

Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable, Dec 17, 2024 monthly meeting notes

Fish Health Building

Notes taken by Jill Thompson

Attending: Heather Wright (DFO), Elizabeth Aitken (CVRD), Katy Fulton, (BC Parks), Ardis Mellor-Laing (BC Parks), Ellery Jackson-Renz (CVRD) , Katie Mosewich (CVRD), Jim Deck, (CLRSS) Barry Hetschko, Scott Noble, Phaedra Douglass, (Somenos Marsh Society) , Heather Pritchard Cowichan Watershed Board), Jill Thompson (Cowichan Watershed Board), Tom Rutherford Cowichan Watershed Board, Robert Martin , (Cowichan Tribes) (online), Jim Wisnia, (Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre), Bruce Coates, (Nature Cowichan and Cowichan Land Trust) Pamela Williams Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre), Genevieve Singleton, nature interpreter, co-chair, Parker Jefferson, co-chair.

Regrets: T’awuhwiye Philomena Williams, Suni, Jennifer Shepherd, Stephanie Cottell, e.

Meeting co-chaired by Genevieve and Parker

Meeting agenda:

1. We are hosted on Cowichan Tribes continuously occupied, unceded territory
2. Appreciation to Fish Health staff and Freshwater Fisheries Society for the use of their meeting room and for providing Zoom.
3. Any regrets? Attendance list to be sent around.
4. Note taking. Thanks to Jill Thompson this today. Thank you to Danni for last time.
5. Website. Thanks to Sarah Mullock for keeping this updated.
6. Review of questionnaire of Quw’utsun Sta’lo’ Skweyul 2024, to be held over till next time.

Sta’lo’ Skweyul -Go round. Every year or alternate?

- Benefits – people would expect it every year.
- Mailing list of 256 some of which are organizers, so about 500
- Smaller group that does the organizing
- Round of applause for Robert and Lulumexun and Peter Moses for making such a difference this year.

Pros and cons

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regularity can save some effort - DFO has always supported both in person and financially - Builds regularity and relationships and is a good way to bring other staff along to be exposed to it all. - Hugely attended – love them! BC Parks support would continue. (Katie could put in more). BC Parks support very important. - Hopefully could get easier over time. - Good way for staff to be involved. CVRD role could maybe combine with Parks – collaborations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding was provided by a grant – not necessarily available annually. - Lots of work for the organizers! (said many times) - Do we have to have so much happening? Nice to have time to sit at the river? Could it be
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fall events are less common than spring. - Other rivers do it annually – would be great if we have the resources. - Momentum – applies both to organizers and attendees. - Learning to delegate and build a team is really helpful. Sub-committees taking on responsibility (e.g. tables and chairs) and this might be smoother if annually. - Lulumexun / Cowichan Tribes staff might be more available if it was a regular thing. - CLRSS – Water Festival in July – which pulls on the same exhibits. Still so many people who don't know anything and they need a place to learn. Educational process. Yearly is a good idea. - More engagement from Quw'utsun Mustimuhw. - Can have tables and chairs from Siem Lelum. - Catalyst very helpful with tents and delivery of tables from gym. - Gravel in the site – might be smoother if CT knew that it was happening every year – on their radar. - CVRD grant in aids very helpful. - Handshake gifts – the way they were handed out was great, in the middle of the day so we can chat with the Knowledge Keepers. - Reconciliation – building bridges, continuation from Aboriginal Games, doing things together. - Barry's hats - Genevieve earns an income. Could use help with detail/spreadsheets, etc. - Expanded sense of joy. Live in the best place in the whole world. - Round out the season. - Cultural aspect makes this different, and this decision should be made with Cowichan Tribes. - Option – plan on it every year, with option to cancel any year that the resources aren't there or whatever. - Resourcing and capacity – standing working group of the roundtable so we aren't starting new every year. Spread out the commitment. - Funding – would be good to have stable annual funding so we don't do that every time. - Think about sequencing the 3 events. Could do some cool things to connect them. Magical events that reflect the valley. - This one was biggest and most successful and logistics might be easier to remember annually. 	<p>smaller? Understand it's the same amount of work either way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 84,000 Fish was a real highlight but is one of the reasons people might not have gotten to all the booths this year. - Nice to have a break in between. - If groups brought their own tents that would save us work. - It's a lot to have 3 events 3 months in a row. Could there be some efficiencies? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o River Cleanup – more dispersed, independent (like Nature Centre).
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Consensus – Genevieve will seek a meeting with Cowichan Tribes to ask whether they would like to do it annually. Consensus from this table that we would like to work together to do it annually.

