

NECHAKO
WATERSHED
ROUNDTABLE

2022 ANNUAL MEETING SUMMARY

October 27, 2022





- 3 Welcome & Acknowledgements**
- 4 Creation Story**
- 5 NWR Co-chairs Update**
- 6 Youth Engagement Working Group**
- 7 Lakes Monitoring Working Group**
- 8 Nechako Portal & Takla Portal**
- 9 Reconnecting Roundtable Part 1**
- 10 Reconnecting Roundtable Part 2**
- 11 Updates & Initiatives from the Watershed**
- 13 Attendees**

The Nechako Watershed Roundtable (NWR) was established in 2015 to address this need for collaboration and to develop a strategy to further advance the vision of a healthy Nechako ... Building on past collaboration in the region, the NWR is a group of representatives from a diversity of organizations, local governments, First Nations, private sector and federal and provincial agencies with a shared concern and commitment to protect and improve the health of the Nechako watershed (Fraser Basin Council 2016; p.4).





NECHAKO
WATERSHED
ROUNDTABLE

WELCOME & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 2022 Annual Meeting of the Nechako Watershed Roundtable, entitled "**Reconnecting: Collaboration Across the Watershed**" took place on October 27th, 2022 from 9:30am to 1:30pm. The meeting was held in-person at the House of Ancestors "Uda Dune Baiyoh" Conference Centre in Prince George, BC.

The Nechako Watershed Roundtable (NWR) is grateful to the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation for the opportunity to host the Annual Meeting on their Traditional Territory. We would like to thank Veronica Seymour, Lheidli T'enneh Elder for providing a welcome to the territory.

Vanderhoof Mayor, Kevin Moutray and Kim Menounos, Nechako Watershed Roundtable Core Committee Co-chairs, chaired the meeting and provided opening remarks.

Thank you to the following individuals for their contributions to this years annual meeting: Francois Prince, Jordan Cranmer, Wayne Salewski, Aita Bezzola, Mitchell MacFarlane, Margot Parkes, William Elkin, Isaiah Reynolds, Darlene Sanderson, Gina Layte Liston, Oliver Brandes, Stephen Dery, Eduardo Martins, Phil Owens and Tasha Peterson.

Funding to support the NWR in 2022 is provided by Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, District of Vanderhoof, Fraser Basin Council, Integris Credit Union, Nechako Environment and Water Stewardship Society, Regional District of Bulkley Nechako, Real Estate Foundation of BC and the University of Northern British Columbia.

The purpose of this document is to summarize the key learnings from the annual meeting. The meeting package including the agenda and a complete recording of the meeting are available to members at www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/Nechako_Watershed_Roundtable.html.



CARRIER SEKANI
tribal council



Fraser Basin Council



DISTRICT OF
Vanderhoof



Presented by: Francois Prince, Nak'azdli First Nation

The Carrier legend of creation is told by Carrier Elders and passed down through generations. Variations in the story exist as each Elder tells the story as they heard it. The creation story teaches children to live with integrity. The lessons to be learned in the story are how to work hard (force), how to be good at something (stealth), and how to differentiate between right and wrong (trickster).

Francois also told a story of a boy who turned into a salmon and swam in the ocean for four years before making his way back to the Nechako and turning back into a boy. The purpose of his transformation was to learn to listen and show respect. One must respect water and it will show respect in return - water has a spirit.



For more Carrier stories, check out the 'Eagle Feather Story', by Francois Prince: www.strongnations.com.





Presented by: Kevin Moutray & Kim Menounos, NWR Co-chairs

The NWR continues to make progress toward implementation of its strategic priorities as laid out in the 2022 -2026 Strategic Plan, to convene partners, support efforts to restore watershed health, advocate for the watershed, ensure a resilient organization and advance reconciliation.

Funding for the NWR is primarily project based and contributions are needed to support operational costs as well as other project-based activities.

The NWR is grateful to its members and the support of the Core Committee. Several Core Committee transitions have taken place in 2022. Margot Parkes has stepped down from Co-Chair, but remains on the Core Committee. Kim Menounos has been appointed Co-Chair. Norm Bilodeau has resigned from the Core Committee. Kevin Moutray will be stepping down as Co-Chair, as he was recently elected Mayor of Vanderhoof.

The NWR Core Committee members as of November 2022 are:

- Clint Lambert, Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
- Gina Layte Liston, Member-at-Large
- Kim Menounos, Fraser Basin Council & NWR Co-chair
- Lara Beckett, Regional District of Fraser Fort-George
- Margot Parkes, University of Northern British Columbia
- Mike Robertson, Cheslatta Carrier Nation
- Wayne Salewski, Member-at-Large

The NWR is looking for members to join the Core Committee, specifically individuals representing First Nations and local government. For more information, please contact nwrcoordinator@gmail.com.



