



THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK & REPORT

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**HEALTHY
WATERSHEDS**
INITIATIVE



INTRODUCTION

A key objective of the Healthy Watersheds Initiative is to advance the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The purpose of this report is to hold ourselves accountable to that commitment, and to transparently document where we've made progress or fallen short, and where further action can and should be taken to build on the challenges and successes, new relationships, and rich learning. The report also offers a framework that we hope governments, environmental funders, and conservation organizations will draw upon in evaluating their own commitments to advancing UNDRIP. By sharing approaches, processes, templates, and tools, we hope to share and learn from each other's efforts and work together to support better policies, practices and relationships — that meaningfully uphold commitments to UNDRIP and healthy watersheds for all.

WHAT IS THE HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE?

The [Healthy Watersheds Initiative](#) is a \$27-million program, supported with funding from the Province of BC, to stimulate British Columbia's economic recovery through investments in community-driven watershed conservation and restoration projects. Through this program, the Real Estate Foundation of BC, in partnership with Watersheds BC, is administering grants for [more than 60 watershed security projects](#) in communities across the province.

Key objectives for the Healthy Watersheds Initiative include:

- Job creation and economic recovery from the COVID19 pandemic;
- Watershed conservation, restoration, planning and monitoring;
- Advancing the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).

WHAT IS THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (UNDRIP)?

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* ("UNDRIP") is an international documented negotiated between Indigenous peoples of the world and the nation-states of the UN over two decades. UNDRIP is comprised of preamble statements from the UN General Assembly, followed by 46 Articles outlining essential rights of Indigenous peoples globally. Rights can be organized in the following categories:

- Foundational Rights
- Life and Security
- Culture, Religion and Language
- Education, Knowledge, Media and Employment
- Political and Economic Rights
- Lands, Territories and Resources
- Self-Government
- Implementation
- Minimum Standards

Adopted by the General Assembly of the UN in 2007, UNDRIP was originally opposed and voted against by the Canadian federal government. It was not until 2016 that the Canadian government withdrew its objection and began the process to implement it in Canada. For British Columbia, our provincial government was the first in Canada to adopt UNDRIP in 2019 by passing the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#). As the provincial government is responsible for key areas relevant to and affecting Indigenous peoples such as lands and resources and health care and education, it is important that the province has taken action to implement UNDRIP.

One of the main reasons for initial opposition to UNDRIP by Canada (as well as other countries with colonial foundations such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United States), was the concern over the inclusion of free, prior, and informed consent ("FPIC"), and the requirement for consent for development on Indigenous lands. While fears and opposition still exist, the colonial countries have unfortunately taken comfort in the fact that international human rights instruments do not impose legal obligations on states, but rather moral aspirations for governments to adopt and implement in their own distinct manner.



"In many ways, Canada waged war against Indigenous peoples through Law, and many of today's laws reflect that intent...The full adoption and implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples will not undo the War of Law, but it will begin to address that war's legacies."

*Senator Murray Sinclair
Truth and Reconciliation Chair
April 2016*

Nonetheless, the standard of FPIC still remains in UNDRIP and Indigenous peoples worldwide continue to call on state governments to adhere to it in their lands. Consent, permission and respect for Indigenous laws and protocols for accessing Indigenous lands is a fundamental right that Healthy Watersheds Initiative has strived to uphold, but met with some challenge that has been captured at various points in this report.

UNDRIP ARTICLES RELEVANT TO HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE

One of the key objectives of the Healthy Watersheds Initiative is to advance the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples* (“UNDRIP”). The following Articles from are most relevant to the work of Healthy Watersheds Initiative:

ARTICLE 18 | DECISION MAKING

Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.



RELEVANCE TO HWI

Decisions regarding funding for watershed projects, decisions regarding access to territories by non-Indigenous projects, decisions regarding future funding and watershed strategies.

ARTICLE 20 - 2 | JUST & FAIR REDRESS

Indigenous peoples deprived of their means of subsistence and development are entitled to just and fair redress.



RELEVANCE TO HWI

Redress can include environmental/ecological restoration, returning watersheds to more natural pre-contact state.

ARTICLE 25 | SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.



RELEVANCE TO HWI

Participating in non-Indigenous led projects does not cede rights to the areas in question. Non-Indigenous projects encouraged to respect and include cultural and spiritual protocols and ceremonies into HWI projects.

ARTICLE 23 | DEVELOPMENT

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.



RELEVANCE TO HWI

Many HWI projects speak of the connection between human and environmental health. Also, as a job creation initiative, HWI is also a social and economic program.

ARTICLE 24 -1 | TRADITIONAL MEDICINES

Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals. Indigenous individuals also have the right to access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services.



RELEVANCE TO HWI

With a large proportion of HWI projects focussed on wetland health specifically, traditional medicines are often found in close proximity to wetlands and riparian areas. Restoration needs to ensure appropriate access to traditional medicines.

ARTICLE 26 | RIGHTS TO LAND

Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.



RELEVANCE TO HWI

Supporting Indigenous-led projects means greater support for occupation, stewardship, and restoration of Indigenous lands and waters. Future funding should have new targets for % of Indigenous-led projects.

ARTICLE 28 | RIGHTS TO REDRESS

Indigenous peoples have the right to redress, by means that can include restitution or, when that is not possible, just, fair and equitable compensation, for the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent.



RELEVANCE TO HWI

Redress for degradation of watersheds can include ecological/environmental redress, returning the land and water to their original state.

ARTICLE 29 - 1 | CONSERVATION OF ENVIRONMENT

Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.



RELEVANCE TO HWI

HWI can be considered a conservation program, and Indigenous peoples and their projects are welcomed and considered without discrimination. Moving decision-making power for project approval outside of government will further entrench this.

ARTICLE 36 | RIGHTS TO RELATIONSHIPS

Indigenous peoples, in particular those divided by international borders, have the right to maintain and develop contacts, relations, and cooperation, including activities for spiritual, cultural, political, economic and social purposes, with their own members as well as other peoples across borders.



RELEVANCE TO HWI

Water does not recognize or conform to colonial borders, thus there are many downstream effects and interests related to several HWI projects. Staff have encouraged project proponents to engage those Indigenous peoples regardless of provincial/federal borders.

ARTICLE 39 | RIGHTS TO FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Indigenous peoples have the right to have access to financial and technical assistance from States and through international cooperation, for the enjoyment of the rights contained in this Declaration.



RELEVANCE TO HWI

As a funding opportunity that has been characterized as 'once in a generation' in terms of scope and scale, it is imperative that Indigenous peoples have had access to as much as possible to support their watershed priorities. With 1/3 of HWI projects being Indigenous-led, it is a good start but targets to increase this % are needed for future funding.

UNDRIP FOR FUNDERS - BEST PRACTICES LITERATURE

One of the members of the Healthy Watersheds Initiative [Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle](#), Kris Archie is the Chief Executive Officer for [The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada](#) (“the Circle”). Through the work of the Circle, Kris shared with Healthy Watersheds Initiative, various resources related to philanthropic funding and Indigenous peoples. One such resource from the International Funders for Indigenous Peoples is [A Funder’s Toolkit: Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).

“Full and effective implementation of the Declaration [UNDRIP] will require contributions by diverse actors from many sectors. One such sector is that of philanthropic foundations, grantmakers and other donors. As key players that work to promote the rights of Indigenous Peoples by funding their organizations and networks, as well as other national and international organizations focused on Indigenous Peoples’ issues, funders can play a fundamental role in the implementation of the Declaration.”

International Funders for Indigenous Peoples, Funder’s Toolkit: Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, page 11.

This toolkit helped shape the approach of Healthy Watersheds Initiative to advancing UNDRIP and evaluating our progress in doing so. As a funding program that links state or Crown funding to Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous organizations and local governments through an independent granting entity (the Real Estate Foundation of BC), Healthy Watersheds Initiative is in a unique position to advance practices and standards that may not be adopted at the provincial government level. Further, as a funding program aimed at restoring and supporting healthy watersheds, striving for the fullest implementation possible of UNDRIP principles is imperative.

“The Declaration recognizes that cultural rights are inseparable from rights to land and resources, as well as the right to self-determination, as the cultures of Indigenous Peoples are inextricable from their economic systems and self-governing institutions.”

International Funders for Indigenous Peoples, Funder’s Toolkit: Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, page 22.

In addition to general guidance on how funders can help advance UNDRIP, Healthy Watersheds Initiative drew from the Organizational Assessment to develop a questionnaire for all Healthy Watersheds Initiative staff to complete as a self-evaluation. The results are shared in Appendix 6.

Advisor Kris Archie was also pivotal in the drafting of UNDRIP-related questions for the interim and final reports for all Healthy Watersheds Initiative projects.

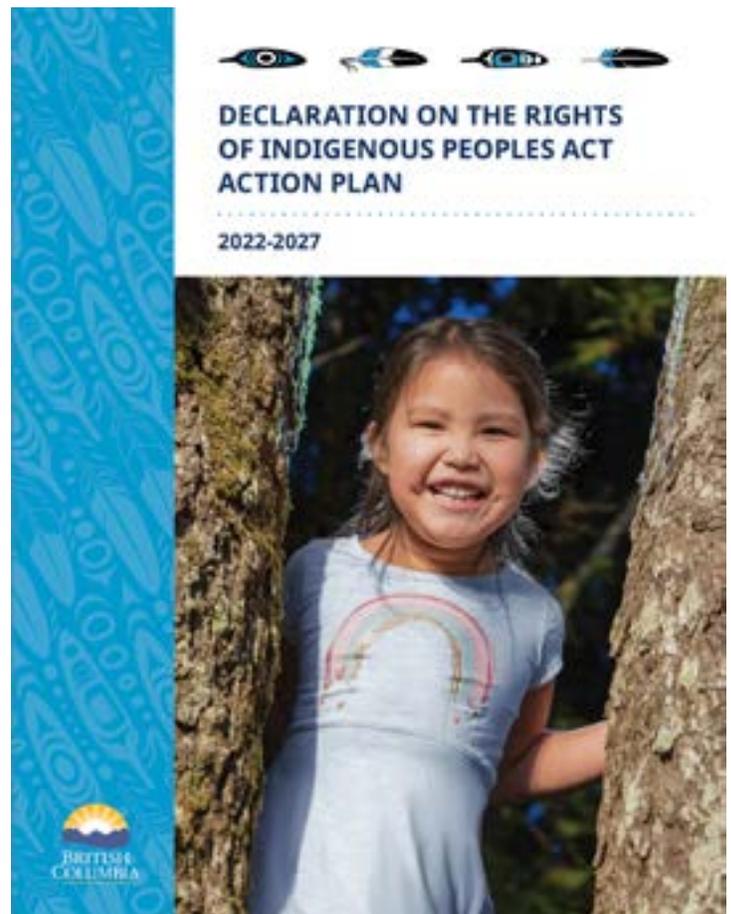
LINKAGES TO PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT AND APPLICABLE LEGISLATION - DRIPA

As the administrator for provincial economic recovery funding, Healthy Watersheds Initiative has a responsibility to implement funding, learning and evaluation, and communications in a manner that supports government's commitments to the adoption and implementation of UNDRIP. The provincial government has committed to the adoption and implementation of UNDRIP through the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#). This ground-breaking legislation includes four key areas that comprise the provincial framework for reconciliation:

- Amending provincial legislation to come into alignment with UNDRIP;
- Co-developing an [Action Plan](#) with Indigenous peoples to meet UNDRIP objectives;
- Annual reporting to the legislature on progress of implementing the Action Plan and alignment of legislation;
- Enabling provisions to allow the province to enter into agreements with Indigenous peoples on shared statutory decision-making.

Some of the relevant outcomes and actions identified in the provincial Action Plan on UNDRIP that Healthy Watersheds Initiative can seek alignment with include:

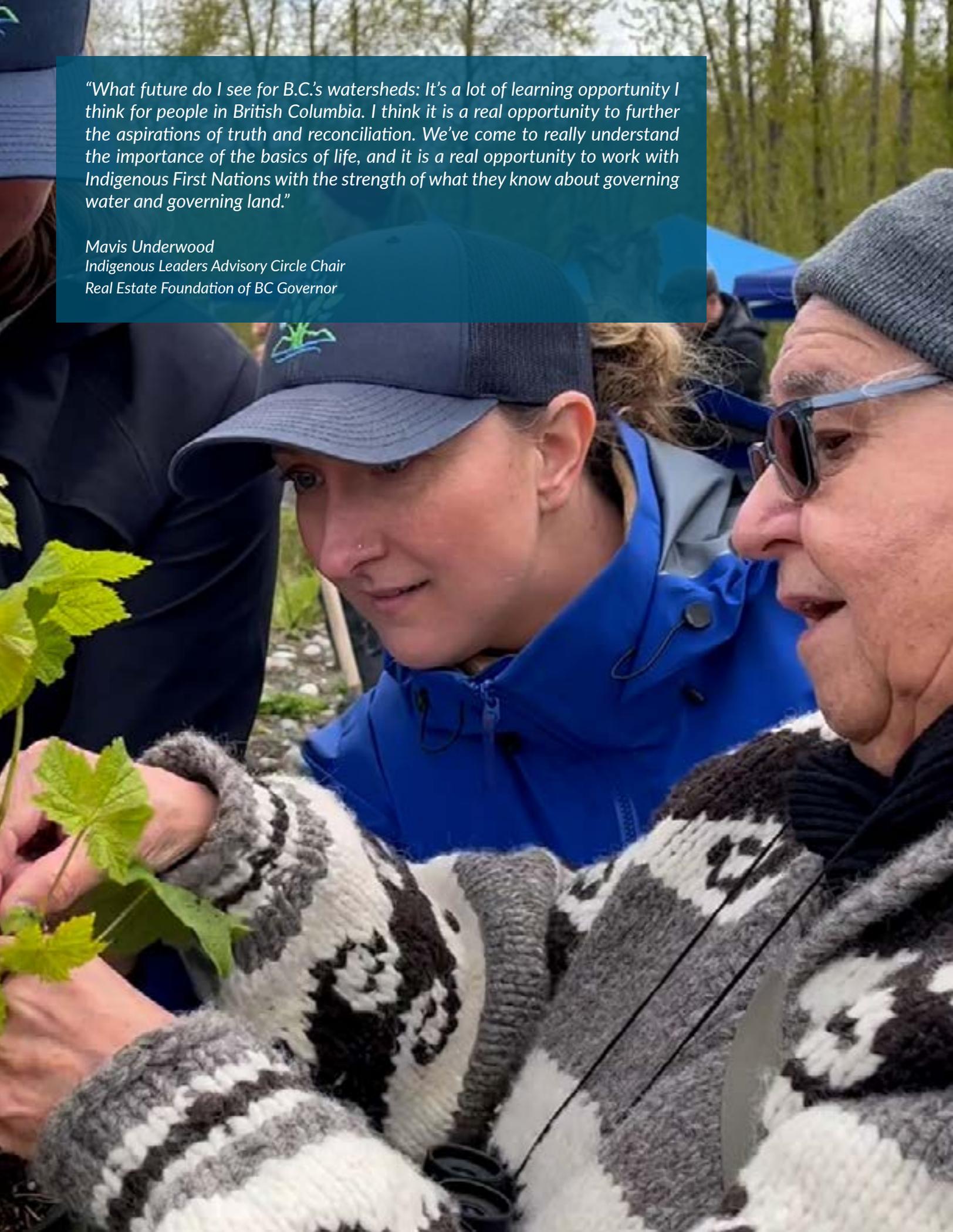
- **Outcome:** Indigenous Peoples have meaningful and sufficient access to abundant and healthy traditional foods and have peaceful enjoyment of their harvesting rights.
- **Outcome:** First Nations exercise their right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development, use and/or stewardship of their traditional territories and other resources.
- **2022-27 Action:** Collaborate with First Nations to develop and implement strategies, plans and initiatives for sustainable water management, and to identify policy or legislative reforms supporting Indigenous water stewardship, including shared decision-making. Co-develop the Watershed Security Strategy with First Nations and initiate implementation of the Strategy at a local watershed scale. (Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship)
- **2022-27 Action:** Co-develop strategic-level policies, programs and initiatives to advance collaborative stewardship of the environment, land and resources, that address cumulative effects and respects Indigenous Knowledge. This will be achieved through collaborative stewardship forums, guardian programs, land use planning initiatives, and other innovative and evolving partnerships that support integrated land and resource management. (Ministry of Land, Water and Resource



While Healthy Watersheds is administered independently from government through the Real Estate Foundation of BC and Watersheds BC, it is important to recognize the political landscape that we are operating in. Further, as the Action Plan is the result of extensive consultation and co-development with Indigenous peoples, it is a useful guide for aligning actions and priorities with the outcomes from the Healthy Watersheds Initiative.

“What future do I see for B.C.’s watersheds: It’s a lot of learning opportunity I think for people in British Columbia. I think it is a real opportunity to further the aspirations of truth and reconciliation. We’ve come to really understand the importance of the basics of life, and it is a real opportunity to work with Indigenous First Nations with the strength of what they know about governing water and governing land.”

*Mavis Underwood
Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle Chair
Real Estate Foundation of BC Governor*



GENERAL APPROACH TO ADVANCING UNDRIP THROUGH HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE

Environmental funders have two main pathways for how they can help operationalize and uphold UNDRIP:

- **As an organization:** staff and hiring, policies, board and governance, educational support for staff, advisors, evaluation and learnings processes.
- **Through the work they fund:** intake processes, prioritizing Indigenous-led land and water-based work, holding non-Indigenous grantees accountable on Indigenous partnerships, culturally relevant and sensitive reporting processes, principles and criteria for funding approvals that breathe life into UNDRIP.



Healthy Watersheds Initiative strived for multiple outcomes across both of the above pathways. Guided by the Senior Indigenous Advisor and the Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle, Healthy Watersheds Initiative approached the advancement of UNDRIP through the key strategies and efforts outlineon the following page.

“Funders have the ability to work in creative capacities and acknowledge that societal and systemic changes are necessary for the realization of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and to resource those necessary changes... The diversity, creativity, and alternative and holistic world view of Indigenous Peoples is essential for the future of all humanity, as well as our planet. Their resilience is highlighted in the ability to face overwhelming odds and continued attacks on their cultures, lands, and livelihoods, as they have for centuries. The protection of their rights is also the protection of this diversity, creativity, and resiliency.”

Amy Fredeen and Evelyn Arce, International Funders for Indigenous Peoples, “A Funder’s Toolkit”.

ADVANCING UNDRIP



**PRIORITIZING
INDIGENOUS-LED
PROJECTS**



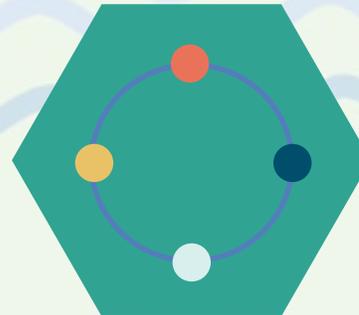
**INTERIM &
FINAL REPORTING
QUESTIONS & DATA ON
UNDRIP ACTIONS**



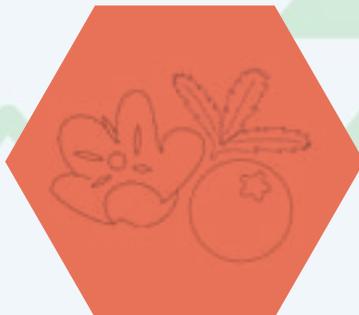
**WATERSHED HEALTH
SUPPORTS INDIGENOUS
RIGHTS**



**DECOLONIZING
PRACTICES WORKSHOPS**
NAHANEE CREATIVE



**INDIGENOUS LEADERS
ADVISORY CIRCLE**



**INTEGRATING INDIGENOUS
KNOWLEDGE INTO PROJECTS**



**HWI UNDRIP
EVALUATION
FRAMEWORK**



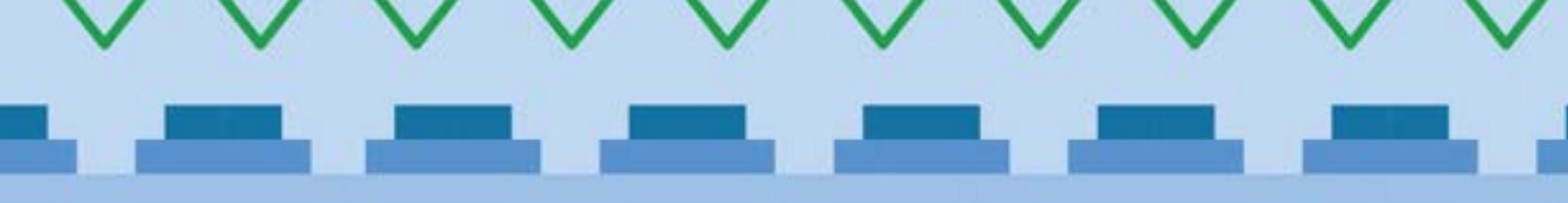
**JOB CREATION PRIORITIZING
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**



**RESOURCES FOR CEREMONY
AND ENGAGEMENT IN
PROJECT BUDGETS**



**SENIOR INDIGENOUS
ADVISOR & INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITY CONNECTOR**



HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

Each of the Appendices serves as a stand-alone outcome related to the work of Healthy Watersheds Initiative in relation to the advancement of UNDRIP. For those who are interested in different aspects of the work, an Appendix can be identified easily and reviewed quickly, as opposed to reading through 100 pages of report trying to find your most interesting section. Different staff, contractors, and advisors were involved in different sections, and so the work as a whole is a team product, but acknowledgements and credit are owed to those outlined in each Appendix.

This report is intended to both capture the outcomes and learning for how Healthy Watersheds Initiative was able to contribute to the advancement of UNDRIP, as well as serve the broader funding community in developing and sharing tools, processes, templates and approaches that can be adopted by others seeking to advance and support UNDRIP implementation.