Roundtable:

Genevieve Singleton, co-chair;

- Salmon and the Forest Nature Programmes
 - o Working with Philomena Williams, Heather/DFO, Cowichan Hatchery staff, Steph Cottell, Ken Elliott Native Plant Nursery, Colleen Elliott and Genevieve
 - o School children arrive at 9:30 for approximately two hours. Philomena opens the event sharing thoughts and stories on Quw’utsun culture. The children then visit hatchery, play salmon focused games, visit Ken’s Native Plant Nursery where they do plantings for restoration and then a nature walk to river with Genevieve. Depending on the season, see salmon and dissect a fish.
 - o We have done two seasons of this Project. Hard to get funding every year. Didn’t get Pacific Salmon Foundation grant when they tried. Was turned down by BC Parks.
 - o However, to our surprise, \$7000 anonymous donation was made to support this program! Thank you to Steph and Board of Cowichan Land Trust for providing the oversight of this project.
- Climate Region Climate Gathering
 - o Honoured to give a presentation with Ken Elliott on our work for climate change. I was pleased to be contacted several times by the Gathering leads to provide info from our CSRT contacts and CSRT long time work in the Valley to provide ideas, etc.

Karen Deck, CVRD Area Director

- Very challenging CVRD budget period – so difficult to make regional decisions.
- 3 stream solid waste system was supported – will reduce shipping to states, methane gas – wonderful thing we have done but it has not been without stress and people wanting to opt out. Will benefit us all in the long run.
- Circular Economy Commission – has wanted to be on this committee. Our landfills only have about 25 years left and in emergencies (earthquake etc.) they would get stretched, so we are in a crunch.

Heather Wright, DFO

- Hatcheries doing well. Egg takes target reached. Green egg estimate done. True number later. Lake Cowichan hatchery also doing well. Chum hatch before Christmas, Coho after that.

Elizabeth Aitken, CVRD volunteer programme

- Will try to come more in new year, getting back in the groove after time away for maternity leave.
- Review of past year. Park bookings and Volunteer coordination for parks and trails.
 - o Region wide – willow staking, broom removal, ivy removal, weeding, seeding native plants. Great partnership with BC Parks in some areas. St. John’s Academy want to

steward on their paddle boards, restoration planting. [Elizabeth will email stats here], Great to partner with Ken Elliott and Genevieve at Hecate.

- Bookings – field trips, filming, picnic shelters (Bright Angel and Glenora)

Katie Fulton and Ardis Mellor-Laing (BC Parks)

- 30 parks – conservation, recreation. Current Cowichan River – trestle 66 to holt section; fisherman’s trail erosion; keeping eyes out for structures in the park that need attention. Flag any concerns with her. Shifting positions - New MLA, new Minister of Environment, new senior managers. Looking for interesting stewardship projects, project planning for next year.
 - Stairway down to holt creek from Glenora Trailhead Park should be fixed. People are using it to see salmon. Its the best spot in the valley to see spawning salmon. Fencing won’t stop people – shouldn’t have a fence barring people in a provincial park. Also important to Cowichan Tribes. We should write a letter about it.
 - Bridge in that area is lower on priority right now – letters would help again.
- Walk with Qwustenuxun and Genevieve – super good event! Great learning and well attended. Funded by BC Parks
 - Next ones are with Tim and Kenny. Emphasis is on getting neighbours out so not widely promoted.
- Ardis’ emphasis is on Cowichan River Park – checking on blowdown; hard to get on top of it, not enough staff to cover all the parks. , Issues with firewood impacts in Chemainus River park and watershed – impacts of roads Road to Carmanah on Rossander Main are washed out. Carmanah currently closed.

Ellory Jackson-Renz, CVRD – wrapping up surface water monitoring; lots of raw data that needs to be analysed. New DWWP Coordinator joining in Jan and forming a TAC. Looking to 2025, Cowichan River Fish Kill workshop last month about intensive monitoring to avoid another fish kill; and similarly, for Somenos Fish Kill event. Reflecting on what to do differently in the future. Lots of opportunity to connect with people in similar positions elsewhere last week.

Katie Mosevich, CVRD– 2-day Cowichan Region Climate Gathering. Celebrating work being done in the valley and also create relationships. Looking into what a future event would look like. Keep relationships and keep in touch. Graphic Narration.

- Groundbreaking for CVRD to do this. Important to see Indigenous Elders sharing their stories.
- Yes, important new direction for CVRD, Catering by Hungry Bubba’s and Island Bagel and Bannock.

Pamela Williams, Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre – happy to be able to say a few words in Hul’q’umi’num. Nature Center. School programs, Cowichan Bay light-up. Tomorrow high King Tide at 8:30 tomorrow am, especially with rain.

