



PERSPECTIVE

“One of the highlights of this project was the opportunity to provide technical water quality data to support Semiahmoo First Nation as they share their story of traditional shellfish harvest practice and the need to restore this food fishery to their community. There has been a beautiful weaving of western science with traditional knowledge and practice that tells a strong story of the importance of the health of this watershed for all of us to flourish into the future.”

- A Rocha Canada, Water Quality Restoration and Monitoring in Boundary Bay



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.

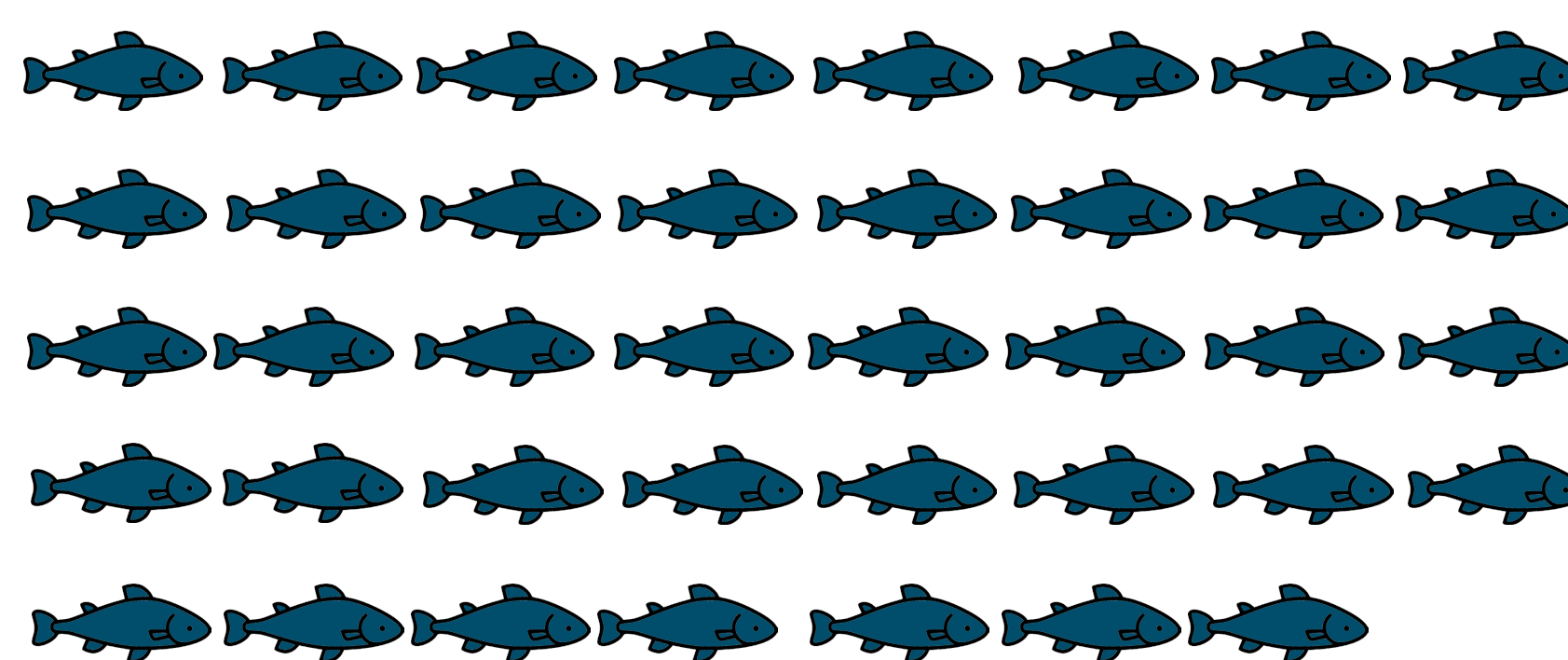
GUIDANCE FROM INDIGENOUS LEADERS

“We highlight the importance of understanding the history of the watershed, including history of Indigenous occupation and use, changes since contact and current state.

Part of this is understanding how natural systems work, so restoration can work with nature and not against it.”

- Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle

39 (80%) projects addressed at-risk or culturally significant species, with Salmon protection being the greatest area of focus.