Each Appendix represents one pillar or strand of the overall UNDRIP Framework for Healthy Watersheds Initiative, recognizing that each on its own is significant, but still part of a larger whole. In approaching complex challenges of decolonization, while administering colonial government funding, a multi-pronged approach is essential to work across all levels.

APPENDICES

- 1.) [Excerpts from Healthy Watersheds Initiative Interim Report](#)
- 2.) [Insights on UNDRIP from Progress Reporting](#)

Input and Direction from Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle

- 3.) [Submission to BC Ministry of Environment on the Discussion Paper on the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund](#)
- 4.) [ILAC Meeting Summary](#)
- 5.) [Principles and Criteria for Future Funding](#)

Learning & Evaluation Events

- 6.) [Healthy Watersheds Initiative Staff Program Self-Evaluation](#)
- 7.) [Decolonization Training Workshop with Nahanee Creative Final Report](#)
- 8.) [Healthy Watersheds Initiative Community Conversations](#)

DESIGN & PHOTO CREDIT

Layout and Design: Supported by Cheyenne Berghenegouwen, HWI Communications Manager.

Blanket Illustration: Created by Chenoa Gao, Muskeg Lake Cree Member, Wetlands Workforce Conservation Illustrator.

Cover Photo: Restoration work at Willow Creek. Kitsumkalum and Tsimshian territory. Photo by SkeenaWild Conservation Trust.

Page 3 Photo: From left to right: Patience Muldoe, Hayley Wilson, and Taylor Wale are with the Gitksan Watershed Authorities. They are continuing the work to restore access, connectivity, and quality of critical salmon habitat in McCully Creek. Photo by Cheyenne Berghenegouwen.

Page 8 Photo: Mavis Underwood shares with Natasha Cox and Rachel Drennan from the Fraser Valley Watersheds Coalition how some native plants were traditionally used during a site visit at Hooge Wetland. Photo by Claudia Ferris.

The meaning of the blanket illustration:



The Healthy Watersheds Initiative is a \$27-million program, supported with funding from the Province of BC, to stimulate British Columbia's economic recovery through investments in community-driven watershed conservation and restoration projects. Through this program, the Real Estate Foundation of BC, in partnership with Watersheds BC, is administering grants for more than 60 watershed security projects in communities across the province.



**HEALTHY
WATERSHEDS
INITIATIVE**

Our Water, Our Future

Interim report on job creation, watershed restoration, reconciliation, and climate action

Please Note: The following pages are excerpts from the Healthy Watersheds Initiative Interim Report.
The full report can be viewed at www.healthywatersheds.ca

30 AUGUST 2021



StrongerBC

Project Locations, Regions, Water Basins

HWI funding supports 61 projects, with work taking place at more than 200 sites across the province. The map on the right shows the spread of work sites across major watershed basins and geographic regions in British Columbia.

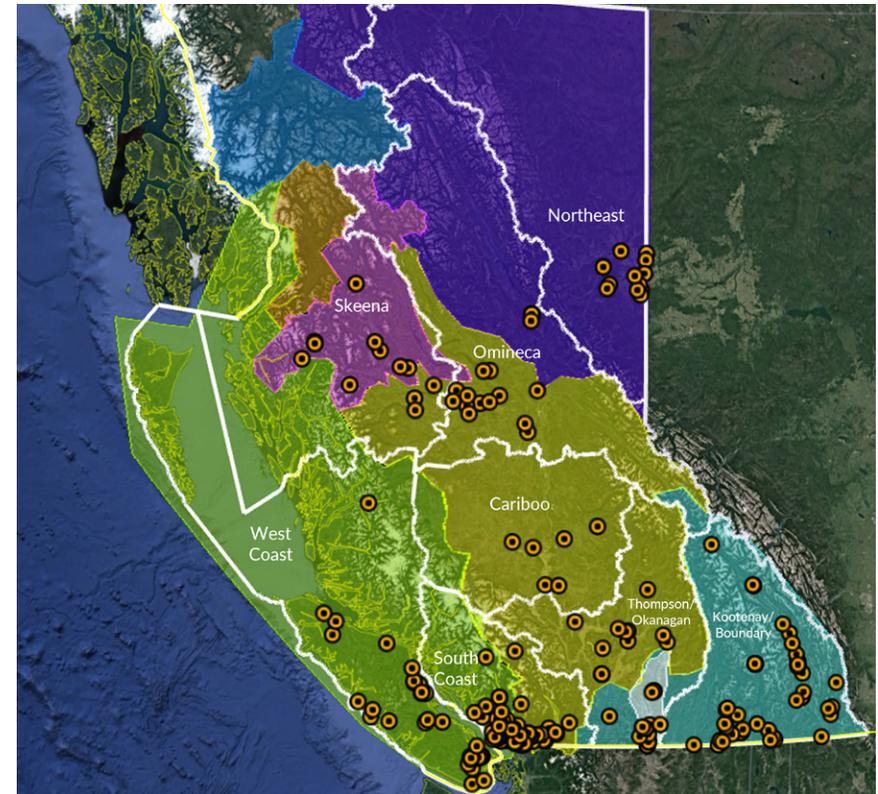
The coloured blocks show the approximate drainage basins of **major river systems** in BC – see the legend at right. The white boundary lines and white text labels show the boundaries of the **natural resource regions** used by the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD).

Our team is developing an interactive version of this map, which will be added to healthywatersheds.ca this fall.

What's a drainage basin?

A drainage basin is the area where precipitation, like rain or snow, falls and flows out into streams, rivers, or waterways. They are made up of both surface water (like creeks and rivers), and groundwater (water that is seeped into the ground). The boundaries of the drainage basin are usually defined by the highest elevation that drains into that water body.

HWI / Work Site Locations



Major Drainage Basins

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| ● Columbia | ● Nass | ● Skeena |
| ● Fraser | ● Okanagan | ● Stikine |
| ● Mackenzie | ● Pacific Coast | |

HWI is Advancing Progress on UNDRIP

The majority of HWI-supported projects are restoring watershed damage from past or ongoing activities that will support healthier watersheds, drawing a strong link to the continued exercise of Indigenous rights.

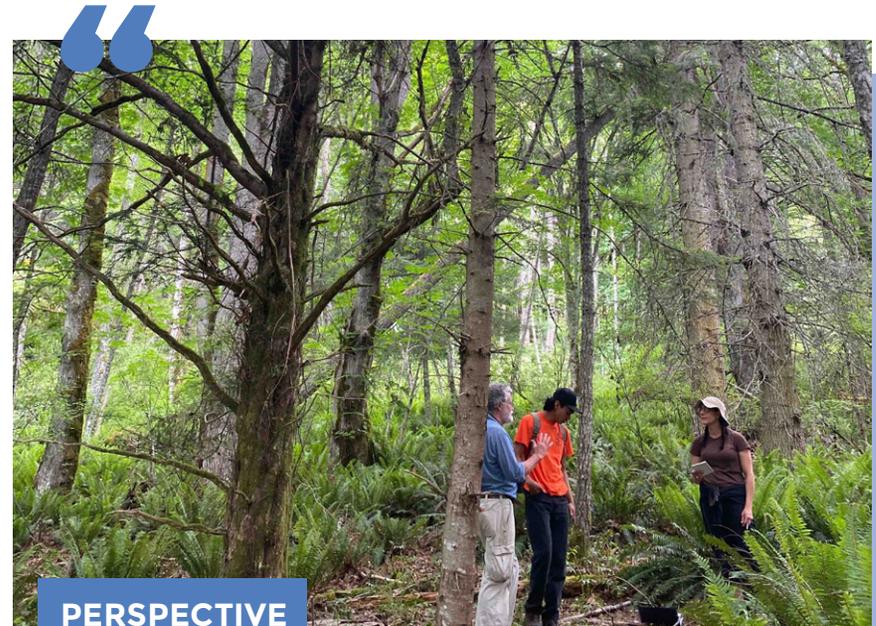
As HWI staff members were reminded at the first Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle meeting, the health of water is linked to the exercise of Indigenous or Aboriginal rights and title. Whether it is salmon habitat restoration, improving water quality to support food security, or decommissioning historic dams and pulp mills to return a watershed to a more natural state, all of these efforts support the ongoing exercise of Indigenous fishing, hunting, gathering, and stewardship rights.

HWI funding is supporting 19 Indigenous-led projects, as well as 38 projects working with an Indigenous partner. Across all projects, at least 135 Indigenous people have been hired – representing 29% of all created jobs that have been reported to the HWI team.

In the News:

“Semiahmoo Bay shellfish harvest could be restored – SFN chief says” ([Peace Arch News](#), 13 May 2021.)

“One cool island. Freshwater is life: Reconciliation and restoring island wetlands” ([Gulf Islands Driftwood](#), 10 August 2021)



PERSPECTIVE

“Working with Stqeeeye’ Learning Society on the Healthy Watershed Initiative project has provided me with a deep understanding of what it means to be a steward in modern times. As an Indigenous woman I have an inherent obligation to take care of the land. This has been increasingly more difficult through generations because of extractive resource practices and politics around land rights. However, through meaningful initiatives such as the Healthy Watersheds, I have had the pleasure of tending to the land and not only learning from it but learning more about myself as an Indigenous land steward. Being a land steward is a practice that Indigenous peoples have upheld since time immemorial, I look forward to returning the land to its natural state so the ecosystem can thrive again. This job allows space, time and learning that must happen to heal the earth and ourselves. Huy steep q’a.”

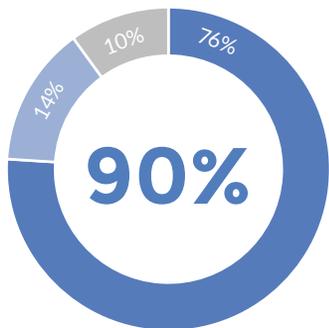
- Maiya Modeste, Stqeeeye’ Learning Society

The HWI interim report form included questions about progress on UNDRIP implementation. These questions were developed by HWI’s Senior Indigenous Advisor by cross-referencing the 46 articles of UNDRIP with the most common activities in HWI project workplans, with an aim to develop questions that produce quantifiable results. Proponents marked their progress on the following 10 areas of UNDRIP by indicating if activities were ‘In Progress’, ‘Planned’, or ‘Not Planned’. An ‘Other’ Category was also included.

Findings: UNDRIP Implementation

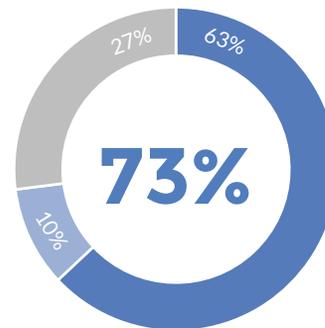
- 1. Project is Indigenous-led and remains so.**
About 31% of all projects are currently Indigenous-led. This category of project is likely the highest tier of UNDRIP implementation because a Nation itself, or an organization in service to a Nation, is leading, implementing, and benefitting from the project.
- 2. Restoration or watershed planning activities supporting exercise of Indigenous rights (e.g.: watershed health supports salmon habitat).**
The response on this question was clear: the overwhelming majority (90%) of HWI projects are conducting work that will support the exercise of Indigenous rights, with less than 10% identifying this as not applicable or not planned.

- 3. Incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into project planning.**
From available interim reports, we learned that 28 non-Indigenous-led projects and 17 Indigenous-led projects answered this question as Planned or In Progress. We plan to explore further how projects have worked to center Indigenous ways of knowing into HWI project planning, and the effects of this on project outcomes.
- 4. Existing partnership confirmed or strengthened with a host Nation.**
We are seeing that most proponents who submitted an interim report have either planned or are in the process of confirming existing Indigenous partnerships. This is a strong showing of projects/proponents with established partnerships working towards confirming and strengthening those relationships. As discussed previously, the fulsomeness of these partnerships will need to be explored further.
- 5. New partnership established with a host Nation.**
Twenty-eight projects have reported that they are in progress or are planning to establish new partnerships with Nations whose territory work is being done on. Our team will be working to better understand how partnerships are being established with First Nations.



HWI / Exercise of Indigenous Rights

46 (out of 51) HWI projects include activities that support the exercise of Indigenous rights.



HWI / Indigenous Partnerships

Nearly 3 in 4 HWI project proponents are confirming or strengthening existing partnerships with an Indigenous Nation.



6. Communications and outreach to First Nation leadership.

The majority of proponents who submitted an interim report (94%) indicated that communication and outreach to leadership was either Planned or In Progress.

7. Communications and outreach to First Nation membership.

The majority (88%) of proponents who submitted an interim report indicated that communication and outreach to membership was either Planned or In Progress.

8. Indigenous ceremony held at project site(s).

Approximately half of projects indicated that ceremony would be included in their work. It may be that because of COVID restrictions, teams and nations alike were hesitant to commit to in-person ceremonies, site visits, or other in-person events. We will be able to share more information on how ceremony was included at final reporting.

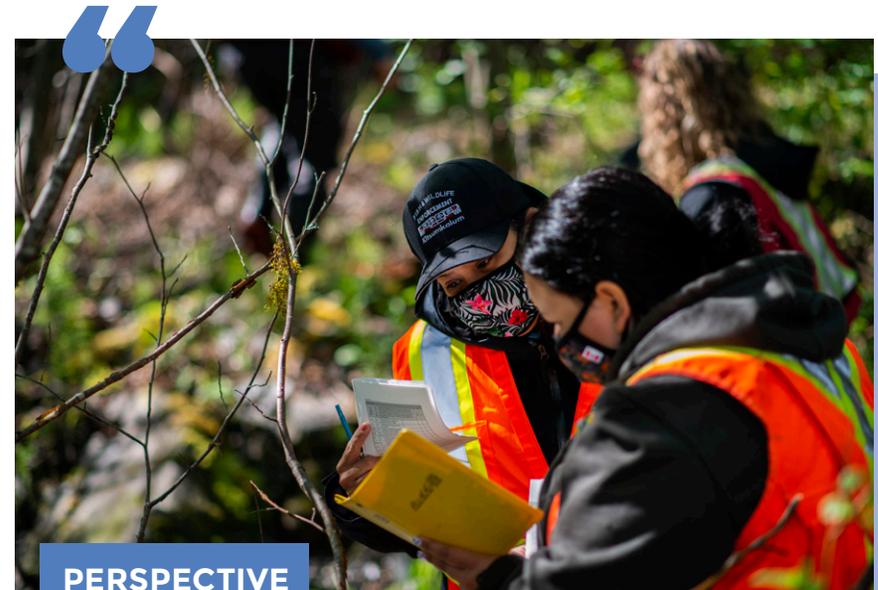
9. Job creation for Indigenous peoples.

As noted, 135 Indigenous people have been hired so far through HWI projects. This is a strong outcome considering all the challenges and time constraints for hiring, community responses and barriers from COVID-19 outbreaks, as well as the residential school findings which have directly impacted many HWI proponents and partners. Additional jobs are still to be created, and we will have a fuller picture at final reporting.

10. Training for Indigenous peoples.

Training for Indigenous peoples is ongoing; at the time we received interim reports, 27 proponents indicated that this was In Progress. These reports also included quotes directly from individuals who are receiving training in watershed restoration work; some of which are included in this report.

We are pleased to share these initial findings on UNDRIP implementation. Over the coming months, HWI staff members will continue to develop our approach and framework for evaluating UNDRIP implementation by seeking direction and advice from our Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle.



PERSPECTIVE

“We are most proud of the fact that there are two Kitsumkalum youth working on this project. For one of the people, this is her first job in the natural resources sector and she is finding the job very rewarding and fun. We are also very grateful for the connection we have made with Kitsumkalum and with Liitaalax Gibaaw (Sharon) in particular. It feels great to be genuinely welcomed to Kitsumkalum territory by the designated House representative in order to serve the wild salmon in restoring their habitat.”

- Project Lead, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust

Partnerships and Collaboration

Watersheds are complex spaces – and communities, industries, and stakeholder groups may have different priorities for water and land use. To address these complexities, project leaders must navigate a range of laws and policies, funding models, cultures and histories, scientific disciplines, economic concerns, and planning issues.

HWI-supported projects are highly collaborative, requiring many communities, sectors, and teams to come together for a common purpose.

During the HWI intake process, proponents identified 228 unique project partners, which can include: non-governmental organizations, First Nations, municipal and regional governments, provincial and federal governments and agencies, industry and crown corporations, educational institutions, consultants, funders, and others. Some organizations, such as Environment and Climate Change Canada, were identified as a partner by several different project teams.

Indigenous Leadership and Partnerships

- 19 HWI projects are led by a First Nation or Indigenous-led organization (31%).
- 25 HWI projects led by non-Indigenous organizations have reported collaboration with an Indigenous partner, i.e., a First Nation or Indigenous-led organization (41%).

Our team is working to learn more about the nature of these relationships and partnerships. HWI aims to support respectful, meaningful, and authentic engagement with First Nations and Indigenous partners. By asking questions about how these partnerships are being created and supported, we hope to gain a better understanding of the quality and



PERSPECTIVE

“The project has found itself in a unique position with local landowners and stakeholder organizations. As many of the large farming and ranching properties are handed down through their families, younger farmers and ranchers are increasingly open to a new way of managing the land. The project has been warmly welcomed by this new blood and there appears to be a vigorous appetite to management towards sustainable outcomes where both nature (river health) and people co-benefit. This transition to younger landowners has quickly turned towards dialogue on how to manage river corridors so that ranchers and farmers have certainty not only for their crops, but also that their actions are leading towards a healthy riverscape, where their families can farm by day and fish by night.”

– Project Manager, Northwest Research and Monitoring Ltd.

long-term viability of these partnerships, rather than simply counting the number and types of partners included in a project.

In particular, we want to avoid misrepresenting or overstating partnerships between non-Indigenous project teams and First Nations or Indigenous-led organizations. This has been a pattern observed with a number of funding programs. Many Indigenous people have shared examples of last-minute requests for letters of support on projects they have not been involved in developing, nor fully understand the impact or benefit on their Nation. Without verification (by letter of support, follow up contact), non-Indigenous organizations may self-report partnerships with Indigenous peoples.

In final reporting, the HWI team will be asking project proponents to share more details about the types and levels of partnerships, such as:

- **Full partnership:** group or Nation is co-designing, co-leading, and co-implementing the project. This level of partnership requires a letter of support from Nation leadership attesting to their role.
- **Semi-partner:** group or Nation is one of many partners, and may be involved at key milestones, may derive benefits from the project and its outcomes, and is generally supportive but not involved in the day-to-day project operations. This level of partnership could be indicated by an email of support from a senior staff member, to reduce administrative burden on the Nation.
- **Project outcomes end user:** group or Nation will derive some benefit from the project outcomes, such as data or training. The Nation does not oppose the project, but does not have the interest or capacity for full or semi-partnership. This level of partnership can be indicated by an email from a staff member.



PERSPECTIVE

“Many of the Indigenous representatives who engaged with us expressed their concern about this short time frame and expressed their preference for longer-term engagement [in relation to the Wetlands Workforce project].”

– Project Lead, BC Wildlife Federation

Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle

The Healthy Watersheds Initiative aims to support good relations with First Nation communities, and to respond to the needs and priorities of Indigenous partners.

To guide us in this work, an **Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle (ILAC)** provides advice and wisdom to direct HWI staffers' approach on engagement, relationship building, and storytelling. To date, the eight members of ILAC have held two meetings (April, July) with HWI staff, with future work planned for the fall and winter.

The guidance of the ILAC, as well as the role of HWI's Senior Indigenous Advisor, are both necessary and meaningful in the approach HWI takes to working with all project partners.

As an example, a concerted focus on Indigenous voices and priorities helped inform HWI's offer for interim report extensions following the discovery of 215 children at the Kamloops Indian Residential School, as a way to respect Indigenous communities' need for time and space. Ten projects requested extensions.

With input from the ILAC, the HWI team is also developing a framework to evaluate progress on UNDRIP implementation, which we look forward to using in final reporting.

HWI / Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle Members



Mavis Underwood, Chair
Governor, Real Estate Foundation of BC
Member of Tsawout Nation



Aaron Sumexheltza
Practicing lawyer and (former) Councillor and
Chief of the Lower Nicola Indian Band



Deana Machin
(former) Strategic Development Manager
for the First Nations Fisheries Council of BC
Member of Syilx (Okanagan) Nation



Gordon Sterritt
Executive Director, Upper Fraser Fisheries
Conservation Alliance
Member of Gitksan Nation, Wilps Wii
Muuglilxw



Kris Archie
CEO, The Circle
Member of Ts'qescen First Nation



Lana Lowe
Director, Lands, Resources and Treaty Rights,
Fort Nelson First Nation



Lydia Hwitsum
Member of Cowichan Nation



Dr. Roger William
Team Coordinator, Dasiqox Nexwagwez'an
Member of Xeni Gwet'in (Tsilhqot'in) First
Nation

INSIGHTS ON UNDRIP FROM PROGRESS REPORTING



**HEALTHY
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HWI PROJECT UNDRIP IMPLEMENTATION

UNDRIP APPROACH

All project teams were asked to describe their approach to advancing UNDRIP in their Interim and Final Reports. These are some of the answers that were received.

Indigenous-Led Projects (by/for First Nation Members)

- For Indigenous-led projects, UNDRIP was advanced through Indigenous leadership, self-determination, and sovereignty
- Indigenous-led projects are designed to benefit members of the Nation and community

"We followed the mantra, "Nothing about us, without us," which applied to consultation and engagement [with the community] at every step."

Kwikwetlem First Nation, KFN Resource Stewardship Program

Projects Led by Traditional Knowledge

Approach to advancing UNDRIP through having traditional knowledge lead projects. For example:

- Traditional knowledge to select sampling sites;
- Approach to project (salmon restoration) taken under leadership and guidance of Nation elders (full partner on project)
- Site selected with direct input from elders and community members
- Incorporating Indigenous ceremony in project work

"The project was completely led, run and completed by Ahousaht First Nations, with some support from a local NGO. Using Ahousaht Indigenous Knowledge, the project focused on restoring traditional spawning grounds of chum and coho salmon which is vital to Ahousaht food security and culture on Anderson Creek. This site was selected with direct input from elders and community members wanting the closest stream to the community of Ahousaht to be restored in order to build better food security and provide a place for community members to traditional harvest fish close to the community."