Bruce Coates - Cowichan Valley Naturalist Society becoming Nature Cowichan. Providing comments to CVRD Parks and Trails from both Nature Cowichan and Land Trust. Bruce sits on that committee and another chance for comment will happen later. Nature Cowichan Solstice event

normally a round circle with Speaker at 6:30pm. Dec 29th is Bird Count – 12 zones in 30 km zone around Duncan. See FB page for more info – Carol Milo is the local coordinator. 3pm that afternoon – après event with food

Re-invigorating the shared calendar to publicize nature related events in the valley. Events, volunteerism, etc. naturecowichan.net - View Calendar widget or Event Calendar at the top. Trial run – will be looking for funding to improve visibility and functionality. See how it works, limiting access for now but intention is to give login access to others. Plan will be to eventually have the calendar be the CVNS home page.

Jim Wisnia – has stepped down from board of Nature Estuary Nature Centre, allowing more time for birding! Enjoying great days.

Jim Deck – Gerald Thom Park adding a fern garden, 84,000 Fish Kill project was at climate gathering last week which Judy and he assisted with.

Barry Hetschko– freelance volunteer. Reflected on the ways he has worked with everyone around the table this year. Recommended Bagel and Bannock Indigenous Foods event - noted that during his process of fitting in here, learning from Cowichan people. Learns something new from Jared every time.

Scott Noble– retired 5 years ago as science teacher at Shawnigan School and loves being involved. In the field, hands on guy – no committees!

Phaedra Douglass, Somenos Marsh Society –

Phaedra Douglass, Somenos Marsh Society – There were better returns in Bings and Averill in the 2nd year of counting spawning salmon. Richards Creek has no fish yet but might with the coming rain. Recap of our work in 2024: over 1000 trees planted along Somenos creek and Open-Air Classroom with Cow High class. We are working with the MNC to revamp our water quality program to identify where nutrient inputs are coming from (as a result from the fish kill response workshop in November). New project and volunteer opportunities: we will be heading into Somenos Garry Oak Protected area to remove invasives.

Heather Pritchard

Quw'utsun Cultural Connections Society – indigenous led. 80% of the Board is Indigenous. Runs Island Bagel and Bannock. There will be more Indigenous Cooking events and Journey of our Generation workshops. Workshops are very effective at moving this knowledge into our hearts and bones. JourneyofourGeneration.ca

Xpey plantings – so far have all been planted in parks; thanks to Katie and Elizabeth.

Indigenous Land Trust to create this on other pieces of land. Experiment on Providence Farm. BC Parks recently acquired land around Skutz which will be good for planting. VIU forestry program will bring a busload of students. Env Stewardship class at high school.

Creating maps to learn where we can plant Xpey that will survive to 2100. Looking for microsites that could be good for cedar.

Cowichan Watershed Board –

WIKD – data hub or data mapping / bibliography. Shared a sketch of potential

Goals: i) Understand who holds what data where? ii) Cheap and easy so we can sustain it. iii) Elevate the great work being done here.

Will be housed on CWB website.

Example of WQ map that Phaedra created for us.

Bibliography – working with Kim L Cowichan Tribes on something.

Will come back to this group for advice.

Riparian Areas – what are healthy riparian areas? Comparing the regulations to whether the riparian zone is functional – understanding what is healthy, restored, functional. New GIS person (with Katie, Phaedra) – hope to develop a model. Working in Kelvin Creek.

Question about RAR and how confusing. ALR land exempt – can clearcut to edge unless near house

Jill Thompson, Cowichan Watershed Board, – will be working on weir communication in spring. Preparing for application to land well in the community.

Concerted effort to make sure everyone who is potentially impacted feels respected and understanding why we need to rebuild the weir, and knowing where to look for information, and that every effort has been taken to minimize any impacts.

Tom Rutherford, Cowichan Watershed Board. – 3 things! How special this table is... acknowledged Parker and Genevieve. There is not a community like this one. It's a privilege to be part of this.

Pacific Salmon – made in BC Salmon Strategy. Systems failure. Model of Feds holding responsibility for salmon with Province holding responsibility for everything that affects them – not working. Tom retained to learn from Pacific NW, and pushing a new model here in BC. Joint Salmon management strategy

CWB - Cowichan weir, fish-kill WQ work, Xwulqw'selu Watershed Planning and short term, how we are treating our Targets; WIKD.

Robert Martin, Cowichan Tribes - Marine Team working with Raincoast on WQ. First report of 4 out. Supporting Georgia Strait Alliance looking for Salish Sea stewardship partnership funding via Watershed Security Fund. Infrastructure Fund to support Quw'utsun food security – Agri-Kit – modular food processing station.

Parker Jefferson, – fish count chum. Alexandra Morton asked for people to send their info from all over Puget Sound, including small backyard streams, chum reports are higher. Fish farms removed from Discovery Passage might be playing a role. Very encouraging to see. Video clip of orca parading salmon around. Even by zoom.

Next speakers – Clay Reitsma, possibly Adams River.

Donations welcome today for gifts for hatchery staff, website donations.

Ken Elliott joined us. Finishing live staking, environmental monitoring on low pressure.