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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.

In addition to environmental actions, 33% of teams put additional focus on the economic, spiritual and cultural values of the watersheds

“We have learned that the challenge in collaboration stems from the differences in worldviews. Syilx values consider humans as being a part of nature, not apart from it, and is inherently different from the western concept of human-centric management of resources for extraction purposes. The bridging of indigenous and non-indigenous epistemologies through an ethical space was brought together in a syilx-led n?awqnxwix? methodology, a consensus-based decision-making process that prioritizes the participation of Syilx Traditional Ecological and Cultural Knowledge keepers.”

- Okanagan Nation Alliance, Okanagan Lake Responsibility Planning Initiative and Restoration Project

“In my times of trouble, when I feel ill, one of the things I always know is that I haven’t had enough water. When I go back and take some water, take some clean water, I do a lot better. It speaks to me even when I don’t listen. Water is a gift for us from the sky, and we don’t do enough to hold it. We need to create space to hold it. We all need to do our part because climate action isn’t a thing that is happening to us; it is something that we need to take action on so that we can give water the help that it needs right now, which is finding places where we can hold it and where we can store it naturally [...] A small thing, a drop of water and what it does for you. It creates that great ripple, and you need to respond to that.”

- Mavis Underwood, Chair, Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle



We have learned that recognizing a spiritual connection to water is a way to reset how we have treated the essence of all life. Indigenous Peoples working with settlers to heal damaged watersheds has helped to repair the resiliency of fresh water systems and community relationships. Understanding the history of each unique watershed, and working together to bring it back to the way it was before, is a process that better respects water as a living entity.

- Op-ed | Tara Marsden & Mark Gifford

We need to stop taking life-giving gifts for granted and bring back reverence for water. As the demand for watershed solutions increases, we can embrace and advance intergenerational learning between youth and elders, focusing on mentorship and long-term stewardship of watersheds.

- Op-ed | Tara Marsden & Mark Gifford

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“K’omoks First Nation has been a project partner since the project’s ideation. The concept for the project was brought to them for review, and they indicated they would like to partner on the project and have the land rematriated after successful restoration. Since then, we have been working with KFN on land securement, project design and review, economic and job opportunities, and ongoing discussions in monthly partner meetings. KFN Guardians Program is active in monitoring and restoration.”

– Comox Valley Project Watershed Society, Kus Kus Sum Unpaving Paradise - Estuary Restoration



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 maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.