Ahousaht Nation, Anderson Creek Restoration



TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING FOR YOUTH | *CONNECTION TO PEOPLE, CULTURE, AND LAND*

Traditional knowledge was shared through transformative learning for youth, building connections to people and the land. For example:

- Youth on the Land program and similar programs increase First Nations outreach (learning and celebrating Indigeneity) and create positive outcomes for Indigenous youth (connection to heritage and land and community).
- School based education (youth connections with elders, knowledge keepers, mentors and knowledge of local community goals)

Relationship Building and Engagement with First Nations

- Spectrum of engagement from initial connections and engagement, to information sharing partners, to collaboration partners, to full partners on all aspects of the project
- Some projects had substantial history, strong relationships, and governance procedures for collaboration with First Nations
- Other projects were just beginning engagement and relationship building
- Advancing UNDRIP through partnership requires knowledge of how to engage with First Nations – beyond relationship building to stronger engagement within appropriate processes
- Engagement took the form of:
 - Cultivate collaboration and networking
 - Coordinating field visits (outreach & connection, aligned efforts)
 - Operate inclusively, keep Indigenous partners updated and provide opportunities to input;
 - Acknowledge traditional territory, establish relationship/agreement with FN, and obtain approval through Cultural Heritage Policy review process
 - Attempts made to consult
 - First Nation input on project through review process
 - Shared data that was collected
 - Involvement in meetings
- Non-Indigenous organizations need to build relationships and trust with Indigenous organizations
- There were also associated challenges with engagement, including:
 - Timing challenges for First Nations to engage with projects (high demand for participation among Nations who are already shouldering enormous demands and requests)
 - Understanding what processes need to be in place and how relationships and collaboration can grow over time



UNDRIP SUCCESSES

All project teams were asked to share any highlights/successes/activities they were most proud of in their work in advancing UNDRIP. These are some of the answers that were received.

Self Determined Watershed Leadership from First Nations

- Self-determination on decisions around land and resources (design, implement, execute the work).
- Advancing UNDRIP in "meaningful, integral, reciprocal" ways
- First Nation leadership in water quality monitoring and research/ resource management

"What I feel our greatest accomplishment in advancing UNDRIP has been our ability to stand firmly within our rights to our traditional lands. Historically when Indigenous peoples/ organizations have had "partnerships" with non-Indigenous sectors more often than not Indigenous voices were not heard or taken seriously. This project has proven that it is possible to achieve the desired outcomes through self-determination."

Stqeeey' Learning Society Xwaaqw'um Village Watershed Restoration

Reconciliation

- Incorporating reconciliatory action into project work by recognizing Indigenous rights and leadership

"This work was the catalyst for renewed partnerships, including agreements with regional and municipal governments as well as opened the door for further reconciliation with the province."

Kwikwetlem First Nation, KFN Resource Stewardship Program

Indigenous and First Nations Employment and Procurement

- A key UNDRIP success from HWI projects was employing First Nations and Indigenous people
- As noted above under "approaches" this involved diverse forms of employment, from youth trainees, to community members to technical staff, to contractors and consultants.

"The project was able to provide employment for members of Ahousaht and completed the restoration work activities for the Anderson Creek project. Through this success we also built increased capacity and stewardship."

Ahousaht Nation Anderson Creek Restoration



Government/NGO Partnerships with First Nations

- Renewed government partnerships to support reconciliation
- Ongoing partnership and relationship building with First Nations

“The highlight of our season related to UNDRIP was a site visit to the Alixton wetland complex with members of the Esk’etemc First Nation’s Land Guardian Program. This was a positive experience for our field crew, and, we hope, also for the Esk’etemc Land Guardians.”

Ducks Unlimited Canada, 148 Mile Marshes Rebuild Project

Species & Watershed Restoration (and Cultural Heritage)

- Species and watershed restoration, and associated restoration or protection of cultural heritage
- For example:
 - Cultural heritage/ species restoration (salmon spawning); sharing that with community
 - Additional watershed restoration from HWI resources
 - Species return to the watershed

Adapted Approach Based on Guidance from HWI Team

- Some project teams built their UNDRIP approach through guidance from the HWI team and Indigenous Advisor
 - In particular, where projects were just beginning to grow relationships
 - For example, Support from HWI Indigenous advisor and team to locate Indigenous language resources.
- UNDRIP work that paralleled and complemented project activities

EDUCATION OF NON-INDIGENOUS PARTNERS

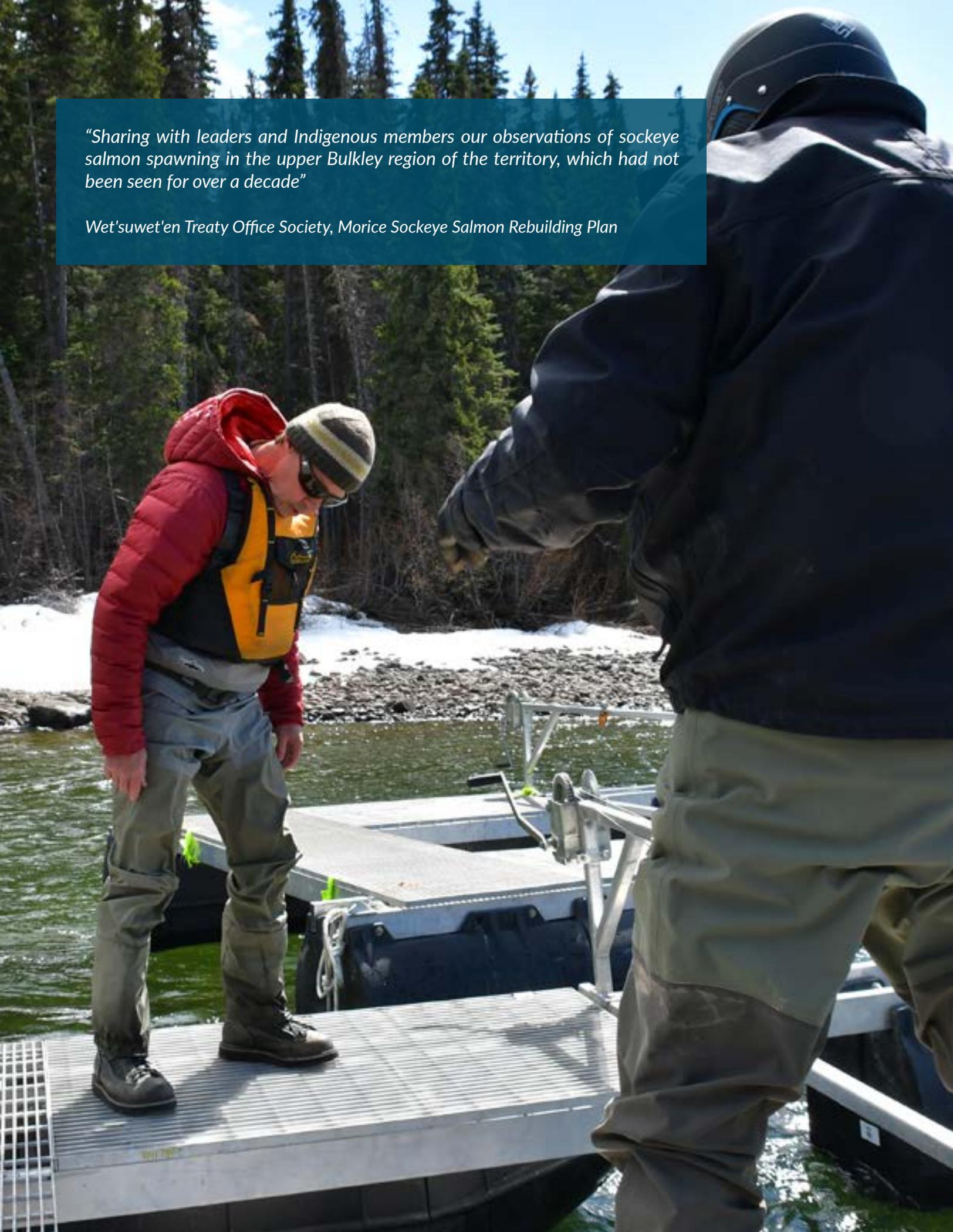
- Raising awareness and understanding of UNDRIP was a key success for some projects
- This can be very challenging work and perseverance is needed
- But there are also examples of smoother knowledge exchange and integration of Indigenous knowledge within project teams

“The understanding and knowledge that the KFN Guardians bring to any project helps to build projects that are more robust, more beneficial to the Nation and in line with their goals and creates a sense of mutual stewardship and community within the work of the project.”

Comox Valley Project Watershed Society, Glen Urquhart Creek Riparian, Stream Course and Wetland Habitat Restoration

"Sharing with leaders and Indigenous members our observations of sockeye salmon spawning in the upper Bulkley region of the territory, which had not been seen for over a decade"

Wet'suwet'en Treaty Office Society, Morice Sockeye Salmon Rebuilding Plan



UNDRIP CHALLENGES

All project teams were asked to share any major challenges they faced in their work advancing UNDRIP and how they addressed or adapted to them. These are some of the answers that were received.

Indigenous Partner and Collaborator Capacity and time for Engagement

- Being able to connect with Nations and members was a challenge (capacity and timing constraints).
- Necessarily slow pace of community consensus decisions; engagement takes time and effort (especially with members who are remote, elderly, or otherwise not easily accessible).
- Some projects noted that although they are dedicated to consulting with First Nations where work is happening, they note these relationships take longer than a grant cycle to develop.
- HWI provided important foundational support to continue to develop/strengthen relationships after the project.
- Project requests are overwhelming, and place undue burden on First Nations
- Need to balance engaging the Nation while recognizing capacity limits

Understanding of How to Implement UNDRIP/Engage Meaningfully with First Nations

- Understanding how to advance and implement UNDRIP requires time and evolution
- Capacity of project lead on how to engage meaningfully and authentically; build relationships
 - Knowing when and how to engage; seeking advice
 - See also token partnerships below
 - Recruiting personnel from Host Nations - posted jobs late in the season when most people already hired;
 - Navigating conflicts between Nations
 - Mitigation: intentional training and courses
 - Everyone is in a different place on their journey of reconciliation and learning

COVID Impacts on In Person Events and Planning

- COVID made in person events difficult
- COVID challenges to traditional ways to share project and results (eg in person)
- COVID created challenges to visiting communities in person

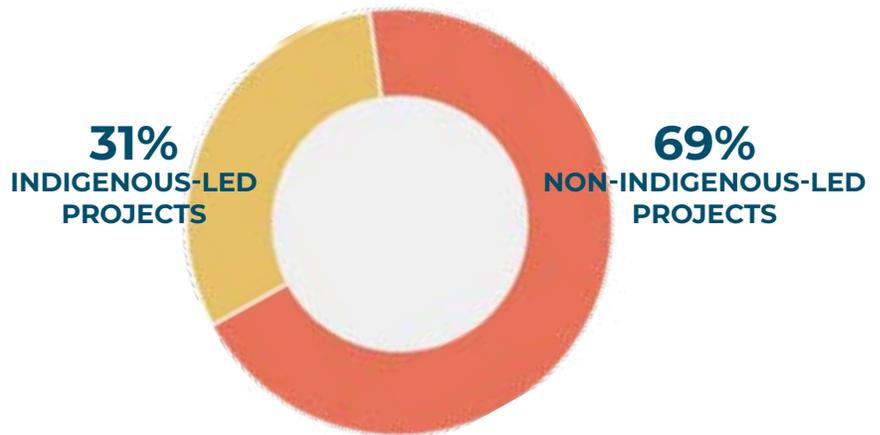
“Many organizations, individuals, businesses etc. are prioritizing working and consulting with First Nations more than ever. This is positive; however, in its current form it can lead to an overwhelming amount of requests which challenges First Nations’ capacity. In addition, CWSP adapted to this challenge by streamlining communication and working with other organizations to share messages resulting in fewer overall requests and more efficient communication.”

Living Lakes Canada, Mitigating the Hydrologic Vulnerability of the 26,000 ha Columbia Wetlands, Columbia Wetland Stewardship Partners

HWI FINAL REPORT | UNDRIP PROGRESS

The Healthy Watersheds Initiative funded 61 watershed projects to protect and restore critical freshwater ecosystems, help communities adapt to climate change, create jobs, protect our drinking water, and strengthen relationships with First Nations and Indigenous-led organizations.

44 projects were completed at the time this report was created with the remaining 17 projects to be completed by the fall and winter of 2022.



PARTNER STATUS: CURRENT

INDIGENOUS PARTNER ROLE THROUGH NON-INDIGENOUS LED PROJECTS:

Engagement: 11
Full Partner: 18
Information Sharing only: 10
Partial Partner: 23
Other: 24
Grand Total: 86

ACTIVITIES TO DATE - UNDRIP COMMITMENTS AT FINAL REPORT

- UNDRIP - Incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into project planning
- UNDRIP - Communications and Outreach to First Nation Leadership
- UNDRIP - Communication and Outreach to First Nation Membership
- UNDRIP - Project site(s) Indigenous Ceremony
- UNDRIP - Training for Indigenous Peoples
- UNDRIP - Other

**N/A OR
NOT PLANNED****DID NOT PROGRESS
AS PLANNED****PROGRESSED
AS PLANNED****TOTAL PROJECTS | 44**

UNDRIP - Incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into project planning	3	5	36
UNDRIP - Communications and Outreach to First Nation Leadership	4	3	37
UNDRIP - Communication and Outreach to First Nation Membership	3	4	37
UNDRIP - Project site(s) Indigenous Ceremony	14	15	15
UNDRIP - Training for Indigenous Peoples	9	5	30
UNDRIP - Other	25	5	14

NON-INDIGENOUS LED PROJECTS | 33

UNDRIP - Incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into project planning	3	3	26
UNDRIP - Communications and Outreach to First Nation Leadership	4	3	26
UNDRIP - Communication and Outreach to First Nation Membership	3	4	26
UNDRIP - Project site(s) Indigenous Ceremony	13	13	7
UNDRIP - Training for Indigenous Peoples	9	13	7
UNDRIP - Other	19	5	9

INDIGENOUS-LED PROJECTS | 11

UNDRIP - Incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into project planning	0	0	11
UNDRIP - Communications and Outreach to First Nation Leadership	0	0	11
UNDRIP - Communication and Outreach to First Nation Membership	0	0	11
UNDRIP - Project site(s) Indigenous Ceremony	1	2	8
UNDRIP - Training for Indigenous Peoples	0	0	11
UNDRIP - Other	6	0	5

WATERSHED SECURITY FUND & STRATEGY DISCUSSION PAPER FEEDBACK

Submitted by the Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle
of the Healthy Watersheds Initiative

MARCH 2022



**HEALTHY
WATERSHEDS**
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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle (“ILAC”) of the Healthy Watersheds Initiative and the Real Estate Foundation of BC, has been working collaboratively for one year to help guide and inform the work of the 61 projects in watershed restoration, planning, and monitoring. ILAC is a group of Indigenous leaders from across what is referred to as British Columbia who have worked on water issues or have connection through other forms of community and nation leadership.

As Advisors to one of the most significant investments in recent history in watersheds and watershed work, we have shared with the Healthy Watersheds Initiative (“HWI”) staff our collective experiences and knowledge and formed the following recommendations in response to the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund Discussion Paper.

Disclaimer: This submission represents a collective consensus of advisors from different distinct and sovereign First Nations, and does not constitute consultation with any of our respective nations.

WHO WE ARE¹

Mavis Underwood: Governor, Real Estate Foundation of BC, Board Liaison, Member of Tsawout First Nation, PhD Candidate (UVIC)

Aaron Sumexheltza, JD: Practicing lawyer and (former) Councillor and Chief of the Lower Nicola Indian Band Member of the Lower Nicola Indian Band

Deana Machin, MBA: Consultant, (former) Strategic Development Manager for the First Nations Fisheries Council of BC, Member of Syilx (Okanagan) Nation

Lana Lowe: Director, Lands, Resources and Treaty Rights, Fort Nelson First Nation, Member of Fort Nelson First Nation, PhD Candidate (UVIC)

Lydia Hwitsum, JD: First Nations Summit Political Executive, Chief of Cowichan Nation

Gordon Sterritt: Executive Director of Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance, Pacific Salmon Treaty representative, member of Gitksan Nation (Wilps Wii Muuglisxw)

Kris Archie: Chief Executive Officer of The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, member of Ts’qescen First Nation

Dr. Roger William: Team Coordinator, Dasiqox Nexwagwez’an, member and former Chief of Xeni Gwet’in (Tsilhqot’in) First Nation.

Supported by: Tara Marsden/Naxginkw, HWI Senior Indigenous Advisor, member of Gitanyow Huwilp, Wilp Sustainability Director

¹ For full bios see the HWI Website: <https://healthywatersheds.ca/about/advisory-circle/>

LEARNING FROM HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE | 2021-2022

Over the past year, our Circle has advised HWI staff on implementation of funding delivery for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous led projects in most of the major watersheds in the province. Staff sought our input, guidance and direction on topics including:

- Importance of water culturally and spiritually for Indigenous Peoples, and maintaining ecosystems that support Indigenous food security.
- Supporting watershed projects through recent and ongoing climate crises and tragic findings at residential schools across the province and Canada
- Integrating decolonization practices into Healthy Watersheds Initiative
- Funding approaches that empower Indigenous sovereignty and environmental reclamation
- Greater understanding around meaningful, mutually beneficial, and impactful partnerships between Indigenous organizations and non-Indigenous organizations and local governments
- Importance of long-term, stable, predictable funding for watershed work
- Connection between healthy watersheds and the exercise of Indigenous rights and title (Aboriginal title lands especially)
- How to foster intergenerational learning between youth and elders and fostering future water champions in Indigenous nations
- Balancing quantitative data with narratives and story-telling on project outcomes
- How to reduce administrative burdens and barriers in funding proposals and reporting
- Greater understanding of the connection between human (community) health and watershed health
- How to amplify Indigenous voices at all levels of HWI from project staff, project leads, to decision-making on grants and future funding priorities
- How to foster and encourage regional collaboration at the watershed and sub-watershed scale
- How to respond with appropriate urgency to climate crises and restoration priorities, while still moving at the pace of meaningful relationships and partnerships
- How to evaluate our success in advancing UNDRIP – at the project level and at the program level

One year following the establishment of the Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle, we have observed and supported the successful implementation of all Healthy Watersheds Initiatives projects, provided insights and direction in a timely manner that provides course corrections as staff learn while doing, and grown our own connections to one another as leaders in watershed work, stimulating Indigenous Elders and Youth to work together on restoration with respect for traditional knowledge and to connect grass-roots and community-based work to broader strategic level discussions on the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund and potential future funding under HWI.



FEEDBACK ON THE WATERSHED SECURITY STRATEGY AND FUND: DISCUSSION PAPER

Healthy Watersheds Initiative as a Learning Lab for Longer-Term Investments

To begin, it is encouraging to see the reference to the HWI and our Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle as a Case Story² in the Discussion Paper. The unprecedented commitment to watershed health that was announced in late 2020, early 2021, with multiple objectives around watershed restoration, job creation, and advancing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (“UNDRIP”), has been a significant learning lab for longer-term investments in watersheds across all Indigenous territories in the province.

In addition to providing advice, guidance and direction, our Circle has been a bridge to the Real Estate Foundation of BC’s Board of Governors through Governor and ILAC member Mavis Underwood. This has had added another layer of accountability and transparency for funding delivery and financial updates, progress on key objectives, achievement of key milestones, and other aspects of good governance. Indigenous leadership, in a variety of forms from the technical expertise in fisheries and watershed work, to elected leaders, to elders and decolonizing funding leaders, are all integral to the long-term funding of watershed security work. An Indigenous oversight body is essential to the success of the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund, providing eloquent Indigenous perspective and life experiences needed to guide discussions of sustainability and relationships with Indigenous People and territory.

Relationship to Water

For Indigenous peoples, water is not a commodity. It is sacred and is the essence of life on our planet. Our cultures and histories are shaped by water, our ancient village sites often located near rivers and lakes, and our diets based on fish, marine life, or wetland species such as moose, beaver and various medicinal plants. Rivers and lakes also formed a critical transportation network around the province used by Indigenous Nations for travel, governance, and economic development. While each nation has their own histories, laws, teachings, cultural protocols and spirituality around water, we have learned that there is more in common than not amongst our nations.

The reverence for water is not shared by the majority of settler society, and in addition to restoration and reclamation from past damages, Indigenous peoples also bear the brunt of public education to help raise awareness about the importance of different waterways in our territories. For example, public awareness is needed to bring attention to the sacredness of sites such as the Liard Hotsprings, which are damaged or disrespected by visitors who have little knowledge or regard for the spiritual significance of the site.

For many of our nations, the biggest court cases and direct-action events have been around protecting water from industrial development such as hydroelectric development, mines and tailings ponds or oil and gas pipelines. Time and time again, we see Indigenous people standing up to protect water in the face of industrial proponents from outside our territories, who have little accountability after their development project has concluded or it is sold to another corporation.

² BC Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy. *Watershed Security Strategy and Fund: Discussion Paper*. January 2022. Page 18.

We have also shared with HWI staff that water is a conduit for our well-being, kinship networks, and for community health. When our watersheds are healthy, it means we can access traditional foods and medicines, we are fulfilling our stewardship obligations, and we have access to clean drinking water that supports ecosystem function. When our watersheds face catastrophic events such as the recent flooding and wildfire cycles, Indigenous peoples have been displaced from their homes, affecting health and well-being.

As Indigenous peoples have been displaced from our territories through the process of colonization, our territories have suffered just as we have. An example is the cessation of prescribed burning that was a common practice among Indigenous peoples in BC prior to contact. Fire ecologists around the world are now recognizing that this practice helps reduce the severity of wildfires, and thus could help alleviate the subsequent flooding events in those same areas.

