



## Draft Minutes – Monthly Board Meeting

Date: Monday, November 24, 2025

Time: 9am-11:30am, beginning with coffee/conversation from 8:30-9am

Location: CVRD Boardroom, 175 Ingram Street

**Meeting Chair:** Co-Chair Kate Segall **Expected Participants:** Shannon Waters, Christopher Alphonse, Calvin Swustus Senior, Michelle Staples, David Slade, David Froese, Tim Kulchyski, Kristine Sandhu, Arlette Malcolm, Jenna Sutherst, Alison Nicholson; **Staff/Project Leaders:** Danielle Paydli, Tom Rutherford, Jill Thompson, Isabel Ransom, Julia Kidder, Katia Bannister.

**Guest Speakers:** Qwuy'um'aat Elliot, EverPlan Consulting

**Audience members:** Working group members, volunteers, interested public. All welcome

**Regrets:** Chief Cindy Daniels; Jenna Sutherst (Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program technical grant review meeting); Michelle Staples (Halifax, presenting on opioid crisis); Oliver Brandes (Advisor)

## Agenda

8:30am Coffee and Conversation  
175 Ingram Street (CVRD Board Room)

1. **Welcome/Prayer (9:00am)**
2. **Regular Business**
  - a. Agenda Review / Revisions
  - b. Review and approve September 29th, 2025 Draft Minutes
  - c. Announcements and Correspondence (see bottom of agenda)
  - d. Staff updates (Danni)
3. **Hul'q'umi'num Watershed Lesson (9:15am)**
4. **Cowichan Weir Technical Update (9:30am)**
5. **CWB Impact Plan - Board Input (10:15am) - For Discussion**
6. **Proposed changes to BC'S Natural Resource Permitting processes (10:30am) – For Discussion and Decision**
7. **Other Business (10:45am)**
8. **Adjourn (11:00am)**

## 1. Welcome/Prayer and Opening

## 2. Regular Business

Agenda moved by David Slade, seconded by Calvin Swustus Sr. – consensus achieved

Minutes from November 27 – moved by Kristine Sandhu, seconded by Alison Nicholson

Announcements and correspondence (Danielle Paydli)

- Received some email correspondence from Richard Tarnoff, coordinator of Community Circles Restorative Justice Society re: dumping illegally on Cowichan Tribes territories. Danni met with the CAO of Cowichan Tribes and was advised no action needed.
- New advertisement of community events in calendar format ([NatureCowichan.net](http://NatureCowichan.net))
- Next speaker night: December 15, Topic: “Our Community’s Water: CVRD’s Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Plan” with Gaelan McMenamim (Senior Environmental Analyst, CVRD)
- There is a new Cowichan Tribes online Hul’q’umi’num’ resource: [LearnCowichan.ca/resources](http://LearnCowichan.ca/resources)
- Public workshop on Saturday, November 29 at the HUB @ Cowichan Station. Topic: How forestry practices impact forest hydrology. Hosted by Shawnigan Lake and Dr. Younes Alila. There will be a forum for public discussion on forestry and water hydrology, and a feature short film: “Trouble in the Headwaters”.
- Discussion re: illegal dumping on Cowichan Tribes reserve lands..
  - Lots of postings recently from Cowichan Tribes re: partnerships and work to resolve this issue with other parties, including DFO and CT’s economic development arm. When CT passed a new land code under federal law, they left that site out as well as another site on Miller Road (old Cowichan Valley dump site) because they knew what was happening there. The time is here that the dump site needs to be addressed. A group is meeting regularly to discuss solutions. A court order has been issued for the landowner(s).
  - This issue belongs to all of us – illegal dumping is an issue throughout the Cowichan Valley. We need to call on higher levels of government to enforce their own rules to preserve our beautiful lands and waters.
  - Acknowledgement of negative comments from people in the community with regards to Cowichan Tribes. Everybody, especially colonial people, have been dumping on Cowichan Tribes land, even after they were displaced to postage-stamp reserves. This is yet another form of the historical injustices we have seen here.