The NWR 2022 - 2026 Strategic Plan can be found here:
https://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/_Library/UFR/NWR_2022-2026_Strategic_Plan_updated_web.pdf.



The NWR has been working on the development of their very own website. Watch for the website launch coming in early 2023!



Presented by: Jordan Cranmer, NWR Youth Engagement Working Group Lead

The second annual NWR Youth Canoe Trip was held in Vanderhoof on August 13th and 14th. A total of 18 youth from the communities of Saik'uz First Nation, Vanderhoof, Fort St. James, Prince George and Lheidli T'enneh First Nation joined over the course of the weekend. The trip was separated into two groups/days, each group paddling 25 kilometres down the Nechako River from the Braeside Road Boat Launch to Riverside Park in Vanderhoof. Youth were given paddling lessons and taught Leave No Trace principals, Nechako watershed history, how to test water quality, and sampled freshwater invertebrate. The NWR Youth Engagement working group thanks all the funders, partners and contributors that made the trip possible: Integris Credit Union, Rivershed Society of BC, Koh Learning in Our Watersheds, Fraser Basin Council and the Nechako Environment and Water Stewardship Society.

In 2023 the Youth Engagement Working group is looking to again, expand the canoe trip to include an overnight stay and increase the number of participants.



The Youth Engagement Working group is looking for Youth Advisors to join in the engagement and planning process. If you or anyone you know may be interested, please reach out to Jordan Cranmer at cranmer@unbc.ca.



Check out the Stories of the Nechako: Youth Perspectives video on the NWR YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/@nechakowatershedroundtable2790.





Presented by: Wayne Salewski, Nechako Environment and Stewardship Society & NWR Core Committee Member

There are large and problematic data gaps for lakes in the Nechako watershed; the Lakes Monitoring Working Groups objective is to understand these data gaps and bring funds forward to do the necessary monitoring and other work to improve lake health.

While the group has had some success with funding through Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fraser Basin Council, Centura and Mount Milligan Mines, it has ultimately been challenging - last year's application to the British Columbia Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF) was unsuccessful.

This year, however, the group has secured funding through the Real Estate Foundation of BC, Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council and the Regional District of Bulkely Nechako to develop a Large Lakes Monitoring Strategy. In January 2022, the Lakes Monitoring Group met and began working to identify shared themes based on observations and set out the objectives of a Large Lakes Monitoring Strategy. Funding for strategy development was secured in May, 2022. The strategy will include a data and literature review and summary, monitoring plan and community training component. The strategy is currently in progress with an expected completion date in early 2023. The development of the strategy will also help to support future funding requests - another application to BCSRIF will be submitted in November.



For more information about the Large Lakes Monitoring Strategy or if you are interested in joining the next Working Group meeting, please connect with Tasha Peterson at nwrcoordinator@gmail.com.





Presented by: Aita Bezzola, UNBC & Mitchell MacFarlane, Takla Nation

The portal, newly named the "Nechako Portal", is an exciting partnership development with the NWR in the continued development to create a sharing tool with everyone working in the Nechako.


Aita gave an overview of how the portal has been and continues to develop - see the infographic below.