For the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund to be effective, it needs to support the reversal of Indigenous peoples' displacement from our territories. As we continue to reclaim rightful places in our territories, working in partnership with provincial, federal, and local governments, as well other partners, Indigenous-led work can achieve more durable and meaningful outcomes for the advancement of UNDRIP and the return of watersheds to their former natural states.

Water as Essential to the Exercise of Constitutional Rights

As Indigenous nations work to reclaim our territories through various forms of negotiation or litigation, the degradation of our waterways diminishes our ability to exercise our constitutionally protected and inherent rights to the land. The work of Healthy Watersheds Initiative has brought much needed resources to places requiring restoration to ensure that fishing, hunting, trapping, and gathering of berries, medicines and other plants can continue now and for future generations.

For the Tsilhqot'in specifically, the title lands recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada have sui generis status, and cannot be used for purposes that deprive future generations of practicing Indigenous/Aboriginal rights in a way their ancestors before them have. As other nations seek declarations of Aboriginal title in the courts, or through recognition agreements with the province and Canada, degraded watersheds limit the full exercise of our rights and title.

While our Circle has called for the increase of Indigenous-led projects through existing and future HWI funding, there is also a recognition that it is essential the broader community, organizations and businesses are held accountable for all impacts within a watershed and share the responsibility and labour of restoring and returning watersheds to a more natural state.

Respect and Recognition of Indigenous Laws

The Discussion Paper speaks at length to "integrating Indigenous knowledge in decision-making...alongside scientific knowledge."³ While this is an important and needed outcome for the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund, it is equally if not more important to recognize Indigenous laws and legal principles around water. Indigenous knowledge is embedded within cultures, worldviews, governance, and legal systems in our nations. Extracting Indigenous knowledge without recognizing relevant Indigenous laws and legal principles, for the purpose of justifying Crown colonial laws and decisions, is not the intention of UNDRIP.

In order to do this, more systemic change is needed, and this would go beyond the opportunities identified in the Discussion Paper regarding training in Indigenous knowledge, sharing examples, and others. The co-benefit to recognition of and respect for Indigenous laws is that when government does this in a robust and meaningful way, it greatly alleviates the "engagement fatigue" referenced under Outcome Three on Reconciliation.⁴ Supporting the documentation of Indigenous water laws, such as the HWI project lead by the Upper Fraser Fisheries Conservation Alliance (Yinka Dene Water Law: Implementing Tools for Fish Habitat Recovery), means that Indigenous peoples develop and express their laws related to water, and then government must ensure that any colonial regulation or legislative change is consistent with relevant Indigenous laws.

³ Ibid, page 16.

⁴ Ibid, page 12.

Breathing Life into UNDRIP

The Discussion Paper touches on UNDRIP, but does not go into detail on proper alignment of a potential Watershed Security Strategy and Fund with the Declaration. Through HWI, we have emphasized and tracked the advancement of UNDRIP with specificity to relevant Articles, evaluation of staff, gathering of data from projects, and providing training and capacity development tools for non-Indigenous project proponents. To truly advance UNDRIP, government needs to address and speak to the relevant Articles, and not gloss over the content of UNDRIP in favour of broader terms like 'reconciliation'.

Further, in addition to the provincial Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, it is equally important to recognize each individual First Nation's position on and expression of UNDRIP. While provincial legislation is a good step forward, it is a compromise between leadership, and not necessarily reflective of each nation in BC.

Tracking successful advancement of UNDRIP for the Watershed Security Strategy and Fund can learn from the practices of HWI, as outlined below, and which will be captured in an upcoming UNDRIP Evaluation Report for HWI.

"Tsilhqot'in Elders always said that all the fish and wildlife spoke the same language. We as Indigenous people have practiced, attended meetings, lobbied, provided direct action and legal action throughout this Turtle Island about our Indigenous Rights and Title. Fish and Wildlife, Lands and Water and all its rights, that needs to be recognized and part of UNDRIP. Indigenous peoples' worldwide traditional law, our Dechen Ts'edilhtan (Traditional Law) believes, practices, and lives that law. All Water has Indigenous Rights."

Dr. Roger William
Dasiqox Nexwagwez'an
Team Coordinator - Community Outreach



ARTICLES OF UNDRIP THAT ARE SPECIFIC TO HWI INCLUDE:

UNDRIP ARTICLE	RELEVANCE TO HWI
18 - Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.	Decisions regarding funding for watershed projects, decisions regarding access to territories by non-Indigenous projects, decisions regarding future funding and watershed strategies.
20-2 – Indigenous peoples deprived of their means of subsistence and development are entitled to just and fair redress.	Redress can include environmental/ecological restoration, returning watersheds to more natural pre-contact state.
23-Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.	Many HWI projects speak of the connection between human and environmental health. Also, as a job creation initiative, HWI is also a social and economic program.
24-1– Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals. Indigenous individuals also have the right to access, without any discrimination, to all social and health services.	With a large proportion of HWI projects focussed on wetland health specifically, traditional medicines are often found in close proximity to wetlands and riparian areas. Restoration needs to ensure appropriate access to traditional medicines.
25- Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.	Participating in non-Indigenous led projects does not cede rights to the areas in question. Non-Indigenous projects encouraged to respect and include cultural and spiritual protocols and ceremonies into HWI projects.
26-Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.	Supporting Indigenous-led projects means greater support for occupation, stewardship, and restoration of Indigenous lands and waters. Future funding should have new targets for % of Indigenous-led projects.
28-Indigenous peoples have the right to redress, by means that can include restitution or, when that is not possible, just, fair and equitable compensation, for the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent.	Redress for degradation of watersheds can include ecological/environmental redress, returning the land and water to their original state.
29 -1 –Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.	HWI can be considered a conservation program, and Indigenous peoples and their projects are welcomed and considered without discrimination. Moving decision-making power for project approval outside of government will further entrench this.

<p>36 – Indigenous peoples, in particular those divided by international borders, have the right to maintain and develop contacts, relations, and cooperation, including activities for spiritual, cultural, political, economic and social purposes, with their own members as well as other peoples across borders.</p>	<p>Water does not recognize or conform to colonial borders, thus there are many downstream effects and interests related to several HWI projects. Staff have encouraged project proponents to engage those Indigenous peoples regardless of provincial/federal borders.</p>
<p>39 – Indigenous peoples have the right to have access to financial and technical assistance from States and through international cooperation, for the enjoyment of the rights contained in this Declaration.</p>	<p>As a funding opportunity that has been characterized as ‘once in a generation’ in terms of scope and scale, it is imperative that Indigenous peoples have had access to as much as possible to support their watershed priorities. With 1/3 of HWI projects being Indigenous-led, it is a good start but targets to increase this % are needed for future funding.</p>

Watershed-Based Collaboration

Our Circle has discussed at length best practices to encourage and prioritize collaboration and partnership at a watershed or sub-watershed level. There are many reasons why this makes sense, these include recognition of natural features over colonial jurisdictional administrative boundaries, maximizing positive impacts with funding efficiency, and building enduring relationships for future work. We have reflected on the fact that other funding programs have offered more funding where more than one organization is an applicant. While this encourages and incentivizes partnerships, it does not always result in more partnerships as an outcome.

Our Circle instead proposes that regional collaboration on watershed work be encouraged by a neutral party (such as HWI staff) to convene multiple groups in a watershed or sub-watershed prior to proposal calls to help inform one another of different project ideas and provide a safe space for dialogue and exploration of partnership opportunities. Either way, there is a strong recognition from our Circle that thinking and acting like a watershed is integral to funding, governance, and shared and joint decision-making. This is further amplified by the reliance of local governments on water, without having any constitutional obligations to Indigenous peoples that would necessitate relationship-building.

Focus on Immediate Action for Most Impactful Industries

The Discussion Paper explores various soft commitments to ‘assess’ or ‘identify’ opportunities, but does not speak to urgent action on preventing damage to watersheds from those industries which have the most significant impacts – including forestry, hydroelectric development, natural gas extraction (LNG), oil and gas, mining and agriculture. There are many sources to draw on for recommended action to address these industries’ impacts on watersheds, including the recent BC Forest Practices Board Report on Forest Practices and Water: Opportunities for Action. Another source for prompting immediate action is the Blueberry River First Nation (Yahey) BC Supreme Court Decision, which includes clear recommendations for systemic change on decision-making, cumulative effects and infringements to Indigenous rights.



Natural Solutions to Watershed Restoration

Our Circle has discussed the need for more natural solutions to restoration of watersheds. The recent example of water reclaiming salmon habitat in the area of the former Sumas Lake, during the 2021 flooding of "Sumas Prairie", has provided a clear indication of the power of water to return to its original state. As climate change causes more extreme weather events, it is imperative that restoration returns watersheds to the most natural state possible. Project proponents need to understand the history of the watershed, including history of Indigenous occupation and use, changes since contact, and current state.

One of the key activities in a majority of HWI projects is around the removal of invasive species, planting of native species, and replanting of disturbed riparian areas. This is a small step forward on a large scale across multiple watersheds and territories, and should continue to guide the work of implementing natural solutions to industrial and residential impacts to watersheds.

Watershed Fund Before Strategy

In keeping with the First Nations Leadership Council recent recommendations⁵, we agree that establishing the Watershed Security Fund needs to be the first step in the overall Watershed Security Strategy. As outlined in their letter to Minister Heyman, "a strategy with no associated funding runs the risk of hollow and/or underachieving commitments that fail to ensure our watersheds are healthy for our future generations."

Further, HWI is evidence that sometimes being motivated by crisis (economic recovery from the pandemic) can prompt meaningful and lasting change, and that while strategy and governance need to inform the fund, we cannot delay until lengthy discussions, negotiations and needed legal reforms are in place before we continue to fund meaningful work to restore and protect sacred watersheds.

Photo Credit

Cover: Scenic shot at one of the B.C. Wildlife Federation Wetlands Workforce project's wetland site near Kimberley BC. (Photo: Cheyenne Bergenhenegouwen, HWI)

Page 2: Goldstream-wxgkpiimxoa. (Photo: Cory Schadt)

Page 4: Drone imagery of a wetland site assessed through the Wetland Ecosystem Services Protocol. (Photo: Kyla Rushton, BCWF)

Page 6: Field Crew Supervisor with the Wetlands Workforce and Northern Lights College Student identify a plant species during WESP training in Northern BC. (Photo: Cheyenne Bergenhenegouwen, HWI)

Page 8: Valemount Scenery (Stock Imagery)

⁵ First Nations Leadership Council Letter to Honourable George Heyman, date Nov. 30, 2021.

INDIGENOUS LEADERS ADVISORY CIRCLE MEETING SUMMARY

WHAT WE HAVE HEARD SO FAR, WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED



**HEALTHY
WATERSHEDS**
INITIATIVE



HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE | INDIGENOUS LEADERS ADVISORY CIRCLE

The Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle is an experienced group of Indigenous leaders who share advice and wisdom on respectful engagement, relationship building, and storytelling. The Advisory Circle is chaired by Mavis Underwood, who serves on REFBC's Board of Governors.



Mavis Underwood, Chair
Governor, Real Estate Foundation
of BC
Member of Tsawout Nation



Kris Archie
CEO, The Circle
Member of Ts'qescen First Nation



Aaron Sumexheltza
Practicing lawyer and (former)
Councillor and Chief of the Lower
Nicola Indian Band



Lana Lowe
Director, Lands, Resources and
Treaty Rights, Fort Nelson First
Nation



Deana Machin
(former) Strategic Development
Manager
for the First Nations Fisheries
Council of BC
Member of Syilx (Okanagan)
Nation



Lydia Hwitsum
Member of Cowichan Nation



Gordon Sterritt
Executive Director, Upper Fraser
Fisheries Conservation Alliance
Member of Gitksan Nation, Wilps
Wii Muuglilxsw



Dr. Roger William
Team Coordinator, Dasiqox
Nexwagwez'an
Member of Xenigwet'in
(Tsilhqot'in) First Nation



THE INDIGENOUS LEADERS ADVISORY CIRCLE MEETINGS

WHAT WE HAVE HEARD SO FAR, WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

SECTION 1 - APRIL 2021 MEETING |

Themes and Highlights from Introductory Statements

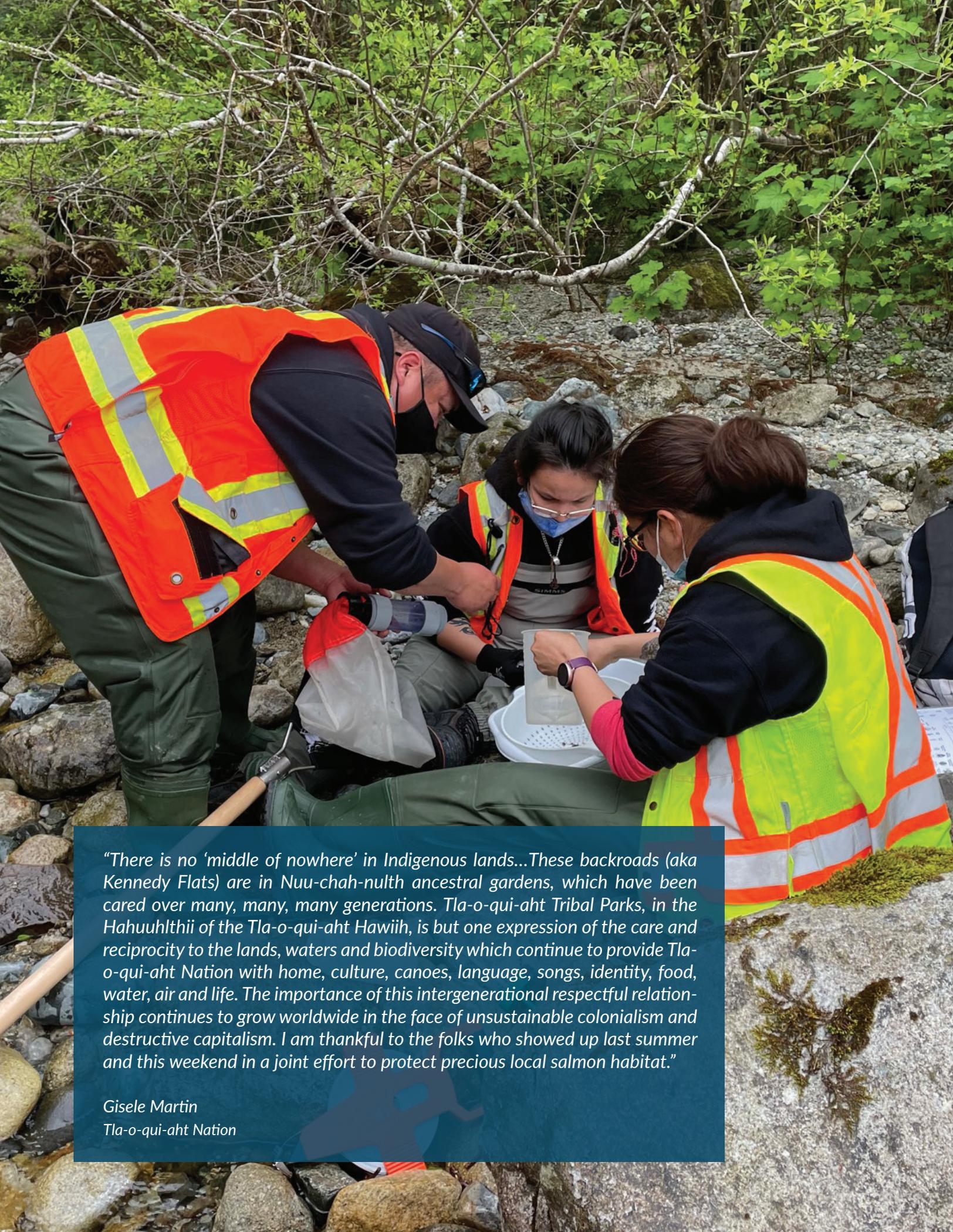
- “Water is a conduit for well-being”
- “We are building a network of wisdom across BC on water”
- “We should be bold in looking for opportunities, engaging civil society in our work”
- “There are broad regional economic spin-offs when Indigenous people are employed, they tend to spend their wages in their own region more than others. How can this be captured?”
- “How can we amplify unheard voices?”
- “Water is essential to our title lands, integral to our title to our territories”
- “COVID19 has taught us that we can do things differently, with less harm to the environment. How to continue this after the pandemic is over?”

General Goals and Priorities that Emerged

- Long-term focus: this work and the people involved/committed will continue advocating for better water governance after HWI ends
- Relationship-building: connecting with other water leaders/communities taking action to stewardship & governance into their own hands; supports long-term focus;
- Enduring watershed security fund
- Evaluation and learning: capturing data related to how indigenous communities and people contribute to the economy as a whole; FN principles of responsibility, respect; continuity of rights, responsibility, knowledge; demonstrating what relationships mean; telling the story that they want to share

Evaluation and Learning is Critical

- Collecting data and telling stories about how indigenous communities and people contribute to the economy as a whole (not just from a silo-ed Band perspective)
 - Ex. capturing data around indigenous projects that hire seasonal workers in the towns nearby
- Connecting with other organizations to get broader perspectives on the ripple effects of investing in watershed work – employment centres in urban communities, political advocacy organizations, programs like Fisheries Renewal BC and Forestry Renewal BC
- Factoring human rights into the triple bottom line (people, planet, profit)
- Funders need to be mindful of administrative burden when asking project proponents to provide data/stories
 - Requests should be made in a way that is supportive and efficient (only ask the questions that are needed and/or support their ability to advocate)
- Use mixed forms of data collection where possible (ex. certain qualitative information is collected via group meetings vs surveys/questionnaires)
- Peer-to-peer or project-to-project learning would be good, by possibly dividing all projects into groups and then HWI staff facilitate discussion and shared learning dialogue
- Youth-centred engagement is missing – ensure some messaging and data collection is targeting youth and is forward-looking
- What is the story the community wants to tell? What are the words they use to describe their work/project
- How do we want to define ‘indigenous-led’
 - Kris provided this resource on her organization’s method



“There is no ‘middle of nowhere’ in Indigenous lands...These backroads (aka Kennedy Flats) are in Nuuchahnulth ancestral gardens, which have been cared over many, many, many generations. Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks, in the Hahuułthii of the Tla-o-qui-aht Hawiıh, is but one expression of the care and reciprocity to the lands, waters and biodiversity which continue to provide Tla-o-qui-aht Nation with home, culture, canoes, language, songs, identity, food, water, air and life. The importance of this intergenerational respectful relationship continues to grow worldwide in the face of unsustainable colonialism and destructive capitalism. I am thankful to the folks who showed up last summer and this weekend in a joint effort to protect precious local salmon habitat.”

Gisele Martin
Tla-o-qui-aht Nation

SECTION 2 - JULY 2021 MEETING |

The Biggest Takeaways from the Meeting

- An appreciation for the variety, depth, and breadth of experience among the group, and
- The opportunity to influence the future of watershed security
- “We need to think of water as an extension of our health system” – Dr. Waters
- Currently, Nations are having to perform their own studies and assessments when industry wants access to their land; often, they have to ask the province for capacity to do this work
- Balancing Indigenous knowledge and teachings with Western science is critical to watershed protection and food security as they are connected
- Need the salmon creation stories and the metaphors embedded within them about sustainability, respect and responsibility important again; we need to sustain that history from creation as part of UNDRIP
- One challenge in doing this is lack of provincial resources into monitoring watersheds – that work is now being done by local communities but the question still remains as to who this type of work. It would be an interest model to have industry-funding supporting this external entity
- External entity could be similar to peer-reviewed science
- We need to move from a silo-ed approach to water (ex. forestry, oceans, fish, and health as unconnected separate institutions) and work collaboratively to sustain and protect water. This includes blending traditional and western knowledge into how this work is done and advanced.
- How can we continue to build on the momentum from the Blueberry River BCSC decision, which recognized that BC has been remiss in protecting their treaty rights/acknowledging cumulative effects, and actively encouraging development?
- Need to continue to make statements around cumulative effects and the potential of the precautionary principle
- WSF & its mandate needs to ensure equality and equity across BC
- Blueberry River decision is an opportunity to discuss the cumulative effects and start doing the planning that’s needed, especially in Nations where economic opportunities and planning are often centered around resource-extraction industries
- A regional approach could assist with this
- Need to consider the larger questions around who’s making decisions, who’s priorities are being considered, what should be prioritized, what criteria and information is being used to make decisions – jobs are important but so is revitalizing salmon and other fish, lands, foods, medicines, etc. How do we balance all of these needs?
- Participating in healing the waters does not mean ceding rights and title – those are enduring and we need to be hammering industry and colonial governments about what they’re doing to ensure continuity of rights, mitigation of infringement, and revitalization of the environment
- Educating our youth, as early as elementary, about our watersheds – about prevention, revitalization and the idea of partnerships; potential to be the most exciting reconciliation ever witnessed – the coming together over basic water rights
- Indigenous peoples need to be part of the designing and the decision-making process
- Creating a system that melds with the fishery objectives and recovery objectives that First Nations have – building and restoring clean water and healthy habitat for fish

Advancing UNDRIP

- Support First Nations to achieve recognition and respect for Indigenous laws
- Pave the pathway for more decision-making over waters, watersheds, and lands that are under multiple pressures from various interest groups
- Recognition that not all watersheds are the same – more regional governance, planning and decision making is needed
- Ex. Okanagan – urbanization has made Indigenous lands the refuge for species at risk, thereby placing a higher ‘burden’ on First Nations to conserve those species.
- The need for resources to support and develop land-based databases for First Nations based on our own research and knowledge
- Countering the privilege exercised by agricultural development
- Centering ‘recognition’ language and bringing it into the discourse in such a way that demonstrates that it is fundamental
- Remove barriers on funding

- Highlight innovation of Indigenous-led projects and showcase Indigenous leadership (from HWI to the Watershed Security Fund)
- Have young people and elders engaged to talk about watersheds
- Balance quantitative and qualitative information and data from projects on UNDRIP
- Dig deeper on partnerships to get a picture of how meaningful they are, verify reporting with Indigenous partners
- Find out more about challenges in establishing partnerships or engagement
- Kris Archie: GrantCraft and International Funders for Indigenous Peoples for UNDRIP Evaluation Framework
- Keep strong focus on communications, visual storytelling
- Linking revenues from land base, with restoration needs and priorities

SECTION 3 - OCTOBER 2021 MEETING |

The Biggest Takeaways from the Meeting

- Decolonization is important for the history to carry forward and to revive cultural practices.
- To tackle these systems, we need to approach all the pieces including those running parallel to it; create the traction from mind to heart, and meeting where they are at it using a variety of means.
- In the context of decolonizing, we need to incorporate our languages. Elders say it's the best way to express who we are and to make that space for our ways of being.
- In practice, there are often 2 ways needed to say the same thing. Envisioning a piece of paper, one side has the way colonial government needs to hear it; the other has the Indigenous way - words of recognition of existing inherent rights and how we envision it.
- Breaking down the processes and systems and overcoming the hurdles that exist within them (ex. a Minister having "unfettered discretion" to do XYZ) is how we dispel the colonial processes.
- Indigenous people have been left out of watershed work for so long. For the benefits of the people - equity, health, well-being, and the future of children - we need to be brought in.
- Appreciation for the approach of bringing youth in - they need to feel a place and sense of value as they learn, grown and become independent people. There needs to be a reclamation of education because youth are so critical to saving our culture and well-being.
- Slow down, pay attention to the environment and look out for our responsibility areas - from our youngest to our oldest.
- The land doesn't belong to us, we belong to the land, and we have that responsibility to the land as our relative. Keeping that in mind shifts how we think about roles and responsibilities.
- We need to make space for young energy to come forward; allow them to be raised in the cultural way so they know how to be involved in the discussions (like digging of remains, protection of remains), and how to protect themselves & their families.
- Recognition of Indigenous Peoples' place in different areas and how we can move forward (think, dispossession of land, Stqeeeye' Learning Society example);
- Recognition of language; and
- Recognition of disruption to the land (Kus Kus Sum example).
- The idea of changing something back to what it was is so important to us. Reconciliation in some places and spaces has been 'that's the way it is and will be'. But bringing back the space for wildlife restores the stories and mythology that we have and it helps to ground people. That's what we see - it's not about taking power/control and putting in cement/rebar/taller buildings. It's about making important plans for how we use space and make sure that we're conscious of what has been there naturally. That's very critical - we look at those places for food and medicine plants. This work is reinforcing that Indigenous Peoples' knowledge is important; the ones who know the history of the place - plant and medicine knowledge. They have a place, a significance.
- The idea of job creation for our women and men is exciting.
- The openness of HWI has created a lot of opportunity, even within federal departments, for additional fund and work, and with changing some of the language.
- We need to keep this work going and continue supporting the nations' leading.
- Re timelines - always need to keep a sense of urgency but also need to manage expectations. As we recognize the spectrum of this work, there are a lot of valuable pieces around DRIPA, sustainability, etc.