- Racism is involved in this. We see this also with the Tl'uqtinus case (*Cowichan Tribes v. Canada*) and naming of the Cowichan Hospital (*Quw'utsun Hulitun-ew't-hw*). Addressing that is part of the work of protecting the watershed.
- The media is misrepresenting the issue – Cowichan Tribes illegally dumping. Cowichan Valley Regional District is not named this way in cases of illegal dumping on CVRD properties.
- The Board members stand in solidarity with Cowichan Tribes.

### 3. H'ul'q'umi'num Lesson with Christopher Alphonse

- *Something is making me sneeze – Hu-sumus-the'lum*
  - *Something is making you sneeze – Hu-sumus-thaam*
  - *Something is making you sneeze continuously – Hul-sumus-thaam*
- *I feel better now - Ni' tsun thuylnulh*
- *The pain of my injury is going away – Ni' 'o' 'i hweehwun tunu tunu sme'kwelh*
- *Have a seat, take a seat – Hwts'e'nutsum*
  - *You have a seat – Hwts'e'nutsum ch*
  - *Please have a seat - Hwts'e'nutsum steep*
  - *I will sit – Hwts'e'nutsum tsu tse'*
- *It is good to see you – 'Uy' kwunus 'i lumnamu*
  - *It feels go to see you – Uy' nu sqwaluwun kwunus 'i lumnamu*
  - *It is nice to see you again – Uy' kwunus 'i tl'e' wulh lumnamu*
- *It's a very good day – Tl'im 'uy' skweyul*
  - *It is a very very good day – Tl'im nan 'i' 'uy' skweyul*
- *I will see you – 'O' lumnamu tsu tse'*
  - *I will see you tomorrow – 'O' lumnamu tsu tse' 'o' kweyul'us*
  - *I will see you this evening – 'O' lumnamu tsu tse' 'u tun'a hwune'unt*

### 4. CWB Impact Plan - Board Input

“Advancing Collaborative Local Governance for a Healthy Quw'utsun-Xwulqu'selu Watershed”  
Presented by Qwuy'um'aat Elliot and Danielle Paydli

### **Intro from Qwuy'um'aat:**

- Qwuy'um'aat is from Cowichan and shares her name with her late father and brother.
- Does a lot of strategic planning, organization, walking with community. She has supported the Board in developing policies, reviewing the employee handbook, and developing the impact plan. Her expertise is in asking questions, getting to the core of work, facilitating. Walks alongside community, deep listening. Academic background – walking in two worlds constantly, trying to bridge ways of being. Highest degree - motherhood. 13 year old, 2 year old, & new baby. Investment in children, community and future generations to thrive.

### **Intention setting exercise: How do you want to show up to this work, and make sure that this work flows in a good way? Why are we here? Share a word or brief statement.**

- Interested in understanding how we live our principles in our work.
- Grateful for this as setting a foundation for the work, bringing to other places and spaces I go to.
- Interested to be open to “flow” – love the metaphor throughout the document. How we can flow to get things done, and not avoid hard topics and questions.
- Looking through the lens of history and present, looking to the future – how we can take the impacts of history and move forward in a good way to develop this plan.
- Recognize how this Watershed Board is recognized in BC and nationally – the partnership and collaboration it represents is really strong.
- Moving forward is understanding the history – the Cowichan Peoples have existing and inherent rights. We have to understand past practices and know what we don't know.
- Hope and optimism for a future that is sustainable, fair, equitable. I like to believe at this table we are demonstrating what reconciliation can look like as we move forward together with leadership and guidance of elders from both First Nations and those of colonial descent.
- If I could show up as a fish, I would. Feeling the river.
- It's important to be here, one of the things everybody at the table has struggled with is trying to find a way to breathe life into this plan and make it a part of everything we do. Try and gain traction. We've been able to have success despite gaps within existing crown legislation (provincial and federal mandates). A big part of why that is, is what's here – talking about Cowichan inherent rights and watershed stewardship and acting based on that.