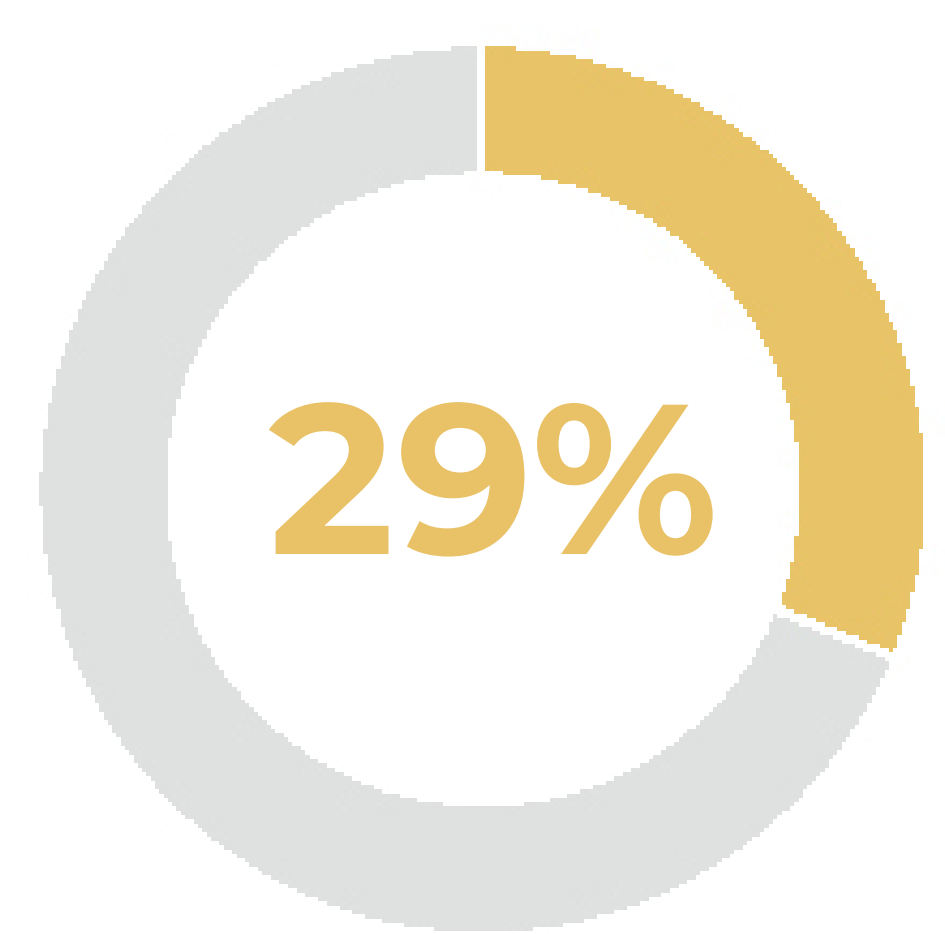
RELEVANCE TO HWI

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

Indigenous Partner Role

Full Partner		18 Indigenous-Led Partners 29%
Partial Partner		23 Indigenous-Led Partners 37%
Engagement		11 Indigenous-Led Partners 18%
Info-Sharing Only		10 Indigenous-Led Partners 16%
No Information		8 Indigenous-Led Partners
Total		70 Indigenous-Led Partners 100%

Indigenous Leadership



Projects Led by Indigenous Leadership

Among our sample of projects, Indigenous-led organizations were directly funded through HWI to deliver 14 (29%) of the 49 funded projects. Of the 61 HWI funded projects overall, 19 (31%) were funded through direct grants to Indigenous-led organizations.

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PERSPECTIVE

“My approach has been bringing youth out on the land, and trying to help forge that reconnection to place. The different roles we play, don’t matter as much – whether it’s a biologist, a manager, a politician or leader, what matters is that connection to the land and water.”

- Taylor Wale, Gitksan Watershed Authorities, McCully Creek Restoration Project (partners with government and private land owners in the Kispiox Valley restoring critical salmon spawning habitat)



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.

GUIDANCE FROM INDIGENOUS LEADERS

“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 a partnership should be included in proposals.”

“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.”

“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.”

- Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle

2905 Sites

included research and monitoring activities

1400 Sites

focused on land and water management activities

424 Sites

focused on conservation designation & planning

169 Sites

provided species management



90%

of projects conducted work that supports the exercise of Indigenous rights.

80%

of projects incorporated Indigenous knowledge into project planning.

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PERSPECTIVE

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.

GUIDANCE FROM INDIGENOUS LEADERS

“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.”

“When our watersheds are healthy, it means we can access traditional foods and medicines, we are fulfilling our stewards obligation, and we have access to clean drinking water that supports ecosystem function.”

- Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle

“As a decolonized approach to habitat restoration, Foodlands features collaboration with local Indigenous communities through the co-design of corridor sites, the integration of traditional knowledge and language, and the creation of local jobs...

During the co-design of our project plan, Foodlands collaborated with Indigenous knowledge holders to identify culturally significant plants and animals to target in our habitat restoration work. Culturally significant species include those that are harvested and hunted for spiritual, nutritional, or medicinal purposes. As outlined in Article 24.1 of UNDRIP, 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...Once the plants have been established and grown, Rivershed is planning to collaborate with local communities and schools to host site visits for Indigenous youth and other community members to learn about plants and animals in the area.

We have provided some funding to Tsleil-Waututh Nation...to use the project sites in the Foodlands corridor to share cultural knowledge around the significance of the food and medicine plants that have been introduced in the restoration efforts.”

- Rivershed Society, Foodlands Corridor Restoration Project



33%

of HWI projects provided skills and training in traditional plants and medicine in restoration work.

Example: The Kwakiutl First Nation A'axsila (Guardian) team expanded their work and methodology beyond what was previously standard practice to include all ancestral use (e.g., trails; clam and kelp gardens; root gardens; medicines).

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