- Should the composition of ILAC, or its role and purpose be adapted or expanded if it extends beyond June 2022?
- Lydia: How we continue to support isn't just an advisory piece, but as infrastructure as an indigenous voice around water planning, prioritizing DRIPA, etc. Need to keep track of how we pull all these threads together.
- Taking inspiration from the Stqeeeye' Learning Society youth quote, a potential outcome could include scholarship or curriculum materials for indigenous youth. Consider engaging FNEC on this.
- Ideas of climate action as we deal with the devastation – things have been out of our control but now we're looking at being ready. It's part of the teachings to be ready, be knowledgeable, and do our best so our heart and mind is open. There's a strong platform here.



“The understanding and knowledge that the K'omoks First Nation Guardians bring to any project helps to build projects that are more robust, more beneficial to the Nation and in line with their goals and creates a sense of mutual stewardship and community within the work of the project. It's very important to Project Watershed to undertake projects that support the work and goals of the traditional stewards of our lands, the KFN, and so working together to further projects has been so important to incorporating reconciliatory action into our work. With each collaboration effort, we can be more attuned to how to support an effective working relationship, to the needs of our partner and host Nations, and the effective steps to take to empower and recognize them as traditional stewards, knowledge holders, and leaders within our communities.”

Project Watershed

PRINCIPLES & CRITERIA HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE FUTURE FUNDING

JUNE 2022



**HEALTHY
WATERSHEDS
INITIATIVE**



The [Healthy Watersheds Initiative \("HWI"\)](#) began as a \$27 million one-year funding envelope under [Stronger BC](#) as a part of the COVID19 pandemic response and economic recovery strategy. This unprecedented global emergency meant rapid responses to economic recovery which did not allow much-needed time for developing consensus-based criteria and principles to inform funding decisions in partnership with Indigenous peoples and organizations.

HWI OUTCOMES

To deliver the funding the Province formed an agreement with the Real Estate Foundation of BC ("REFBC") to administer HWI with support from Watersheds BC. The following outcomes were included in the original shared costs arrangement between the Province of BC and the Real Estate Foundation of BC.

- Economic stimulus through direct and indirect job creation in COVID-19 affected demographics and affected communities.
- Improved workforce skills with the potential for longer-term employment.
- Restore and maintain ecosystem services (e.g., healthy wetlands as natural flood control).
- Restore and maintain watershed health with linkages to government's climate mitigation and adaptation objectives.
- Support local organizations in meeting their mandates and support provincial government objectives.
- Support for reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and advance implementation of UNDRIP principles.

With one year of implementation now complete, informed by direction from the Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle, and feedback from Indigenous and non-Indigenous led projects, as well as other outreach and engagement with key partners in watershed health, we now have a better idea of the types of Criteria and Principles that can guide future funding opportunities.

The following are draft Criteria and Principles that can help inform the following:

- A potential shared cost arrangement between the provincial government and a Funder.
- Call for Expressions of Interest for Funding.
- Proposal/application intake review and approval/rejection guidelines for staff and decision-makers.
- Future funding programs in support of healthy watersheds and watershed security.

PRINCIPLES

What are we fundamentally trying to do? What is our intent? What are culturally relevant principles we have heard from Indigenous Advisors and communities that can help advance UNDRIP and our collective work to support healthy watersheds?

1. Water is essential to Aboriginal title lands, integral to Indigenous territories, and a conduit for health and well-being for Indigenous communities.
2. Watershed work should have a long-term focus, with the ability for some immediate action. Multi-year, Indigenous-led projects (with appropriate partners where needed) are encouraged and supported.
3. Watershed work should encourage and empower relationship building and water stewardship champions that endure beyond the 1-2 year funding envelopes. Relationships between Indigenous people and organizations, NGOs, local government, industry, and local communities are all essential to healthy watersheds now and in the future.
4. Proposal and intake, as well as interim and final reporting processes, should avoid undue administrative burden on Indigenous and smaller organizations, and focus on meaningful outcomes for watershed health. Options for reporting should be opened to include various media formats (e.g. video, presentations/webinars, one-on-one interviews).
5. Granting needs to strive for regional equity across what is referred to as British Columbia, recognizing that some regions suffer capacity deficits in terms of water-related funding, and/or may also be at greater risk in terms of climate and impacts and need for restoration stemming from cumulative industrial development.
6. Indigenous people need to be empowered at all levels, including but not limited to: project staff, project leads, partnerships with non-Indigenous project leads, input on project design, the Funder's staff, decision-making on grant approvals. Efforts to achieve this shall be transparent, while also recognizing that prioritizing Indigenous applicants does not always guarantee outcomes.



7. Projects should embrace and advance inter-generational learning between youth and elders, with a focus on mentorship and long-term stewardship of watersheds.
8. Continuing to support the advancement of UNDRIP and continue to evaluate its progress openly and transparently with its government and Indigenous partners.
9. Decolonizing practices play a pivotal role in capacity and training for projects and staff teams. Training and dialogue should be offered for both projects and Funder staff, and incorporated into budgets and programming.
10. Projects will support and embrace healing of watersheds (restoration), in an effort to return watersheds to their natural ecological state and function, which in turn supports reconciliation and environmental redress.
11. Working at a watershed and drainage basis scale better reflects the natural functioning of ecosystems (from headwaters to tidewaters) compared to more arbitrary jurisdictional boundaries; efforts to share information, collaborate and work on complementary projects and proposals within watersheds should be supported and encouraged.
12. Timelines should recognize the urgency of climate emergencies and crisis to encourage shovel-ready projects but should allow space for projects that move at the pace of relationship-building. Balancing these two objectives should be supported by staff.
13. A range of grant sizes should be considered, to meet organizations and communities where they are at in terms of capacity. Smaller grants should have minimal proposal and reporting requirements.
14. Further evaluation and learning should include:
 - a.) assessing potential additional economic spin-offs when funds are invested in Indigenous communities, in terms of job creation, procurement, and induced economic activity.
 - b.) data gathering on restoration needs/priorities categorized by industry sector impacts, including but not limited to: forestry, mining, agriculture, urbanization, recreation and tourism, hydro-electric development, water use for municipal and other users. The Funder should help inform greater understandings of costs of restoration by type of impact, and help to inform other provincial initiatives on forestry and mining reform, modernized land use planning, and others.



CRITERIA

What conditions need to be met to achieve the principle? What do we want to encourage in successful future projects?

1. Projects should balance and integrate Indigenous knowledge and laws with western science and provincial laws and policy on water.
2. Where projects are led by non-Indigenous organizations, evidence of research of Indigenous history and culture in the watershed and efforts to engage and seek partnership should be included in proposals.
3. Priority areas for future funding include climate change adaptation, mitigation and monitoring; flood and fire recovery and resilience; habitat restoration; continued focus on wetland health and collaborative data-gathering and restoration; and watershed planning.
4. Staff should be encouraged to play a role in supporting regional collaboration, prior to proposals being submitted. Where a neutral party may be able to convene multiple Indigenous nations or other organizations around potential partnerships on projects, staff may provide a safe and neutral space to help support, but not impose, new partnerships where possible.
5. Projects are encouraged to take a long-term approach to watershed restoration and health. Demonstration of understanding of where the project fits in the broader long-term context of watershed health is essential for successful projects. Multi-year grants will be considered where needed to complete outcomes.
6. Successful projects will include mentorship and inter-generational learning to foster future generations of water champions and stewards.
7. For non-Indigenous led projects, resources in project budgets for Indigenous engagement can and should be adaptable to the host or affected nations' needs and priorities. For example, where hiring Indigenous people for the project is challenging due to competing labour demands, projects may consider tendering contracts to the nations' Guardians, fisheries, or other environmental technician programs.



REFERENCE MATERIALS

Meeting Summaries, Healthy Watersheds Initiative Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle. Dates: April 12, 2021; July 6, 2021; Oct. 19, 2021; January 25, 2022.

BC Watershed Security Fund: A Collaborative Vision. Strategic Directions from the Sustainable Funding Working Group. December 2021.

Meeting Notes, First Nations Fisheries Council Water Roundtable, June 9, 2021 (HWI Update Presentation, Q&A).

Meeting Summary, Water Leaders Forum (POLIS), June and October 2021 (HWI Update Presentations, Q&A).

Extension Survey Results, Healthy Watersheds Initiative survey of 49/61 Projects on Future Funding Priorities and Project Extensions. Oct. 26, 2021.

Meeting Summary, BC Wildlife Federation, Year-End Gathering, Nov. 4, 2021.

Our Water, Our Future: Interim Report on Job Creation, Watershed Restoration, Reconciliation, and Climate Action, Healthy Watersheds Initiative, August 30, 2021.

PHOTO CREDIT

Cover: Training program in Clayoquot Sound. (Photo: Graeme Owsianski)

Page 2: Central West Coast monitoring in Clayoquot Sound. (Photo: Lora Tryon)

Page 3 LtoR:

- Northern Lights Student and project manager for the BCWF's Wetlands Workforce identify a type of Willow. (Photo: Cheyenne Berghenhenegouwen, HWI)
- Ahousaht Nation crew doing work at Anderson Creek. (Photo: Ahousaht Nation)
- Young Biologist at Clayoquot Sound. (Photo: Lora Tryon)

Page 4: Nature Trust of BC crew during WESP training. (Photo: Jordan Neal, Nature Trust of BC)

Disclaimer Note: This is a working draft, reflective of input from the Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle, but has not yet been reviewed and endorsed by the Circle. Endorsement is pending and any changes made will be shared immediately with affected parties.



**HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE
STAFF PROGRAM SELF-EVALUATIONS**



**HEALTHY
WATERSHEDS
INITIATIVE**



HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE STAFF PROGRAM SELF EVALUATIONS

Summary of UNDRIP questionnaire responses from HWI team and leadership (collected in December 2021).

In the fall of 2021, the Healthy Watersheds Initiative Senior Indigenous Advisor drew from the A Funder's Toolkit: Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and adapted a series of questions in the Organizational Assessment section to develop a questionnaire for HWI staff to complete. The results were then summarized and analyzed for themes, action and tension points. Similar to a self-evaluation that employers might use for employees as a part of a performance evaluation, this was intended to look at areas of strength, and areas that could benefit from further work, attention, and resources.

The questionnaires were completed by all HWI staff, and many of the responses from the Real Estate Foundation of BC staff included discussion on their organization as a whole, as well as HWI specifically. The Senior Indigenous Advisor hosted a series of Coffee Break sessions on Zoom so that people could ask questions, get clarification, and share ideas on how HWI was doing in relation to UNDRIP advancement generally. Staff were also offered one-on-one interviews or written response options, as well as providing their responses anonymously on sensitive matters. In the following summary, no attributions are included to respect those who wished to respond in that manner.

The Senior Indigenous Advisor brings lived experience as an Indigenous Gitksan community member, as well as 20 years working in the space between funders and Indigenous communities. Her approach and analysis are informed by this experience, and supported by Anne Bergen of Knowledge to Action Consulting who also supports HWI in final reporting coding and analysis, and has worked with the Real Estate Foundation for several years on various projects. The intent was to provide a safe space for honest self-reflection, and identification of ideas for program modification to improve UNDRIP advancement. This summary was then shared with the Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle for feedback and verification. General grants program staff at the Real Estate Foundation also received this document and participated in a webinar on the results, to help inform their on-going work in working with Indigenous communities and developing an Indigenous Grants Stream.

HWI and REFBC encourage other funders to employ a similar self or independent assessment of their organization and intake process in their capacity to uphold UNDRIP principles. Sharing results publicly can cause concern for some, but honesty and transparency are key principles shared by the Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle as well as REFBC core principles.

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT

1. Does your organization keep information on the Indigenous identity of its grantees? If not, does it have the capacity to begin keeping this information?

Summary Response: Yes.

HWI tracks which projects are Indigenous-led and which partners (organization/government) are Indigenous-led Self-identified by proponents with some follow-up by HWI team

Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: Indigenous identity is not defined, relies on self-identification which has shown to have challenges.
Tension Point: Do not track Indigenous identity of project staff and leads, only the organization.



1b. How is this information collected and collated?

Summary Response:

Collected at HWI project start (intake/project docs, email, phone calls). Stored in Salesforce database, funding agreement, data dashboards. Shared publicly via website lists, reports.

2. Can your organization identify any past or current programs or strategies implemented with the goal of increasing Indigenous Peoples' access to your funding?

Summary Response:

HWI is a temporary funding program so previous funding is not relevant. REFBC history of efforts to increase Indigenous access to funds, current pilot for Indigenous Grants Stream. REFBC Decolonizing granting initiatives.

Intake process for HWI, 25% of unfunded projects were Indigenous-led. Most were not approved by BC for various reasons.

Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: Process of inviting proposals and alerting First Nations/Indigenous communities to this funding opportunity – unclear who was reached (equity consideration)

Action Point: Drafting Principles & Criteria for future funding with ILAC input.

Action Point: Cross learning with REFBC Indigenous Grants Stream & HWI.

3. Are there any policy or planning documents in your organization that address Indigenous Peoples?

Summary Response:

Currently no completed policy documents for HWI that address Indigenous Peoples. As a temporary and new program, HWI is developing new approaches daily, and documenting key learnings as we go.

What exists now:

UNDRIP Framework in progress (ready in 2022)

ILAC meeting summaries

Questions on Indigenous partnerships, engagement, ceremony in interim and final reporting

REFBC Territorial Acknowledgement Policy

REFBC Strategic Plan (Indigenous focus items)

REFBC Signatory to Community Declaration (Circle on Aboriginal People & Philanthropy)

Prioritization of Indigenous applicants in job postings, contractors and vendors, grant top-ups for Indigenous organizations (not written in policy)

Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: Time pressure to get HWI up and running: Hardly any time for development of policy or planning documents

Tension Point: A policy on FPIC may help guide projects that do not have partnerships/consent with Indigenous nations. Would also limit the # of potential projects, balance between need for restoration and need for meaningful partnerships. Overlapping territories may be a key challenge.

3b. Are they achieving what they intended? Do they include Indigenous Peoples' rights and do they mention the Declaration?

Summary Response:

"Yes, but I would say that we could do more."

"UNDRIP framework will be a needed deep-dive into how HWI is supporting Indigenous Rights/Title"

"More explicit commitments to UNDRIP, decolonization are needed"

"steps we have been taking are beginning to achieve some of what is intended, but its early days"

"All the projects in one way or another are strengthening the exercise of Aboriginal rights as they work to heal the land and/or monitor the changes with the greater goal of protecting what's left and supporting recovery."

Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: Are written policies needed? Would development of such policies take time that is not currently available?

Action Point: Tracking outcomes through UNDRIP Evaluation Framework, need to ensure on-going.

4. How would you rate your organizations understanding and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and their cultures?

Summary Response:

Understanding and knowledge of Indigenous peoples and cultures ranges significantly across the two funding organizations (REFBC and WBC).

"I would say 7/10, we could do more...."

"Better than any other organization I've worked for, in my opinion."

"Maybe a B+?"

"I would rate it as early development/ developing or moderate in relation to settler based organizations"

"High"

"We are beginners"

Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: Complexities of understanding and knowledge of culture of 200+ First Nations in BC

Action Point: "Basic working knowledge, combined with an open and humble approach to on-going learning is needed to work at this scale and level"

Action Point: Dedicated learning time allotted in all staff workplans. Request for learning more about history of colonization in BC, UNDRIP, nation-specific culture and priorities.

5. Has your organization ever implemented any strategies or training to increase organizational understanding and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples' rights especially utilizing the Declaration?

Summary Response:

Workshops for grantees and HWI staff on request
Resources and guidance from Senior Indigenous Advisor (SIA) for HWI team
Nahane Decolonizing Watersheds
UVIC Indigenous Law Workshops
Partners in Reciprocity – Circle on Aboriginal People & Philanthropy

Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: Didn't have time to create or implement an intentional learning agenda for HWI project re: UNDRIP
Action Point: Learning & Evaluation outcome includes UNDRIP Evaluation Framework

6. Does your organization have any Indigenous board, staff or volunteer members?

Summary Response:

HWI:
One Indigenous staff person on HWI in leadership position (Senior Indigenous Advisor – SIA)
8-member Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle which provides strategic advice and direction to the HWI staff and program

REFBC:

One Indigenous board member at REFBC (also ILAC member)
Additional advisors and partner guidance
Land Awards celebrate and acknowledge Indigenous leadership

Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: Prioritizing Indigenous applicants for job postings does not guarantee they will apply.
Tension Point: Indigenous can include individuals from outside of our service area (territorial landbase), with limited knowledge and experience working with BC First Nations.
Action Point: Continue/enhance prioritization of Indigenous vendors and contractors to augment minimal Indigenous staff.

6b. How are their experiences and knowledge utilized?

Summary Response:

“Reception to receiving and acting on experiences and knowledge of Indigenous staff and advisors has varied throughout the year of implementing HWI”

Sometimes receptivity is high, and action on input and direction is immediate and consistent.
Sometimes staff have to be reminded about advice or direction given from ILAC
One isolated incident of SIA advice being disregarded by other staff
Learning curve around what incorporating guidance from ILAC should look like and how to accomplish this in meaningful way



Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: One key gap is in Indigenous voices or people in decision-making - especially around what was funded or not. Need this representation to prioritize Indigenous-led projects.

Action Point: Identify key milestones & decisions requiring Indigenous input for HWI 2.0, incorporate into workplans. (This was not possible due to government funding decision in 2022)

7. Has your organization implemented any strategies to increase the number of Indigenous Peoples in the organization?

Summary Response:

HWI hiring prioritized Indigenous applicants but only one hired (of targeted two specific positions)

- Indigenous people are only 5% of the population in BC, and are in demand in many employment opportunities as more organizations and companies seek to recruit and retain Indigenous employees

REFBC has multi-layered strategy and is engaged in continuing work to change organization

Part of the reason for the organizational structure of HWI's staff and advising team was to increase the number of Indigenous Peoples in the organization

- Senior Indigenous Advisor
- Indigenous Leadership Advisory Council

Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: Lack of Indigenous applicants to HWI and other positions

Constraints and pressures of the very short HWI timeframe (no time for more outreach/ recruitment)

Should some positions remain vacant until filled by Indigenous individual?

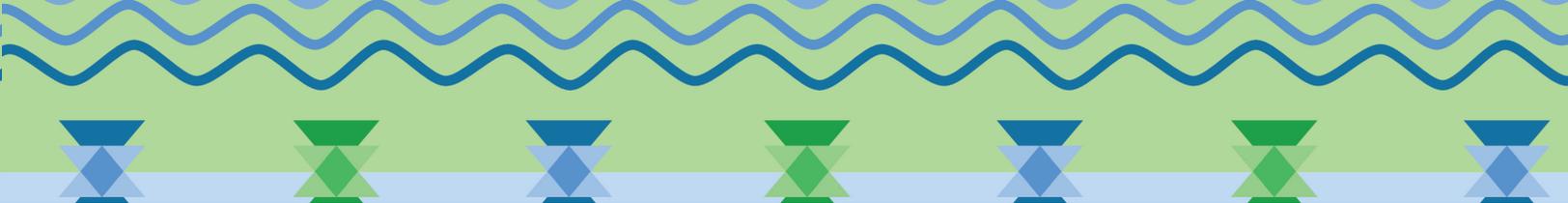
Action Point: Tracking Indigenous influence or direction in key decision-making is even more important than tracking number of Indigenous staff or board members

“Need to find different or additional ways to attract and retain Indigenous people to our organization and teams, and allow the necessary time and space to do so”

8. Does your organization have any relationships, associations or networks in common with Indigenous Peoples' organizations?

