders.
- Union of BC Indian Chiefs meeting. Heavy agenda for 2 days. Surprised to hear that they had a fish kill exactly like ours. Would like to find out from them and hear how they We take care of the river. We don't have money but we were born and raised to take care of it. Through climate change and the environment, everything has changed. It's worth bringing an Elder to talk about what worked back then, how did they take care of the river? Should Cowichan Tribes' Councillors record some Elders about this? Minister wants to talk about food sustainability, elk, ... Hard to keep all these doors open and moving forward.
- WIKD is western knowledge
- whole of watershed plan will take a long time. It will integrate 'state of the watershed, the targets, and identify new targets, and integrate an ecosystem-based approach like in the Koksilah
- reviewed some of the pieces that are in place that could be models or parts of that.
- all these processes around emergency management, what makes the most sense for all the different kinds of planning. Need this – will make other things easier to get going.
- budget week next week. Building our economies – where do climate and emergency response fall into that? Where can we build resiliency in our regions as part of infrastructure response? Taxing upstream impacts to support downstream? Looking more holistically at Gov't response to tariffs?
- flagged that priorities 4/5/6 are overarching.
- question about XWP and our role in that. Do we have a representative?
  - Answer - we provide support and advice to that process.

- this is the opposite of what it was like when I started. Cowichan Watershed Board has a role to tell the story. We don't have mechanisms to do the work. If there are ways of funding for Cowichan Tribes to be able to support this. 2 Elders did a run of the river and recorded their knowledge. Lost one of those since. Is there funding to support Cowichan Tribes to do more of this.

Question 2: Are there key elements to 'how we work' that are missing/off-base/etc.?

Input

- integrate Hul'q'umi'num.

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**Break out teams - for both Priority Projects & Elements of HOW we work, answer these 3 questions:**

1. How can the Board engage in each element of the work?
2. Are there gaps in our collective knowledge that we'd like to fill?
3. Any direction needed for staff?

**Guests/Working Group members** – Discuss proposed new Target Strategy and how that relates to your work/organization.

Responses for: PRIORITY PROJECTS (3 Questions above)

- First 3 & Last 3 priority projects (tech - lead); last 3 more board member engagement
- Indigenous perspective across all priority actions; (missed); CWB to have youth intern from Cowichan community;
- different board members have different areas of expertise - can engage where they can.
- address issues around pulling together across jurisdictions - board to put their minds to that
- understanding groundwater; what's available? may be available in the future

Responses for: Elements of HOW we work (3 Questions above)

- engage with specific expertise at working meetings, etc.
- delving into specific board agenda items
- directory of partners - what do they do; key contact
- staff and board to engage in community outreach
- mentorship - succession planning; VIU & others; be more visible where there are youth
- specific youth projects in the community

Guests (stewardship community) conversation on Target Working Groups/strategy:

- shifting from multiple meetings to doing the work
- Need to consider long term relationships - e.g. Roundtable mtgs: don't want to lose that
- Whole of watershed considerations: overharvesting in the watersheds & invasives (many groups are working on this)

**Speakers for CWB meetings**

- Tribes Elders
- Perhaps a rhythm
- Innovative ideas – e.g. sewage treatment – gold standard. Where does it go if not the river? How to keep it out of the groundwater. Zoom topics.
- Youth on the Land group – what are they seeing and doing?
- Networking – who has concern? E.g. fire departments? They have a need for water too – do they have a different perspective? E.g. California – needed water towers and didn't have them. Firesmart.
- Xwulqw'selu group give a talk.

**Ideas for 15 year celebration:**

- Canoes from above Skutz
- Late spring to early summer.
- Would like to see school kids invited. They can paddle as well.
- Can we add on to Sta'lo' Skweyul – Friday celebration?
- Super heroes, hosers – something everyone can participate in.
- Sunday and Monday for Quw'utsun Skweyul
- Children and Grandchildren of CWB members. Matching capes.
- Moose lodge – Quamichan – canoe ride.
- Send people home with cedar saplings.
- Whole of watershed badges.
- Hats.

ACTION: staff to revise Impact Plan for next meeting to reflect input.

ACTION: form event committee – Kristine, Michelle.

**8. Other Business (11:45 am)**

**9. Adjourn (12:00 pm)**

Next CWB meeting - March 31, 2025 via Zoom

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Materials referenced below can be found at: <https://cowichanwatershedboard.ca/meetings/>

**Correspondence**

- Letter from BC Watershed Security Coalition to Premier Eby, Feb 10 2025. CoSigned by CWB CoChair Kate Segall.





**Announcements/Events**

- Speakers Series - Always at VIU-Cowichan Campus, Room 140, 7pm, FREE. Details at <https://cowichanwatershedboard.ca/content/cwb-viu-speakers-series/>
  - Mon. Feb 24th (tonight) - Where Land Meets Water with Kelly Loch and Heather Pritchard
  - Mon. March 17th - Sta'lo' Stories with Jedson August.
- Saturday March 22 - World Water Day. "Walk the Weir" tours. Details to follow at [cowichanlakeweir.ca](http://cowichanlakeweir.ca)
- Cowichan Estuary Nature Center job posting <https://www.cowichanestuary.ca/>

**Further Reading**

*Samqwan—Water: Revitalizing our relationship through Indigenous co-governance.* By Jae Ford, Shannon Waters. February 10, 2025 <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pwat.0000346>

# World Water Day

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| <h2 style="margin: 0;">Sta'lo' Stories with Jedson Tsusqun August</h2> <p style="color: white; font-size: small; margin: 5px 0;"><i>Sharing stories and knowledge about Quw'utsun Sta'lo' and its waterways.</i></p>  <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 10px;">  </div> <p style="color: white; font-size: small; margin-top: 10px;"><b>Speaker Night @ VIU-Cowichan</b><br/>Mon, March 17 • 7-8:30pm • Free</p> | <h2 style="margin: 0;">Walk the Weir Tours</h2>  <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 10px;">  </div> <p style="color: white; font-size: small; margin-top: 10px;"><i>Tours on top of the weir at Lake Cowichan! Learn how this vital structure is important for the environment and why it needs to be updated.</i></p> <p style="color: white; font-size: small; margin-top: 10px;"><b>Saywell Park • Sat, March 22</b><br/>10am-1:30pm • Free</p> |
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