### **Presentation**

- See slides: *HERE*

### **Discussion**

- **Re: addressing climate change explicitly:**
  - Don't see climate change or the climate crisis mentioned in this document. Many imperatives are at least partially related to the climate crisis – we should

acknowledge as an issue we are all facing, whether in “upstream clarity” (ex., *develop a whole-of-watershed approach in the face of the climate crisis*)

- Are we still on the same page about getting to net zero, given that climate change is at the root of our watershed health issues? We need to build housing, what about ensuring new builds are net zero? The weir project is a band-aid, we need to address the major problem of climate change.
  - Important to mention – but, we can say climate change and not recognize what’s causing it. This document gets to the root of many ideologies that have resulted in climate change – it goes more upstream, to the headwaters (colonialism). That said, the reason this came into being was drought caused by the climate crisis.
- **re: Putting principles into action: our ways of working:**
    - Principles can be revisited and adapted – thinking of work being done to clarify Quw’utsun water laws and 11 Quw’utsun teachings. Not a conversation for now, but open to adaptation through the year
    - With the discussion today around the dumping site – I think it’s captured indistinctly in here, but can be explicit: for the future, we need to recognize that we’re in a context of rising racism within the valley and commit to continuing to have those difficult conversations and bring that into the space of what we do, collectively.
- **re: targets:**
    - Seeing exclusion of forests from targets as a gap in whole-of-watershed approach. Adding forests to targets?
    - The watershed, by-and-large, is a forest. We must include forest health in our targets.
    - Healthy forest, healthy system – for example, the massive mudslides/landslides in the Fraser river (2021?); if we’re not maintaining certain things, and enabling deforestation, this could happen here
    - Addressing derelict vessels in Cowichan Bay – partnered with Burgoyne Bay
      - Problem was – wasn’t a large enough catchment area and Cowichan Tribes weren’t told beforehand they were looking for a specific scale.
- Motion to include healthy forests in the Targets: moved by David Froese, seconded by David Slade.
- **Re: delivering key projects**
  - (see timeline in presentation slides – not in impact plan)
    - Weir Replacement: Securing Summer Water
    - Xwulqw’selu Watershed and Water Sustainability Planning Process
      - Plan submitted 2026
      - Next step: governance structure for implementation

- Unclear role for CWB in how to support next phases of that work following the plan submission
  - Community Fish Protection: Crisis Response & Resilience
  - Water Quality & Data Sharing: Accessible Knowledge for All
  - Kelvin Creek Pilot Project: Assessing riparian health
  - Youth Engagement Project: Building multi-generational capacity
- **re: Xwulqw'selu Watershed and Water Sustainability Planning Process**
  - Counted on this planning process addressing the forest issue and unsure, doubtful it will progress far enough along to make the process needed to deliver on watershed goals. We need to increase focus on forests, and how they relate. The watershed is a forested system. Every tributary coming into the rivers is affected by forest health, and I don't see us doing that work right now.
  - It is important to stage, work on a timeline and set aspirational targets, but these things take time and may take longer than we want to do a good job. Important to be active, but not rush.
- **Identified for further discussion:**
  - Should we include development of healthy forests indicators, and add timeline for fundraising for projects within this area to the workplan/timeline?
  - Where would the watershed board sit, in the Town of Lake Cowichan, in long-term implementation planning and conversations with the Province?
  - We should acknowledge that we, as a Board, support upgrading/improvement of the sewage treatment plant at Lake Cowichan. Perhaps we should have a general comment about support for improvement of that facility.
  - Good representation of upstream/downstream approach – sewage treatment (upstream) and outfall at Lake Cowichan Lagoon (downstream) Joint Utilities Board
  - Lake Cowichan is within Cowichan Tribes traditional territory – nobody has spoken with CT about what's happening with the lagoon. Our goals here with the river bring good light to what's happening in that area. Suggests keeping this on the agenda, because it impacts Cowichan's heritage river.
- **3-year Planning Exercise**
  - What outcomes and realities we want to deliver by the end of year 1, year 2 and year 3?

## 5. Review Letters to the Province

**Proposed changes to BC's Natural Resource Permitting processes** (11:28 am - 11:44am)  
For Discussion and Decision

Danni Paydli and Oliver Brandes to follow up regarding the Board's response to the proposed changes to the province's natural resource permitting processes.