Summary Response: Yes

- Circle on Aboriginal People & Philanthropy
- First Nations Fisheries Council
- POLIS (Water Leaders Network)
- UBC Indigenous Community Planning
- Indigenous Watershed Champions
- Sustainable Funding Working Group (BCFLI)
- Water Security Coalition
- Indigenous Climate Action
- Reconciliation & Responsible Investing
- Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty



Action/Tension Points:

“Both REFBC and WBC are quite embedded in water networks across BC. It’s a small world and our leadership are extremely aware of the players.”

“Yes, we do have connections, but it could be further expanded through more outreach and other meaningful ways.”

9. Is your organization aware of any potential, actual or perceived barriers to accessing funding related to Indigenous Peoples’ rights?

Summary Response:

HWI has worked to reduce funding access barriers

- prioritized Indigenous-led projects
- created a position to support those projects to ease administrative burdens and help reduce barriers

REFBC is working to reduce barriers to Indigenous and racialized organizations accessing grants (easier and more options for application and reporting)

HWI-Specific Barriers

- time-sensitive nature of the funding (HWI grant cycle)
- how projects were selected and funding distributed – 25% of unfunded projects were Indigenous-led, government decisions
- work happening on Indigenous lands, with or without FPIC, by an entity other than the Nation/rights-title holders/etc.

Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: Limitations in process for project selection and funding distributions

Short timelines on HWI grants means some projects did not have FPIC for work on Indigenous lands

Action Point: Address limitations in community-driven call if HWI 2.0 (this was not entirely possible with government decisions on funding in 2022, but is being shared with MakeWay for the Indigenous watershed funding stream).

Discuss potential statement/policy on FPIC and projects?

10. Can you identify ways that existing programs could be modified to improve Indigenous Peoples’ inclusion?

Summary Response:

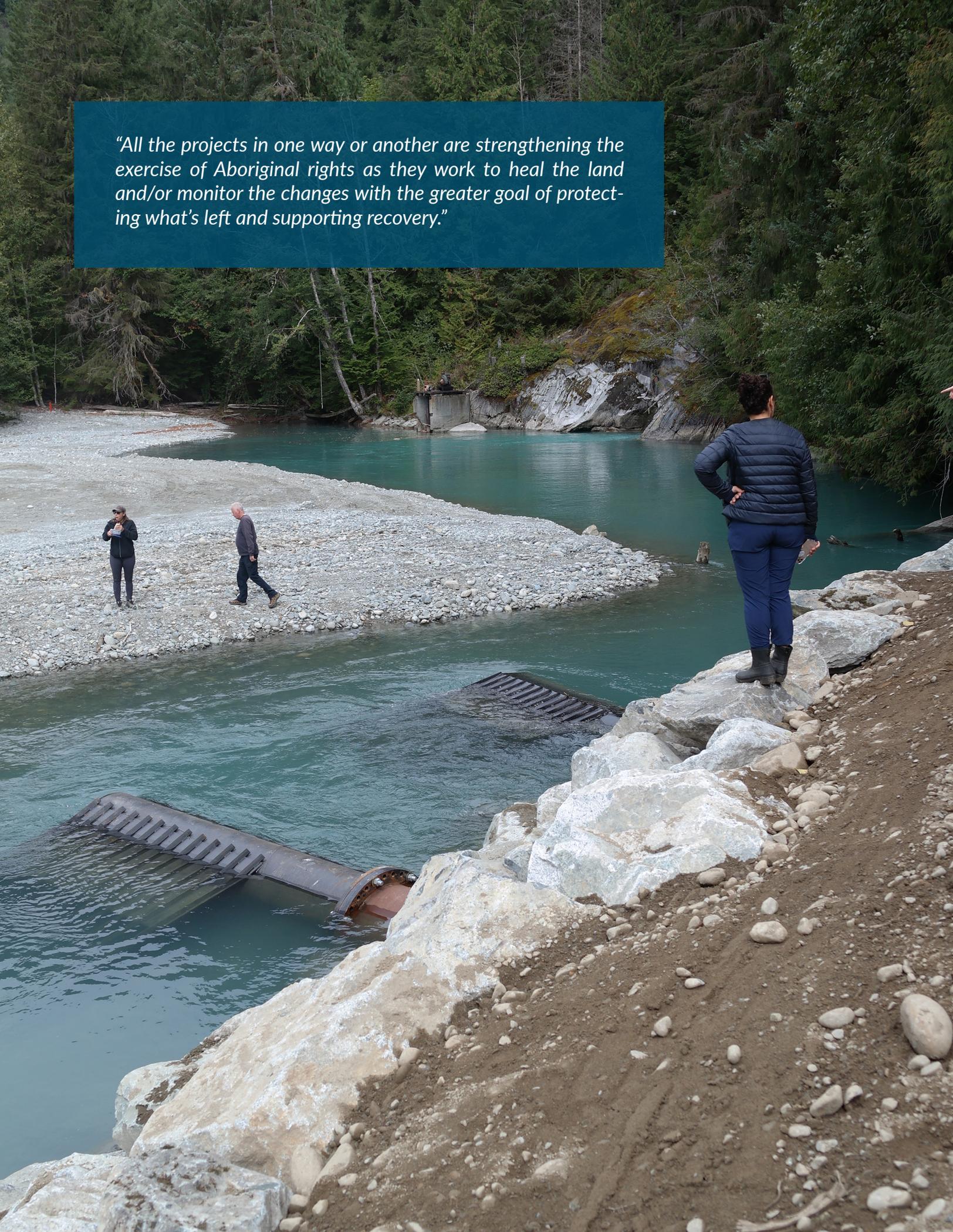
Many detailed ideas (see appendix) covering themes:

- More flexible timing and structure with capacity supports and dedicated opportunities
- Meaningful shared decisions and control by Indigenous Peoples
- Improved outreach, networks, and relationships
- Training for staff across organizations

Action/Tension Points:

Action Point: Survey all Indigenous proponents to ask them this exact question

“All the projects in one way or another are strengthening the exercise of Aboriginal rights as they work to heal the land and/or monitor the changes with the greater goal of protecting what’s left and supporting recovery.”





APPENDIX - IDEAS FOR PROGRAM MODIFICATION TO CONTINUE GROWTH ON UNDRIP IMPLEMENTATION

More flexible timing and structure with capacity supports and dedicated opportunities

- Flexible or removed limits on time for project approvals and completion
- Offer alternatives to 'written only' submissions for applications and reporting, such as interviews or videos)
- Making avenues for more funding to remain in Indigenous communities to develop adaptive capacity
- A longer application period would improve Indigenous Peoples' inclusion
- Indigenous-only funding stream.
- Re-fund Indigenous communities who were supported in the first round (if there is additional funding)
- Adapt grant application process (focus on meaningful ways to understand proposals, and reduce administrative time required for applicants to complete lengthy, detailed applications).

Meaningful shared decisions and control by Indigenous Peoples

- Remove funds from the political control of government to a fund at arm's length co-developed with Indigenous peoples.
- Having a representation from Indigenous Peoples during the grant making or allocation process
- More discussions on FPIC
- Vet all plans to engage Indigenous peoples
- Consider a participatory grantmaking process,
- Make the process more transparent during uplift process: either spread the remaining amount of funding to all projects or only to Indigenous communities
- ILAC or other Indigenous advisors involved in funding decisions
- Prioritize Indigenous approaches and work
- Share decision-making power with Indigenous communities
- Develop and apply funding principles and criteria with Indigenous advisors
- If deciding between two projects, REFBC grants team will choose an Indigenous-led project over a settler-led project.

Improved outreach, networks, and relationships

- Broader outreach for proposals
- Conduct more outreach/webinars with Indigenous groups, possibly through regional and national workshops
- Strengthen relationships by aligning funding with the objective of yielding environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits to Indigenous communities.
- Build our credibility and trust with Indigenous led organizations and networks, and share information about programs and funding through more targeted outreach to them
- Hire more Indigenous staff and modify hiring strategies to improve inclusion (e.g., revisiting educational requirements, how distributed)
- Continue to work with media
- Explore how to embed the work done through HWI in Indigenous cultural spaces
- If there is capacity for a community of practice, consider convening Indigenous proponents/partners semi-regularly

Training for staff across organizations

- Make more Indigenous community development training available to all staff members
- Definitely continue offering training
- Offer ongoing training and development for non-Indigenous staff on decolonizing practices, cultural safety and awareness.



PROPOSAL AND INTAKE PROCESS

Note that these responses were based on only two-three perspectives for most questions.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

1. Does the proposal empower Indigenous communities as equals to non-Indigenous?

Summary Response:

- About 1/3 funded projects Indigenous-led
- Prioritization for intakes and funding top-ups went to Indigenous-led projects
- 25% of unfunded projects were Indigenous-led, no clear reasons tracked (many were due to government responses)

Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: “shovel ready” criteria may have prevented some Indigenous-led projects from being proposed

Action Point: Targets identified for increased % of Indigenous-led projects and total funding to Indigenous projects for HWI 2.0

2. Does the proposal identify the root causes of the disparities being addressed?

Summary Response:

Many proposals identified root causes of the work to be done, though colonialism/racism were probably mentioned less than industry/climate change

Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: Unclear what was present in call for proposals around root causes (low involvement from survey respondents)

3. Are there plans for monitoring unintended impacts on marginalized sub-groups (women, youth, elderly, disabled, etc.)?

Summary Response:

- Workplan template did include equity and diversity requirements for projects, including youth and women
- Plans to monitor how many women, youth and Indigenous people were hired
- But beyond the numbers no formal plan to deeply understand their experiences
- Proponents were not instructed at intake to monitor impacts on these groups beyond capturing hiring data.
- Elders were often brought up as being included but no formal way to gather their thoughts on being involved with HWI.



SELF-DETERMINATION

4. If an Indigenous Peoples' organization is the potential grantee, has the grantee shown itself to be the legitimate representative of the community it claims?

Summary Response:

HWI's staff team followed up on this for non-profits and/or corporations acting as proponents

Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point:

"It is a challenge where staff do not have direct local knowledge, and so are not wanting to be disrespectful, but also want to ensure that all grantees and partners are the legitimate representatives of the Indigenous peoples."

Action Point: Now have clear criteria shared with us by ILAC, and can incorporate that if future funding is available.

5. Does the proposal allow for control of the project by the Indigenous Peoples?

Summary Response: Yes.

6. Are there mechanisms in place to ensure affected communities can be involved in the design of projects concerning them?

Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: Short timeframe meant some affected communities had minimal involvement in project design (this varied by project)

Tension Point: Consent to access the territory is also a key gap that needs to be addressed if further funding becomes available to continue HWI

Action Point: Have created a series of 'partnership' categories for non-Indigenous organizations to better describe their partnerships with Indigenous peoples

- Full scale partnership does include active design in the projects, including site location, Indigenous knowledge, employment and training, review of results, and information sharing.

CULTURAL INTEGRITY

7. How does the proposal strengthen the cultural institutions of the Indigenous communities involved/impacted?

Summary Response:

- HWI has supported various training for all projects
- HWI has also included intake, interim, and final report questions which places Indigenous knowledge and laws on parallel with scientific knowledge and colonial laws.
- In some cases, HWI provided much-needed funding to support cultural institutions



Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: How can cultural institutions access HWI funding if they don't have a relationship with an intermediary organization to access funds (e.g., OBWB)

Tension Point: Tight time constraints for HWI do put pressure on strained capacity for Indigenous organizations.

8. Does the proposal recognize the cultural integrity of the Indigenous Peoples involved?

Summary Response:

- Mainly yes within HWI but not always
- There have been some projects that do not prioritize UNDRIP principles
- Ongoing issue of FPIC not being recognized uniformly across HWI projects
- Also, the provincial government made initial project approval decisions and those decisions have not been assessed

PARTICIPATION

9. Are there mechanisms included in the proposal to ensure that all groups are involved in the design and implementation as well as the monitoring and evaluation processes in meaningful ways?

Summary Response:

- Partially
- Tight timelines for intakes and proposals, so did not have time to contact Indigenous partners and verify their involvement and support for the project.
- Very tight timelines for implementation; HWI M&E plans developmental during first year

“Difficult to find entry points for proponent input (not least because they were so busy completing their project work!)”

Action/Tension Points:

Action Point: Upfront contacting would be much preferred to learning more about this at interim and final reporting stages.

Action Point: This would be improved with more lead time for relationship building or a requirement for some sort of 'proof' of partnership (letter, email, etc. from partners involved in all project stages).

10. Does the grant proposal exemplify participation and consultation of all groups in the decision-making process leading to the project or need in the proposal?

Summary Response:

- No for the non-Indigenous projects
- HWI can do better in being transparent in the decision-making process leading to a project being funded or denied
- HWI did not have a chance to agree upon what a 'gold standard' of participation and consultation



Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point:

"We had several non-Indigenous projects that received approval without having any established relationships with affected Indigenous peoples. Many were struggling to consult and engage while trying to complete a project under tight timelines."

Action Point:

"Need to recognize that partnership criteria for non-Indigenous projects need to be more transparent, and that there may be a period of time where fewer projects are successful until they build those important relationships."

11. If the potential grantee is a non-Indigenous organization, have they shown to have the consent of Indigenous Peoples which may be impacted by the project?

Summary Response:

- This was not a requirement.
- Some projects indicated they would seek consent before accessing territories, but did not have contingency plans if consent was not granted.

"I suspect that the lack of formal consent will be the biggest limitation in our lessons around UNDRIP."

Action/Tension Points:

Action Point: As above, discuss options for policy/statement on FPIC and projects funded.

12. Were Indigenous Peoples given an opportunity to provide information, ask questions, and offer opinions to the organization(s) regarding the project in question?

Summary Response:

- Have incorporated this into the final reporting stage
- Small minority of this year's HWI projects would have had this kind of process before reporting

Action/Tension Points:

Action Point: Ideally, this opportunity to provide information, ask questions, and offer opinions would have happened at intake.

DEVELOPMENT WITH IDENTITY

13. If the grant's purpose is for economic development, does it address the cultural value of the Indigenous People to the proposal?

Summary Response:

- This would be evident in projects drawing on Traditional Ecological Knowledge
- There are some good examples of projects (both Indigenous- and non-Indigenous-led) that center Indigenous cultural value
- HWI prioritizes watershed restoration, monitoring and planning.
- As a co-benefit, it prioritizes job creation as a part of the COVID economic stimulus initiative.
- Jobs and training for Indigenous people were prioritized and data on this is tracked at interim and final reporting.

Action/Tension Points:

Tension Point: Were projects which addressed cultural value of Indigenous Peoples prioritized in HWI funding decisions?

14. Is the development project being proposed articulated by Indigenous Peoples?

Summary Response:

In about 1/3 of projects, yes.

LANDS, TERRITORIES AND NATURAL RESOURCES

15. Does the proposal impact the land, territory or natural resources of Indigenous Peoples? If so, does the proposal address this impact, and show FPIC from the Indigenous Peoples?

Summary Response:

- Virtually all of the projects directly impact the land and waters of Indigenous Peoples
- FPIC is ideal, and should be included in future funding criteria, but given the tight timelines and urgent circumstances involving the COVID stimulus recovery from the provincial government, it was not included in HWI

"The projects I have reviewed only positively impact territories and waters. Most, if not all, of the restoration needs stemmed from settler society development and activities (e.g., legacy dams, forestry, mines, roads etc.), so having settler organizations lead the restoration makes sense"

Decolonizing Watersheds

a series of shared learning opportunities to expand understandings of decolonizing practices, capture lessons learned and prepare to share & apply them, in your ongoing work, in good relations, with a decolonial lens



Hosted by Nahanee Creative, a Skwx wú7mesh-owned Social Change Agency

Healthy Watersheds Initiative

Learning & Unlearning Together,
a gathering for reflecting on lessons learned and recommending next steps for future projects

February 15, 2022, 9am PST

A Final Report to the HWI Community



Watersheds BC



Project Background

Beginning in August 2021, Nahanee Creative, REFBC and Healthy Watersheds Initiative (HWI) worked together to understand the varied needs of HWI project leads through a distributed questionnaire which was heavily influential to the design and delivery of workshop structure, directed questions and discussions, as well as in the provision of further resources to participants.

Since October 2021 Nahanee Creative has provided a total of 9 facilitated decolonial workshops to 246 participants in the Healthy Watersheds Initiative, with a further 450 to be enrolled in self directed, on-demand courses. Divided into 3 topics, this workshop series set its focus on providing both a solid foundation and a forward looking perspective on decolonization for a range of participants to apply to their current and future projects.

Project Approach

With an emphasis on storytelling and equitable engagement, Ta7taliya Michelle Nahanee, Ta7taliya-men Paisley Nahanee, Squamish, and Savannah Erasmus, Metis-Cree, lead three sets of workshops for HWI participants. Each facilitator shared insights from their own experiences and Nahanee Creative decolonial framings through *Introducing Decolonizing Practices*, *Restorying Colonialism* online zoom-based workshops. The series culminated in a customized Decolonial SWOT Analysis designed to assist participants in understanding and implementing the calls to action outlined in UNDRIP.

Throughout these workshops, participants were guided through lectures and discussions, and were asked to share their learning and ideas through online whiteboards and collaborative software which was collected throughout each session and amalgamated as *harvest documents*. These harvest documents are not only an effective tool for engagement during a workshop, but focus each participant's attention on the importance of their own agency, empathy, and relationship building when working to decolonize and to create culturally safe environments for all. Additionally, these documents provide a valuable touchstone along the Decolonial Journey.

Project Outcomes

[Workshop Dates and Number of Attendees per:](#)

[Introducing Decolonizing Practices:](#)

October 7th 2021 - 25 Participants
October 14th 2021 - 23 Participants
October 20th 2021 - 46 Participants

[Restorying Colonialism:](#)

October 21st 2021 - 34 Participants
October 27th 2021 - 23 Participants
November 5th 2021 - 23 Participants

[Actioning UNDRIP:](#)

November 8th 2021 - 33 Participants
November 12th 2021 - 20 Participants
November 17th 2021 - 19 Participants

Next Steps

[Harvest Documents](#)

We're including PDFs from all of the Harvest Documents from all of the Decolonizing Watersheds workshops to date. We've promised to share these with all of the participants so will work with HWI to disseminate.

[Instructions and Access Code for Enrollment in Introducing Decolonizing Practices on-demand course:](#)

Nahanee Creative has set up an custom on-demand course to share with HWI participants. To enroll in *Introducing Decolonizing Practices* please use the following link in order to add the course to your cart:

<https://www.nahaneecreative.com/collections/nahanee-creative-on-demand-mini-courses/products/1528777?variant=39485633691726>

Once you have added the course to your cart you can use the discount code **HWI2021** to receive a complete discount. Once you have finished purchasing the course you will receive a link via your provided email with a unique course access link which you can follow to access all course materials.

Please email hello@nahaneecreative.com if you have any questions!