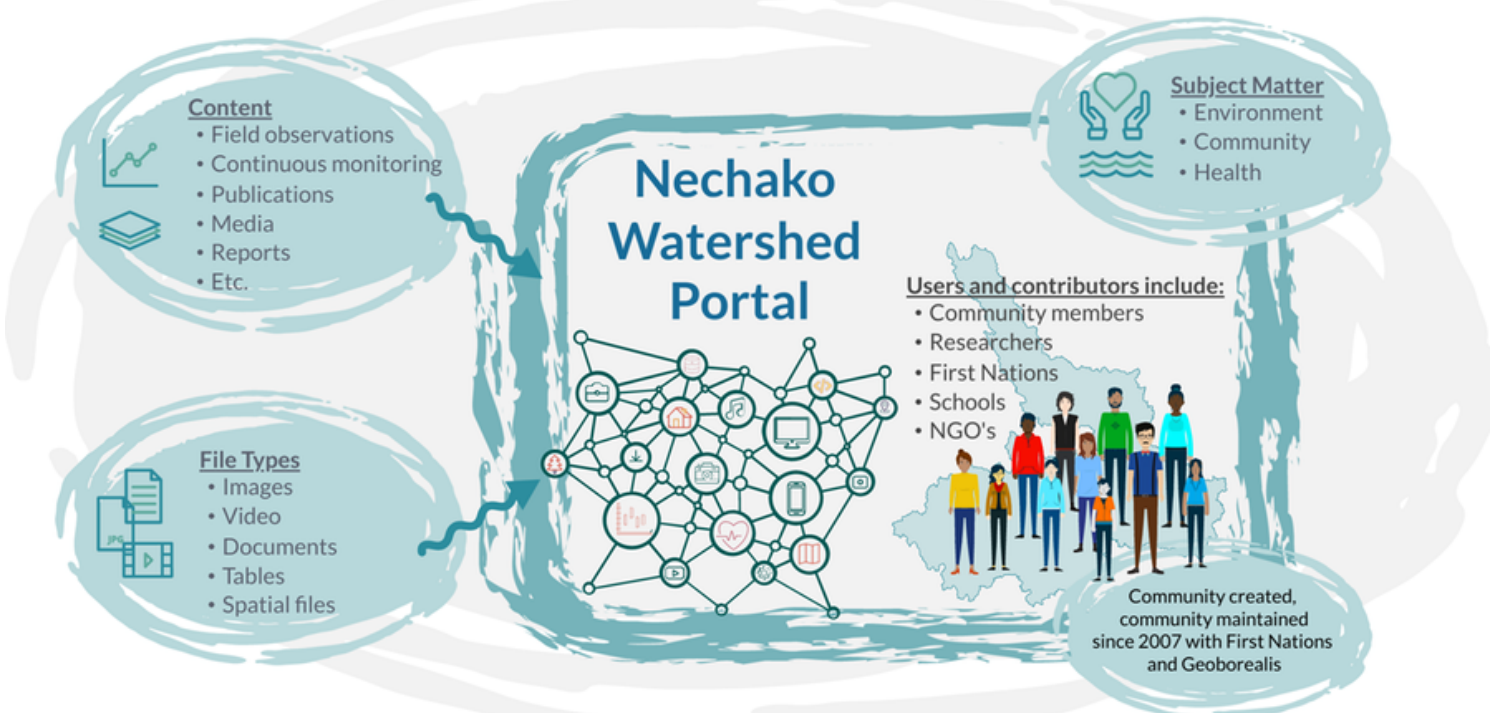
- The portal was developed in a response to a need to store and archive data and information with a singular access point - it is community-created and community-maintained.
- It a people fueled tool with incredible capacity to save time through centralizing and compiling data and bringing it to life (maps and other visualization tools).

There have been many learnings through integration of the Nechako Portal and Takla Portal. The open-source platform has been very positive - as one portal makes an upgrade, all other iterations get the benefit.

Mitchell gave a demonstration of how the Takla Nation Stewardship Portal is being used. The two main goals and objectives of the Takla portal are 1. Management and securement of traditional and cultural data, and 2. a streamlined review process. It currently has 196 active users ranging from Takla Nation internal staff to mining and forestry companies.

- There was some discussion around the use of the SMASH App for transporting data. The app is open source and can easily be downloaded to your phone.

 For more information on accessing the portal, or if you are interested in uploading your own data, please connect with Aita at Aita.Bezzola@unbc.ca.





Sharing Circle: Intergenerational Caretaking, Stewardship & Guardian Efforts

Moderator: Margot Parkes, UNBC & NWR Core Committee

Panel: Isaiah Reynolds, Stelat'en Nation & Darlene Sanderson, UNBC & Secwepemc Guardians program

Darlene is the Donald B. Lex Leadership Chair in Indigenous Environment and Health and brings together her knowledge from her Cree ancestry from Northern Manitoba and Russian heritage. She has worked with many First Nations worldwide and locally, on Indigenous water laws and previously worked on a cross cultural comparative of what water "is" from an Elders perspective, as well as has focused on the special relationship that woman have with water.

- Through the University of Victoria, Darlene held workshops and meetings with Elders and First Nations across BC to discuss their concerns and solutions for water management.
 - It is important Nations develop water declarations in their own languages.
- Had the opportunity to ask Elders and Secwatem people, "what does water mean to you?" and "what are your concerns".
 - There is a real need to recognize Indigenous people in conducting their own research and having ownership over data relating to watersheds.
- Water connects all life - it is the physical form of spirit.
- Education is the key to the future - youth training and asking Elders questions.

Isaiah Reynolds is a Stelat'en First Nations Youth who has a passion for restoration, fisheries and watershed work. He went to BCIT and has experience working in fisheries. He is currently working in his home nation to champion natural resources work.