## **Discussion**

- Protected areas: how do Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) affect areas or trigger any funding?
  - Clause in letter about streamlining not affecting local watershed initiatives – wording is broad enough to cover that.
  - Formalized initiatives or processes (like the WSP happening in Koksilah) would have rigor beyond act – but, as scale goes down to local government or Indigenous-led initiatives or things that are more informal. Local planning wouldn't automatically supersede or circumvent the structure of the Act.
  - Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) – given currently undefined legal status (in colonial law), less recognizable by/impactful on the Water Sustainability Act than the WSP which is an established government-to-government planning process
  
- Suggested edits:
  - Concerns about use and registration for low-volume users being posed as the way to address cumulative impacts. The biggest water user by far in the Cowichan Valley is the (Crofton) Mill. This license needs to be reviewed and changed. The main use of water should not be the pulp mill with profits going to the richest family in Indonesia. If we're coming down on community members who want to water their gardens, and ignoring the impacts of the mill, we're not doing our job.
    - Response: This letter is a specific response to proposed changes in the Water Sustainability Act to streamline the process for granting new licenses or permits. As such, the scope of this doesn't apply to comments on existing water users. Keeping the letter's scope to what's changing.
  - CC co-chairs of BC First Nations Water Table and mention unilateral changes by BC
    - James Mack, Lydia Hwitsum (Cowichan), Hugh Braker (Tseshaht) Brian Holmes (Nicola)
  - Phrase “remain rigorous” – change to “be rigorous”.

**Decision:** Motion by Calvin Swustus Sr., seconded by Tim Kulchyski that the board approves the letter subject to 2 changes (cc and change of “remain”)

## **Proposed engagement in a Provincial-level Water Rates campaign (11:45 am - 11:58 am)**

For Discussion and Decision

David Slade to introduce the campaign and suggest next steps from the CWB

## **Discussion:**

- Is this just going to the MLA, cc'd to other Ministers?
  - Yes – part of a movement to get other watershed groups to support this request.
- What and who is the Watershed Security Coalition?

- A provincial-wide non-profit organization looking to connect stewardship groups, advocates, and boards across the province to look at where provincial policies can uplift local communities
- Goal is to get the province to fund watershed boards across the province, recognizing the value of these boards.
- Local organizations can showcase unique, locally-focused, place-based, watershed-scale examples.
- Cross-fertilization between Watershed Security Coalition, BC First Nations Water Security Table, etc. – lots of similar people within those groups within the province
- Point out that the cost for homeowners is not \$2.25 per million litres – homeowner costs are many orders of magnitude different.
  - Water weights that anyone in a water system pays are proportional to the cost of water.
  - Well owners don't pay; not getting water through CVRD.
  - North Cowichan paying \$2.25/million litres, then adding cost of management, distribution, treatment etc. and passing onto the consumer
  - This is affecting the *wholesale* price of water
- Has the CWB asked MLA [Debra Toporowski \(Qwulti'stunaat\)](#) for a meeting or met previously?
  - Have invited her to come to a board meeting for that kind of connection and recognition, as with the outgoing MLA/MP in September.
  - Danni invited both incoming MLA/MP but hasn't had either of them yet.
  - Tom has been invited to talk about watershed values.
- Assume the province, who approves licenses and pay rates, are excusing major industrial users from paying their fair share because they are providing jobs – is that the case? Is there a way we can acknowledge the rationale, whatever the reason is that the province has set up licenses the way they are, and still point out the disparity? Interweaving, as well, personal/residential-use water rates.
- Note the things we would like brought up in the conversation with the MLA, and send this letter as part of the request for a meeting. Can form a response based on

**Decision:** Motion by Christopher Alphonse, seconded by Alison Nicholson: the board approves the letter, subject to incorporating amendments and subject to approval by internal processes of the partners.

## 6. Other business

- Speaker series: December 15, 7pm. Speaker is Gaelan from CVRD. Coming earlier for a social: 6:30pm. There will be an interactive, educational model of the watershed. Looking for an MC volunteer – helping open and close the event, uphold protocol. Brief speaking notes will be provided, but the volunteer is encouraged to imbue their own sense of humour and expertise.

- Tim volunteers.
- 2026 Speaker Series - emerging topics
  - Riparian Invasives: Two watershed working to address emergent threats to ecosystem health
  - Understanding Elk and planning with them in-mind: Indigenous Rights, farmer concerns, and more
  - Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas: Asserting Indigenous sovereignty
  - Green building: Climate-friendly building practices for Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities

**Adjourn [11:35]**

DRAFT