Decolonizing 101

With Ta7taliya Paisley Nahaneé

Oct 7, 2021



Giveaways

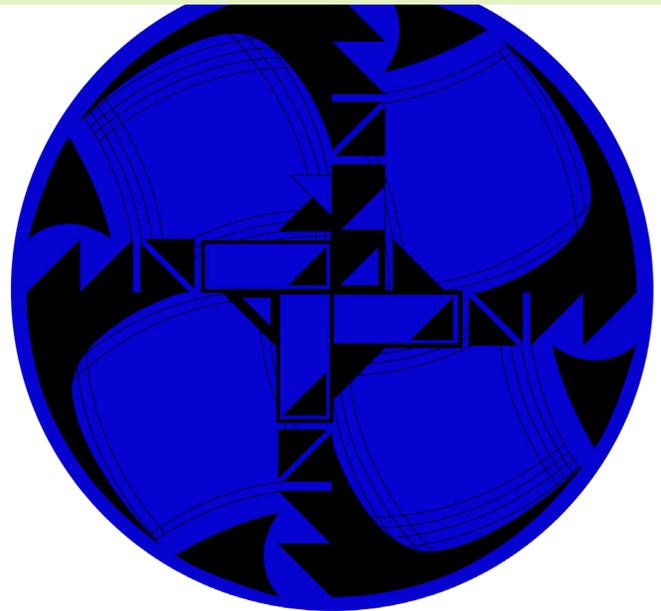
- I want to: learn better indigenous culture, be sure when i speak with indigenous people not to harm them (big learning from this workshop). I commit to listen what they need, and not to do what I think they need.
- Learning more about how certain aspects of the environmental field are colonial in nature, and looking for alternatives
- To seek Indigenous-organized events to attend in allyship
- I commit to looking at current policies/procedures from a decolonizing perspective
- To give attention to my ancestry.
- I commit to learning more about the history of Indigenous peoples and listening to their stories
- I commit to learning some Kwanlin Dun stories about the river I live near and visiting every week to reflect.
- I can commit to encouraging my students to lead the learning
- To continue to try to change the regulatory systems and policies that are not inclusive and continue to displace and leave out Indigenous voices and rights
- To do the awkward work to shift decision-making power in our work and centre Indigenous perspectives + approaches.
- Conscious effort to work collaboratively with students and colleagues
- Learning and using the correct pronunciation for the waterways and species working with in **hə́h̓qəmíh̓ə́r̓**

Huy Chexw
(Thank you)



Takeaways

- Helping and harm. The reconciliation word and some implications are not liked by many indigenous people, I start understanding why
- Unlearned that good intentions are always helpful
- Reminder to reflect on who is benefitting!
- Perfectionism is a colonial construct
- Focusing on job title, "place-based calling in from". I will endeavour to learn how to introduce myself in a more meaningful way acknowledging my connection to place, to my ancestors, and how i am showing up in the moment.
- .The definition of decolonizing and that reconciliation is not something indigenous peoples resonate with.
- Land use versus land relationship
- I learned how to more closely examine ways that we may think we are helping and whether this could be causing harm



Wa Chexw Yuu
(Take Care)

Decolonizing 101

With Ta7taliya Paisley Nahaneé

Oct 14, 2021

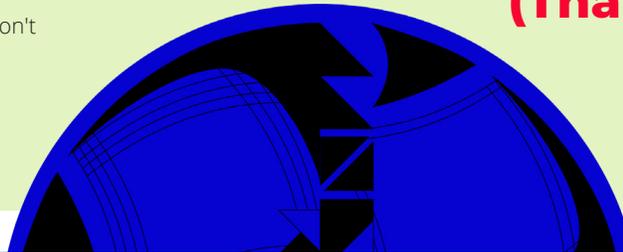


Giveaways

- Continuing to learn and listen
- Continuing to listen and keep an open heart, while holding myself and others accountable
- Continue to learn and be open to criticism, and to call people in when I notice a teachable moment.
- Try to adopt decolonizing principles into daily life, e.g. non-hierarchical introductions
- Bringing a decolonial check-in into work meetings and general life interactions.
- Try to decolonizing 101 themes to our local community
- Learn and continue to listen
- Examining the projects/work I currently do to ensure the intentions aren't misaligned
- Continue to find and read references on decolonizing, reconciling, self actualizing and indigenizing
- Decolonial check in
- Using a decolonial introduction, even if others don't

- Renew relationships with Indigenous collaborators - equal parties
- Apply learning in establishing deeper connections with local K'omoks peoples
- Continue to learn and continue my journey as an ally.
- Need to use bigger picture of decolonizing
- Decolonize first
- Incorporate content and learning into local workshops for ENGOS
- Family relations. Not job titles.
- Slowing down, employing WAIT
- Bringing decolonization to our local community and workspace

**Huy Chexw
(Thank you)**



Takeaways

- I love the personal, intimate quality of the decolonized introductions.
- Stages of involvement / allyship
- This is an ongoing process, it is important to support each other.
- Govt and industry continue to ignore UNDRIP/pick and choose what works for them
- There are so many ongoing, perpetuated impacts on Indigenous Peoples from colonization
- Stages of allyship and the power colonialism still has in daily life (telling you what to do to help and be better)
- Decolonial check in, WAIT, ally stages framework
- Slowing down and building relationships before jumping into commitments/tackling project objectives. Moving away from "box ticking" towards true, self-actualized action.
- The stages and the 4 aspects.
- There are stages of being an ally.
- Granting protocol is colonial/timelines/deliverables - not cohesive to building relationships

- Acknowledge if you cause harm through good intentions
- It is important to take things slow so I don't cause harm when trying to help.
- Decolonize first before indiginizing
- The importance of a decolonized introduction; to start in a better way
- Good intentions can still be harmful
- Unlearning the uncomfortability of "awkward silences". Re-learning the power of being silent and listening.
- Decolonization is healing
- Neocolonialism vs decolonization
- Decolonizing is like healing - different for everyone.
- Perfectionism = colonialism.

**Wa Chexw Yuu
(Take Care)**

Decolonizing 101

With Ta7taliya Paisley Nahanee
October 20, 2021



Giveaways

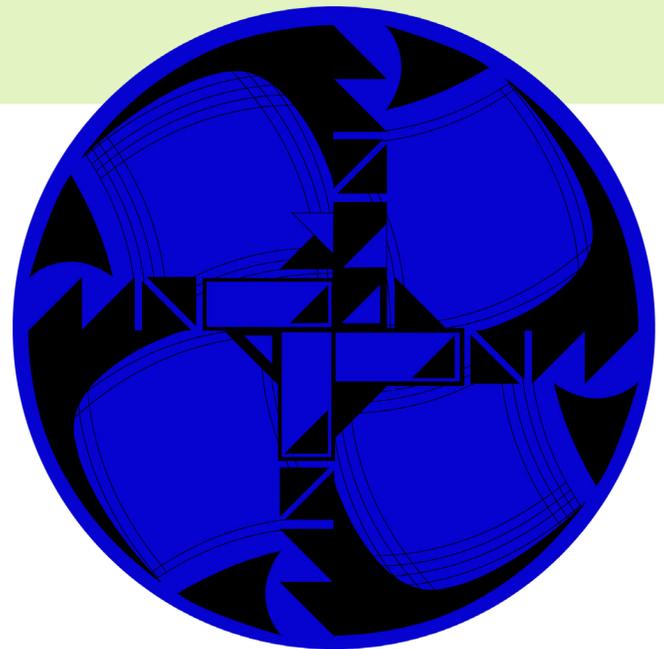
- Asking instead of assuming
- Decolonizing our introductions in work meetings
- Continued learning to increase my ability to self actualize
- Learning more about intergenerational wealth from a decolonial lens; spurring conversations about it
- Commit to larger involvement with the indigenous communities whose land we work on
- Considering my actions from a decolonization lens before committing to them
- Not look at committees as "collecting" types of people to show diversity, but ensuring we avoid tokenism
- Researching proper local protocol for consultation so as to avoid asking for free labour inappropriately
- Listening mindfully and waiting for responses and explanations and hearing what people have to say
- Continuing the tough work of decolonization, even if it isn't popular
- Thinking about harm and helping and where it fits into the work we do
- Reframing the ask around land acknowledgments to make them less of a formula
- Reflecting on my biases and perspective. Looking through a decolonizing lens
- Continuing to find and use resources to educate myself and continue to learn/unlearn
- Practicing and applying the terms decolonizing, indigenizing, reconciling, and self actualizing
- I learned new words describing the differences between them
- Continue to revisit outcomes of intentions/programs and their true connection to community
- Continue to centre Indigenous ways of knowing and being
- Really working on avoiding tokenism: we do this with you and it frustrates me
- Incorporate Indigenous perspectives in policy and law making
- Listening more than talking

**Huy Chexw
(Thank you)**



Takeaways

- I Hadn't thought about the hierarchy aspect of western introductions - and realized I definitely use my title to assert position!
- Unintended consequences of my good intentions.
- I unlearned applying hierarchy facts
- I learned what helping really means
- Learned new ways of doing an introduction
- Thinking about who I want to take along with me on this journey
- Reminder about not tokenizing individuals or groups of people
- To use diverse methods of introductions rather than focusing on hierarchy related facts
- Everyone is at a different place on their decolonizing journey
- Squamish place names and history
- Feeling a belonging to place while acknowledging ancestral relations that cared for it and in turn cared for us
- Providing the 'answers' to how to act as a colonial approach
- I think that pointing out how I put job title at the forefront of a lot of introductions and how that affects conversational hierarchy was very interesting
- Not that i didn't know this already..but wow this is going to be a lot of work!



**Wa Chexw Yuu
(Take Care)**

Healthy Watersheds Initiative

Restoring Colonialism

Oct 21, 2021



What Needs Restoring?

- Colonial land claims system
- What's possible in terms of mutual liberation
- The idea of living in obligation and accountability vs living with rights
- My colonial relationship with myself
- Who we truly are
- Decolonizing concepts of "nature"
- Scientific conduct/knowledge
- Learning about aspiration of Indigenous people
- The story of us and the story of now.
- Our relationship with the land where we live and that takes care of us
- We are all related
- Who's land supports us
- Our way of thinking, outside of the capitalistic way
- How restoration and conversation are centred/done in settler led orgs
- Our relationship with the world and the living beings within
- How we teach our kids and youth about the land they live on and benefit from
- Equality of people - and their contributions to story creation or re-creation
- Our collective relationship of the land and that of the people who have stewarded it
- How people see FN/aboriginals/indigenous peoples
- What we deem as worth it, necessary, a priority
- Canadian history
- Our relationship to water, our accountability to it, respect
- What does it mean to be a nation
- Canada's history
- we are all big bags of water and water is life
- Indigenous participation and values in Canadian life
- Capitalist system
- The term "First Nations"



What Do We Need To Do It Well?

- Ask questions and be truly willing to listen-active listening
- Genuine willingness to engage and get it wrong and do better
- Education
- Time and introspection
- courage
- organizing
- Acknowledgement & listening
- Take it slow
- Be kind to ourselves and to each other
- Patience
- Clilong term comitment and relationship building
- Being honest with ourselves about our intention
- A commitment to lifting each other up.
- Active communication, starting with listening.
- Deep compassion
- Deep listening
- Openness and care for ourselves and others.
- Shut up and listen
- Celebration of failure (as a celebration of trying). Liberation in the making.
- Firm commitment to keep moving forward when it gets hard.
- Introspection, acknowledgement and open mind to complete unlearning and relearning
- truth
- Have love in our hearts
- Drop perfectionism



What Should Happen First?

- Awareness
- Ask - What can I do?
- Humility
- Work through the Decolonize workbook and then use that information to help you work out what you can do first
- The People need to be humanized.
- Giving up power
- Come talk with a FN
- Seeing yourself
- More interaction with Indigenous people on the subject of decolonizing
- Invest in a relationship
- Move from transactional to deeper relationships.
- Relationship building before anything
- Understanding deep, complex, and conflicting histories

- Personal education
- Truth
- Maybe there is not a "first". We can progress in all the things: learning, communication, trying to reset the system from capitalism to something better, offer the help that is wanted
- Sharing power and keeping mutual liberation as a goal.
- Open communication and listening to people who have not been given the chance to be heard
- Learning, admitting we are not in the right relationship
- Paying attention to the work that needs to be done and taking responsibility for it
- Humility
- Listen to marginalized voices, really hear them
- Acknowledging we have one planet and we can do the hard stuff



Healthy Watersheds Initiative

Restoring Colonialism

Oct 27 2021



What Needs Restoring?

- How do you connect to your lands?
- Systemic vs personal journey
- The importance of caring for the land for our ancestors and the future
- The land as so much more than a source of resources
- Who is responsible for reconciliation?
- Decolonizing concepts of "nature"
- Traditional (active) indigenous stewardship and enhancement of nature
- Everyone has an equal voice at the table
- Community - outside of our close friends and family
- The role FN have had in caring for and managing land before colonization, and how settlers benefitted
- Dominance and silencing
- Environmental work centred on saviour complex
- Concepts of wealth (not being about money only)
- Acknowledging the land and the Indigenous peoples who care for it by listening and engaging with their practices
- Learning and doing necessary work to improve from a place of compassion rather than performance activism
- Land ownership and who is responsible for caring for the land
- Individual value
- Past narrative on identity
- Understanding of ways to complete tasks and the multitude of them
- Land being a resource rather than a responsibility
- Gross Domestic Product and Capitalistic culture
- Everyone is a teacher
- Personal and group identities



What Do We Need To Do It Well?

- Vulnerability in our unlearning
- Committed time and resources
- Systems to hold ourselves accountable to the work
- Systems to help us collaborate - we're stronger together
- Openness - for our own journey and for others
- Willingness to learn, understand and change
- Allowing everyone who wishes to participate a seat in the process and the opportunity to speak
- Creating a familiar tie to the land and understanding the importance of caring for it and it for us
- Being open to all ways of connecting and learning
- Compassion towards one another
- Indigenous teachings on personal accountability
- Understanding that everyone is at a different point in their personal journey of healing
- Thinking about why this journey is important to you and what it actually means to you
- Holistic approach to lands is necessary for life
- We are ALL humans
- Accountability to land
- Difficult conversations
- Honesty
- Letting go of ego - accepting fault and moving on
- Accountability to self
- Accountability to community
- Safe space
- Open hearts



What Should Happen First?

- Personal journeys
- Learning , listening and reading
- Taking the time and energy to work on our own personal understanding of the circumstances and relearning with an open heart
- Slowing down and opening yourself up
- Listening
- Start at the beginning, what is your reasoning for wanting to do this work?
- Making the link between land and wealth widely known
- Questioning current systems and processes
- Acknowledging past and current injustice
- Continue to examine our own privilege, biases and processes and make changes as needed
- Questioning the legal framework we operate in
- Committing personally to the journey
- Holistic research and education
- Personal work. Listening and learning about FN sacred laws
- Decolonizing at the individual level
- Taking responsibility for harming/helping impacts
- Support those who are leading decolonizing work
- Provide space to check your actions and ideas



Healthy Watersheds Initiative

Restoring Colonialism

Nov 5th , 2021



What Needs Restoring?

- I am wondering how much I need to explore by settler roots? They are not that important to me. Is this an issue?
- Language in the media, how we portray BIPOC people in "pop culture" / public eyes
- What creates "value" in a person's life: i.e. wealth and other colonial values
- Concept of value of time. Using time in a "efficient way"
- History/social studies curriculum in school!
- What makes a landscape beautiful?
- Utility of land
- "Helping" communities from a colonial perspective
- My "why"
- Gatekeeping for creative pursuits - what's acceptable, and who is empowered to do them
- The construct of perfectionism
- Utilitarian views of "natural resources"
- Employment opportunities, expectations, and protocols
- What makes a person 'valuable' and whole (not just what they do for work)
- Our socio-political actions, such as voting in an election



What Do We Need To Do It Well?

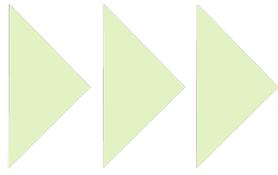
- A deep dive into what accountability means to me and how I walk in the world
- The courage to ask...to ask without fear of judgement or reprisal
- Non-Indigenous people who are willing to learn and listen and support
- The commitment to feeling uncomfortable
- Active listening.
- Non-Indigenous people who are willing to learn and listen and support
- The willingness to be wrong
- To allow time for these adjustments and understanding that it won't always be perfect immediately
- Embracing the intrinsic beauty of places rather than imposing a particular idealized Euro-centric value for what should be growing there (e.g., green lawns)
- Take actions, guide others, and encourage them to do the same
- Supporting children of all races and backgrounds to their full potential
- Openness to blind spots
- Employer acceptance and transparency about their workplace and work culture
- Engage communities from a level they appreciate and respecting the values of the individuals and communities whose land we live and work on
- Humbleness - its okay to not get it right the first time but trying, learning, and growing is critical



What Should Happen First?

- Understanding where you come from, your relationship with the land and the original caretakers of the land you live on
- To reach out to find out the sacred laws and teaching where I live and work
- Personal understanding of history and what has got us here (collectively & individually). "Those who don't know their history are doomed to repeat it."
- Reflect on your accountability
- Challenge concept of perfectionism
- Be ok with being wrong
- Teaching about ecology and the interconnectedness of all organisms and people
- Foster a connection to the land in all children - outdoor education, field trips, etc
- Challenge concept of perfectionism
- Self reflection, engaging and learning with the community whose land we live and work on
- Hold up Indigenous voices/perspectives
- Commit to personal learning & self-reflection
- Learn and unlearn, think and rethink certain info and decisions
- Listen, read, research
- Speak up
- Look at the toxicity that we support/ignore
- On whose land am I visiting?
- Acceptance of our differences
- Foster a connection to the land in all children - outdoor education, field trips, etc
- Teaching about ecology and the interconnectedness of all organisms and people
- Be ok with being wrong.
- Reflect on your accountability

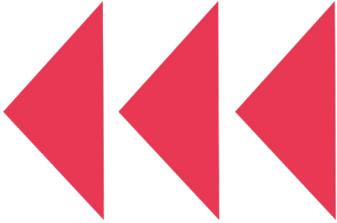




Threats

What barriers or beliefs do we need to question or disrupt? How can we think and act beyond these barriers or beliefs? (Including disrupting systemic barriers)

Double click on a sticky note to type!	Building capacity, continuous funding	red tape doesn't work on building trust.	fear of PR having control (land, because the PR values are not understood.	Public apathy and fear slows action	Working in siloes
Capacity and capability of decision makers	sustained funding mechanisms lacking	gov't staff silo themselves, i.e. DFO is different in different regions.	lack of communication and understanding between communities.	Barriers to good relationships (ex. time, resources)	Will government continue to provide funding to do this work?
building relationships to learn	colonial funding systems / deadlines	funding deadlines are colonial	don't see the shared opportunities.	Awareness of good relations	figuring out a balance of sharing indigenous leaders time to work with settler led organizations.
shifting towards a both/and attitude to indigenous knowledge, western science, "	working in silos	Equitable access to doing the work	the way we see a report and how we see it change from our western lens and how indigenous people see it.	The work will take a long time and we need to stay motivated	inequality
fear of doing the wrong thing					existing protocols are 5 year sunset and no further funding, a colonial construct.



Strength

What aspects of UNRIP and your sessions with Nahanee Creative have already been active practices within your team that we can build on?

Providing importance of connection to natural environment	permission to do what we're doing to interact with indigenous organizations and their personal aspects of UNRIP	learning how to act at the speed of trust	Empowering my voice to ask questions and listen and learn.	Starting with intentions when extending invites	new perspective on what to expect - need whole team to do personal work
Articles related in Rights and Title. What is the support such as data collection.	Language could be stronger, i.e. "states shall" vs. "states must"	Learning more how to incorporate UNRIP at work and in work practices	Seasonal Touchpoints Event - another way to connect with the land	Starting and not being afraid of the change	
Helping and supporting initiatives.	Articles cover off items such as Social Housing, education and natural resource.	Taking things slowly and take the time for things to develop at their own RATE	Acknowledging the complexity of the situation		
drawing attention to work with indigenous peoples	Decolonizing introductions	take the time to learn and work with intentions			

Opportunity

What are the opportunities to work in solidarity with Indigenous Folks and in relation with each other?

Double click on a sticky note to type!	to work with the local indigenous people on local data, need to decolonize the data and collect data.	Environmental Education inclusion of local nations in the process	Learning how to help create opportunities and collaborations	Personal opportunity to be more collaborative in the projects	Learning how to behave and communicate respectfully
Good place to start - interest in relationship building on both sides	decolonizing the data systems we have	Receptivity to start process in org and community	With partnerships and shared projects, that do local nations want to move forward in and how can we move forward together	relationships - need to be developed and foster them	is our help and support even wanted or needed by the local nations for opportunities: have to ask first
Shared decisions are more robust	DRIPA has given us permission to actively work toward change	org has committed resources to bring forward learning opportunities.	Being graceful in how we make mistakes and be ok with it	shared values	Not letting the weaknesses remain as such, and turning them into strengths
Bringing the whole organization along (board, staff, and anyone else)	Failure can be the opportunity - things will be messy and we will learn from it.	to meet as a nation for natural resources.	Learning that trying to do this and how we can improve when we move outside of our immediate community	Capacity development (both ways)	A lot of openness and receptive-ness to try new things
Re-affirming our relationship with ecosystems/nature/the planet					

Weakness

What patterns of inequity have been further revealed or are increasing?

one uniform conversation with one indigenous person is not the end all, be all.	Need balanced BOD, not just check a box.	The institutional inertia of bureaucracies are very slow to change	Indigenous organizations' collaborative capacities are overstretched	No indigenous staff
Struggling to understand how to work with our privilege	so much red tape for the indigenous communities.	Gov't is not ready to implement.	Reliance on colonial data and map standards	The experts normally doesn't account the TEK.
How to give voice to TEK.	unclear idea of where we're going - what does decolonization look like?	How to work with/change our existing systems	We don't have more indigenous	
Institutional inertia				

Place a note of encouragement and/or a reminder for yourself and others to look back at to help us along on our decolonizing journeys...

Don't be fearful	Making mistakes is part of the journey and it's important to reflect on them so you earn along the way.	Keep a little voice on your shoulder that asks you, can I support my indigenous neighbor in some way	Small steps still count as moving forward	When unsure if you're supporting decolonizing, ask for guidance.	Don't underestimate the number and quality of allies you already have in this journey	We are gracefully failing, learning, and doing better together	We are stronger together in learning and doing	There is joy in this work together	Building relationships starts with listening
Celebrate your failures so you can move forward in a good way	work at breaking the cycle of systemic racism	Continue to work on your personal journey	Take your time and keep your heart open how you can			Rise up and be bold!	Return to reverence and care for the living world and each other	Self care throughout this journey	Be Brave
Heart first and good intentions are important and demonstrates authentic intent.	don't be afraid to ask questions.	decolonization is a long, continuous journey, start today				You're not alone in your journey	Be brave and open to critique	Everyone is in a different place in their healing journey	
Build genuine relationships	don't be afraid to support an Indigenous person.	we are all humans				find the shared values	see all of us as community	open, learn, build trust & relationships	

Threats

What barriers or beliefs do we need to question or disrupt? How can we think and act beyond these barriers or beliefs? (Including disrupting systemic barriers)

Double click on a sticky note to type!	language	Canada	land rights	fear of making mistakes (settlers)
Fear of the unknown	dependence on objectivity	timing differences in structures	"doing the work will be bad for Canada's economy"	being able to break down the colonial framework
"Rat race" of work expectations challenging to shift paradigms	entrenched value set in government	BC is built on the exploitation of Indigenous Peoples	shifting from a "resistance to change" to a "resilience for change"	dependence on ownership



Opportunity

What are the opportunities to work in solidarity with Indigenous Folks and in relation with each other?

Double click on a sticky note to type!	salmon as galvanizing issue to rally around/together	go above and beyond with intertribe relations	returning to all of our Indigenous roots	realizing Indigenous futurisms
supporting nationwide youth programming	datasharing platforms	breaking out of academia silos and into real life scenarios	involve IP from the very beginning leads to better outcomes	compensate!
intertribal fisheries	make good relations with an indigenous cultural monitor for projects	Beyond the Duty to Consult's Colonial framework	making space for Indigenous leaders within colonial decision making (Ottawa)	using budget lines to build in robust honorariums for all Indigenous knowledge sharing, consultation
opportunities for cultural awareness training within nations	true collaboration instead of consultation	collaboration pre-stage 1 not only "consultation"	Ask! find indigenous voices and put them into your project	



Weakness

What patterns of inequity have been further revealed or are increasing?

health access & lack of respect from healthcare workers to indigenous people	further increases power of band councils	lack of resources & capacity for Bands to get involved in projects	misrepresentation in grantwriting
apathy around language	hiring inequities	giving indigenous people and intelligents working within the nation the support fund in ceremonial, initiative, contributors vs partnerships	how can I help move this process along - why is it so slow to implement?
timing disconnect in grants	difficult to scale up from community	not knowing who to ask for help about decolonial language	lack of diversity
hereditary vs. elected leaders			



Strength

What aspects of UNRIP and your sessions with Nahanee Creative have already been active practices within your team that we can build on?

focusing more on practices than project itself	helping vs harming	bringing decolonial lens to every decision	accountability: who are we accountable for and accountable to?	values? What are they and who do they benefit
highlighting wealth transference as part of decolonization	primary approach: combine traditional knowledge with western practices primary	working to weave worldviews in our ecological work	unlearning space	speaking up when in a stakeholder group
confirming inherited rights not granted rights	awareness of doing the work deeply and quietly not about virtue signaling!	involving local indigenous government in every step of the project	making the connection between wealth and land	Challenging decision making structures & relations with the land
UNRIP as specific articles to point to for reference	UNRIP as another tool in the tool box	history of having UNRIP as a tool developed over decades led by Indigenous folks	being critical of our western worldviews	centering indigenous voices in all work
get into the process: may be long term				using traditional placenames to disrupt erasure and objectivity



Place a note of encouragement and/or a reminder for yourself and others to look back at to help us along on our decolonizing journeys...

we are meant to do this together not on our own	caring about others is a way to care about ourselves	embrace the journey	walk the land, she misses you	breaking down society is making way for a new society	make space for the work at work
tiny daily actions matter	Indigenous consultants/knowledge keepers deserve compensation tool			mistakes are an opportunity to learn	learn more, listen harder, move slowly
change the language change the relationship	IT is worth the effort	"Language becomes knowledge"	bringing decolonial practices into homelife will translate into society through our children	Keep listening and learning	change is possible



Threats

What barriers or beliefs do we need to question or disrupt? How can we think and act beyond these barriers or beliefs? (including disrupting systemic barriers)

Double click on a sticky note to type!	Land protection is sometimes at odds with indigenous use.	Existing legal framework is colonial and can be limiting	Emphasized barriers with language in our group
requiring FN govts and orgs to get fed/prov permits to do work on their land	Science trumps cultural knowledge	Change is almost always stressful, even when it is positive change	<small>Working within a largely colonial system where funding comes from and partnering with an indigenous gov't that is not recognized by the colonial system and does not aim to be, but is a self government nation. Something here needs to be disrupted.</small>
Fear of power shift to indigenous groups	Fear of change, fear of the unknown or not knowing	resistance to paradigm shifts regarding ways of knowing and language (e.g. referring to trees, animals, streams, as beings)	Colonial way of knowing (western science) being dominate

Opportunity

What are the opportunities to work in solidarity with Indigenous Folks and in relation with each other?

Double click on a sticky note to type!	Looking for FN inclusion on our Board	Working to align our land protection program with FN priorities	Develop MOU/MOA to set up a long-term operational relationship
Look for opportunity to seek funding to support indigenous partners if of interest	Support additional learning opportunities in our community	bringing the agricultural landowners together with the FN groups through restoration	Listen to the First Nation to see if they have objectives we could help with with our skill sets
Developing committees to work together on decision making for land management	provide funding directly to Indig orgs/govts for them to distribute to projects	Involve Guardian Watchmen program in our projects where there is a fit	Looking for opportunities to show support in other areas of interest to indigenous partners



Weakness

What patterns of inequity have been further revealed or are increasing?

Indigenous people are underrepresented in management & faculty	We work on buying private land to protect it - inherently plays into the colonial land use concerns.	Overworked indigenous leadership and lack of indigenous project mgmt/coordinators	Focus on western science (less credit, if any, is given to traditional knowledge)	Creating opportunities for gathering with local Indigenous communities
Not being consistent with bringing partners in on decision making for smaller projects	Negating the complexities of working with our Indigenous partners and believing that work with us is done (that goes to have to come by your support)	Misinformation, good intentions often leading to tokenism	Valuing different education backgrounds	community group lack of education and knowledge on how to consult and collaborate with indigenous groups.
Lack of diversity and indigenous representation on board	Not a lot of emphasis on indigenous values in our reports focused on community values	Reserving/conserving land and excluding traditional/cultural Indigenous practices	Double click on a sticky note to type!	more requests directed to already capacity-strapped FN orgs/govts

Strength

What aspects of UNRIP and your sessions with Nahaneé Creative have already been active practices within your team that we can build on?

Actively learning how to advocate/support work with an Indigenous Gov't that is not recognized by the BC or Canadian gov't	Incorporating meaningful land acknowledgements and learnings in our work	Ensuring job postings are reaching Indigenous communities	Working collaboratively with local indigenous communities on environmental projects	Offering education to foster inclusion with indigenous peoples within and partnered with organization
Training an indigenous crew in restoration practices (capacity building for Nation)	Working closely with an organization whose purpose is to protect the land for the Nation	Indigenous book club for faculty & staff	Hosting workshops on decolonization for stewardship groups	Having Indigenous community members guest lecture in classes (so their perspectives are part of the curriculum)
Land acknowledgements	Work closely with local first nations	Indigenous Leaders Advisory Council (like a Board of Directors)	UNRIP Staff & Organization Self Evaluation	Longer timelines for engagement
Start the conversation of indigenous comgmt of waters to the community	Securing funding for indigenous partners			



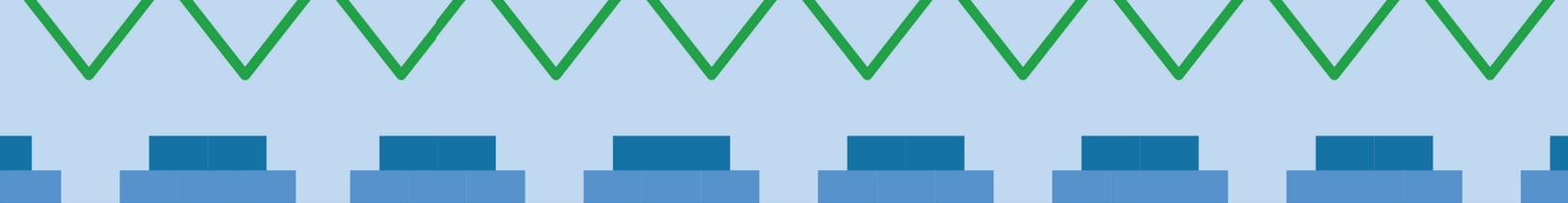
Place a note of encouragement and/or a reminder for yourself and others to look back at to help us along on our decolonizing journeys...

Don't be too worried about perfection	Be honest and open in your relationships	We are making waves!	Be authentically yourself :)	Focus on shared hopes/goals	Be kind :)
Keep making connections	Decolonizing my own mind is a big part of this process, too.		Sharing is caring	always forward, even if small steps	
Kindness is caring - people will recognize you are doing the good work	We're in this together		Just by showing up to these sessions, you're making change	Knowledge is empowering	

HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS



HEALTHY
WATERSHEDS
INITIATIVE



HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS: OPEN DIALOGUE SUMMARY

Written by Claudia Ferris and Included in the Dec. 22, 2021 HWI YEAR END UPDATE to Project Teams, updated by Tara Marsden, Senior Indigenous Advisor

On December 10th 2021, Healthy Watersheds Initiative held an open dialogue session via Zoom to mark the end of many of the project's work, to reflect on challenges and resiliency, and to honour and respect the recent findings of residential school burial sites across BC and Canada. Originally planned as a celebration event, it was reframed in light of the catastrophic flooding events of November in the lower mainland and southern interior, and the on-going tragic findings of unmarked graves at residential schools, and the militarized police invasion of Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan lands resulting in arrests and police brutality of land defenders. Our staff opted for a more reflective, somber and honouring event to recognize resilience in the face of on-going challenges and trauma.

The session included more than 20 HWI project leads and staff, and illuminated how HWI project teams demonstrated resiliency in many ways by adapting their work in response to the many challenges we faced last year. In addition to the Covid-19 pandemic, teams had to respond to the impacts of heat domes, forest fires, flooding and, the discovery of unmarked graves at former residential school sites. The HWI work on watershed security is an important part of helping to make our communities, our homes, and the places we love stronger, more resilient, and more livable.

The zoom session provided an opportunity for peers to exchange information, stories, and experiences. Several people reported that their projects fared well during the atmospheric river events, showing that their restoration work increased capacity for holding and dispersing water. Breakout groups had engaging discussions on themes developed from participant inputs to a Jamboard. The discussion themes included:

- Watershed Governance, Recovery and Building Back Better, and
- Intergenerational learning and Indigenous Rights.

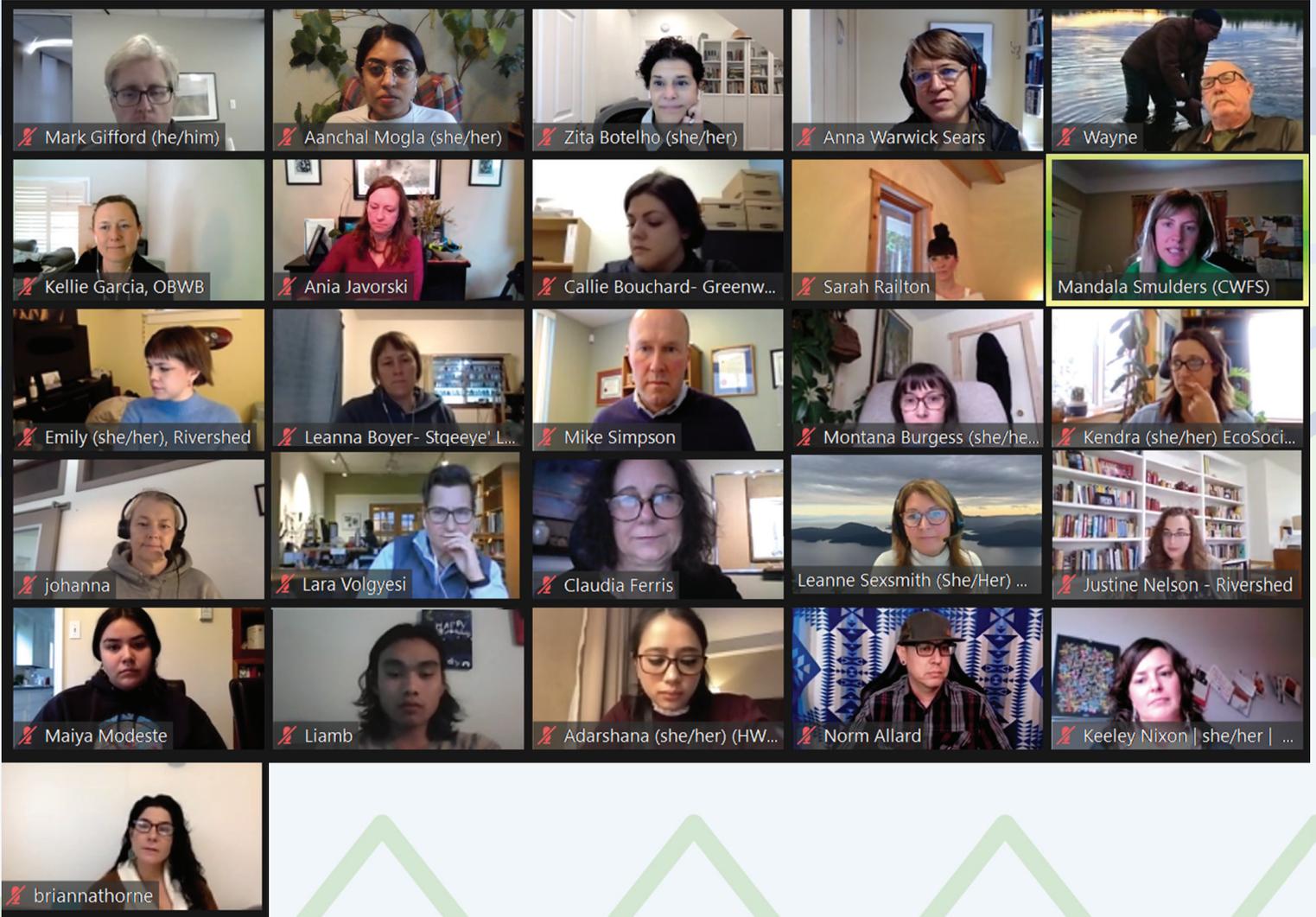
A common theme that emerged from all the groups was the importance of developing lasting relationships. We also heard that the complexity of watershed work involving multiple government agencies is a challenging reality of this work. Participants also spoke of the need for water leaders to “push back the public narrative about continuing a colonial way of dealing with infrastructure and they need to champion a path forward that includes more natural defenses solutions.”

We heard stories about how HWI teams are working collaboratively in their communities, and demonstrating reconciliation actions on the ground. One participant shared that, “Indigenous elders are pleased to see landowners and non-governmental and Indigenous organizations working together in a way they haven't seen before.”

Participants shared that they wanted the capacity developed through HWI to be sustained by the provincial government delivering on their commitment to launch a permanent water security fund and strategy. In addition, we acknowledged that the one-year economic stimulus funding time frame does not align with the seasonal and time dependent realities of this work that can be challenged by climate, fish cycles or permit processes. Many HWI projects accepted extensions to address the unprecedented scheduling obstacles due to COVID-19 and impacts of the climate crisis.

For HWI staff, it was important to not ignore, deny, or downplay the significance of the events of 2021 and the impact that they had on Indigenous communities across BC. Being responsive and supportive to Indigenous-led projects, as well as projects with Indigenous partnerships, meant providing additional time for interim and final reporting, acknowledging the tragic events and holding space for dialogue, and lobbying the provincial government for the one-year extension for all projects who needed it.

PARTICIPANTS OF THE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION





What question or topic do you want to discuss, given current events and challenges that have impacted communities, projects and objectives?

EXAMPLE
How might we ensure that local governments make decisions that support watershed security?

Long term funding and changes to regulatory processes for restoration and research specific projects

What comms or storytelling support could projects use to help local media make the connection between projects and value of watershed security fund/HWI-type support from Province and Feds?

how to get the provincial and federal government to better regulate ecosystem protection?

How do we do our projects to advocate and support the dire need for healthy watershed policy change?

How to better align permitting/government decision-making with habitat projects that fall under short-term funding cycles.

What are ways HWI orgs and projects could show support for Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en First Nations?

To add to the above, how might we support local govts to do this

How do we jump ahead to being proactive with climate adaptation when we have so much recovery to do?

How to continue the funded support like HWI to further restoration across the province?



Resource extraction with land use planning

School involvement as part of their educational path forward

Having our Indigenous Youth on the land, connecting and learning, is essential. How do we continue to support Indigenous youth moving into watershed restoration?

What does building back better look like? How do healthy watersheds support/integrate with that?

How do we make sure we are providing sufficient resources to support recovery but are still supporting the proactive work that needs to be done.

how to get the provincial and federal government to better regulate ecosystem protection?

What are some simple ways we can connect and collaborate (vs. work in silos/compete for funds etc.) with each other to reach similar goals on healthy watersheds and healthy orgs working for change?

To expand on this, how to include multiple generations in restoration, protection, adaptation work. including youth, elders

How have the floods affected water monitoring programs? (i.e. washed out sampling locations, lost sensors, safety of volunteers during field visits?)

how to get the provincial and federal government to better regulate ecosystem protection?

How can we change our models of forestry and resource extraction to better support climate change adaptation and restoration-based economy?



Breakout Room 1 - Watershed Governance

Issue - Restoration projects being framed as development projects requiring regulatory compliance

Government agencies operating in silos - 1 DFO dept is a partner, while another is requesting EAO involvement. How can this disconnect be resolved?

Areas that don't have land use plans create situations where restoration work is happening in areas that are still being developed / dismantled

So much of the time through this funding was trying to lay the groundwork. The actual work was pushed into the 11th hour.

Funding windows don't align with regulatory windows, while regulatory windows don't align with the work that needs to be done

One initiative reformed so they could have better coordination between the province and feds so some awareness of disconnect

Pressuring govts to move the process along are harmful to relationships

HWI flexibility in project deadlines has been helpful

Disconnect between ministries as well - mandate for fish recovery not extended to what MOTI's mandate is

Funding for employment is critical as its often left out of what funding can be used for

Challenge with 1-year funding is the lack of ability to monitor and correct work as needed. Could ultimately lead to loss of investment

1-year limitations create job insecurity and lead to loss of talent; also many orgs seeking staff within the same year

1. Has HWI provided any insights for solutions to governance challenges?

Would benefit with conversations with the Province on different approaches to restoration as they will vary regionally

Through employment, we've been able to support Guardian programs which has built relationship & trust and ensures we're abiding by what the Nation wants

Suggestion: Forum with DFO & provincial ministries to close the gaps and bridge the silos

EXAMPLE
How might we ensure that local governments make decisions that support watershed security?

To add to the above, how might we support local govts to do this

How can we do more, through our projects to advocate and support the dire need for healthy watershed policy change?

What comms or storytelling support could projects use to help local media make the connection between projects and value of watershed security. Fund/HWI type support from Province and Feds?

Resource extraction with land use planning

How to better align permitting/governance decision making with habitat projects that fall under short-term funding cycles

How to get the provincial and federal government to better regulate ecosystem protection?

How to get the provincial and federal government to better regulate ecosystem protection?

What are some simple ways we can connect and collaborate (ie work in silos/compete for funds etc.) with each other to reach similar goals on healthy watersheds and healthy orgs working for change?

How can we change our models of forestry and resource extraction to better support climate change adaptation and restoration-based economy?

- Notes:
1. During discussion, please also capture your thoughts in posted notes
 2. Nominate a person in your group who can share your discussion with the whole group





Water storage with natural approaches - we did beaver dam analogues in Nicola - instead of engineered dams

Breakout Room 2 - Recovery and Building Back Better

Does HWI provide any insights about how to build back better?

Wetland restoration and creation - recognizing multiple wins of water storage to address flood, drought, fish habitat

hard to push work agenda forward when people are dealing with deep personal challenges of the past year. Trauma of colonialism.

Engagement takes long term maintenance. It's very important and needs resourcing and time.

there are large areas that need restoration. This work takes years and years.

really hard to counter the momentum of people wanting to quickly build back with fortresses and grey infrastructure. How do you do a course correct when facing such a force of fear.

events of the past weeks really challenging. Thinking a lot about how to communicate and articulate a path forward.

build in the right place. Remove conflict of interest between Local Gov't and province in flood control.

Promote wetlands restoration and creation to regulate flows and mitigate flooding and

levels, but also generate revenue from land development. hence they are mostly driven by demand for revenue and push for development in places such as floodplains. Local gov't responsibility for flood management

competing priorities. You can't just return people's properties to a lake, for example in the Sumas Valley.

Restoring freshet. Dams and other barriers affecting natural systems. Will never get back historical floodwater levels, but restoring in ways to mimic yearly flooding, which hasn't happened in 40 years.

ongoing changes in the climate. we won't be able to predict, necessarily. planning in the absence of data and not knowing the future, is really hard. Previously the models were more predictable

inter-connections. Working on foodlands project through a drought and flooding, hope gov't will look to all the HWI project, and look to those as examples - keep funding and resources. It will save gov't in the long term. Disaster relief has to

people's connection to place is so fundamental to emotional and spiritual ties - you can't compensate financially for that loss. Find ways to build back that inter-connect those important elements. Super challenges.

floodplain re-engagement - led by Sylix - non-Indigenous orgs need to support that Indigenous led work. Takes a lot of resources. Must continue to fund and support those Indigenous led projects.

How to continue the funded support like HWI to further restoration across the province?

What does building back better look like? How do healthy watersheds support/integrate with that?

How have the floods affected water monitoring programs? (i.e. washed out sampling locations, lost sensors, safety of volunteers during field visits?)

How do we jump ahead to being proactive with climate adaptation when we have so much recovery to do?

How do we make sure we are providing sufficient resources to support recovery but are still supporting the proactive work that needs to be done.

** 1. During discussion, please also capture your thoughts in posted notes.
2. Nominate someone to share back your discussion with the larger group



Breakout Room 3 - Indigenous Rights & Multi-Generational Learning

Has HWI provided any learnings or insights about how to support this work?

What is needed to advance this approach? Are there existing opportunities?

Maiya, Brianna, Emily, Trinda, Sarah, Liam, Leanna, Mark, Zita

What are ways HWI orgs and projects could show support for Gitsan and Wet'suwet'en First Nations?

School involvement as part of their educational path forward

Having our Indigenous Youth on the land, connecting and learning, is essential. How do we continue to support Indigenous youth moving into watershed restoration?

reciprocity

"Elders and youth together breathes life into the land." Elders have traditional knowledge and they know the land best and need to part of everything.

multi-generational, figure out more ways to include people of all ages, learning programs for youth to be able to continue this work. trying with woodlands project. outdoor learning schools & supporting indigenous learnings for kids is imp

youth enthusiasm for land stewardship is the most healing thing for me. It inspires me and strengthens my commitment.

To expand on this, how to include multiple generations in restoration, protection, adaptation work. including youth, elders

kindergarten-gr 12, proven to be valuable, sparks interest in youth to become stewards, deeper understanding of what it means to be an indigenous land keeper. brings together indigenous and non indigenous

biology student, I saw indigenous knowledge as separate and I've learned that I can integrate the two. We need to support youth to be able to see that potential integrations. How can NGOs support communities

true healing happens when youth and elders are together. All generations together builds resiliency and healing to the land.

- ** 1. During Discussion, please capture thoughts on posted notes.
- 2. Please nominate a group member to share your discussion with the whole group



**Maiye
Modeste,
Liam, Leanna,
Mark, Trinda
Brianna**