Isaiah discussed the consequences of Big Bar and the awareness it brought to issues in the North. He noted that there was a 96% (salmon) survival rate when First Nations helped with the watershed and the opportunity for First Nations to become leaders in hatcheries work. He is currently also, working with Nakaldzi and Okanagan Nation Alliance on salmon restoration activities.

- It is important to combine "colonized and traditional knowledge".
- There is a need to talk about what is going to be lost and what we have to lose.
- There is a relationship between drug/alcohol abuse, mental health and ones connection to the land - traditional practices.
- Youth education in fisheries programs is great - more work is needed to engage First Nations youth and get them involved.



Watershed Security Strategy & Fund Update

Moderator: Gina Layte Liston, NWR Core Committee

Presenter: Oliver Brandes, POLIS

Oliver Brandes serves as Co-Director of the POLIS Project on Ecological Governance, based at the University of Victoria's Centre for Global Studies (CFGs), where he leads the award-winning POLIS Water Sustainability Project. His work focuses on water sustainability, sound resource management, public policy development, and ecologically based legal and institutional reform.

Oliver joined the Annual Meeting virtually, and shared the following:

- New Ministry of Land, Water, and Resource Stewardship:
 - Continue modernization of land use planning
 - Develop a path forward with First Nations to build a co-managed land and resource management
 - Provide provincial leadership on water policy and strategies
- Watershed Security Strategy & Fund:
 - 75 million commitment annually for BC watersheds
 - Local governance is important
 - Summer-December 2022 - co-develop/confirm intentions paper
 - 2023 launch Watershed Security Strategy & Fund (in budget 2023)
 - Bottom line: watershed security is a focused priority for communities and government at all levels
- First Nations Water Caucus and Water Table:
 - Brings together Province of BC and First Nations
 - Sets up conversations with cabinet and where the Province will land
 - Connection to accountability and linkages to other issues/initiatives around climate strengthened
- How do you take DRIPA and Water Sustainability Act and make sure they align with each other?
- POLIS Analysis - Gaps & Priorities for Integration:
 - Strengthen accountability and coordination (between ministries, across all four levels of government: local, provincial, federal and Indigenous)
 - Elevate watershed security within the emerging forestry regime and salmon priority
 - Connect watershed security with climate adaptation and risk
- Substantive Reforms
 - Establish the Watershed Security Fund in Budget 2023
 - DRIPA aligned Water Sustainability Act reform
 - Build an Indigenous water knowledge and provincial science strategy that emphasizes monitoring & State of the Watershed Reporting
 - Develop clear guidance and a framework for watershed governance that includes direction for local entities and local control
 - Fully integrate decision and regulatory tools
 - Strengthen accountability and oversight
- POLIS to work with the NWR at the front line of the future among watersheds and keeping them healthy and functional - from an economic and social perspective



Integrated Watershed Research Group (IWRG)

Moderator: Margot Parkes, UNBC & NWR Core Committee

Presented by: Stephen Deéry, Eduardo Martins & Phil Owens, IWRG/UNBC

UNBC houses the IWRG, a collaborative research group that focuses on better understanding what is happening in the Nechako Watershed in relation to the climate crisis and interrelated issues that influence hydrology, soils, fish populations and communities. The core group consists of Stephen Deéry, Eduardo Martins, Phil Owens, Margot Parkes and Ellen Petticrew, with support from Barry Booth as Research Manager and a number of students and other team members working across the group.

- Stephen Deéry's work focuses on climate change and water security and recent work is also linked with his Industrial Research Chair (IRC). Stephen noted that they operate only three meteorological stations in the watershed - hopefully, another will start on Cheslatta territory in 2023. Stephen's research team is working on sophisticated computer models to reconstruct the past hydrology of the Nechako watershed and making future projections up to 2100. The temperature in the Nechako has risen by ~2°C since the 1950's on average, with extreme events also reflected in events such as the heat dome.
- Phil Owens' work is increasingly focused on the impacts of wildfire (the frequency of which is likely to increase) and how it contributes to erosion, and the delivery of sediments and contaminants in the system. A large wildfire causes an increase in organic contaminants in the soil and erosion will cause this to move through the aquatic system. There is ongoing work looking at sediment quality and the source of sediments - which is mainly coming from erosion of channel banks along the mainstem of the Nechako River.
- Eduardo Martins is a new member of the IWRG group his year and will be studying effects of water temperature on fish populations. Water temperature affects fish movement, population and behavior. There is a need to learn more about the thermoregulation of fish which do not have physiological mechanisms to adjust their temperature like humans do.
- Margot Parkes has also been a member of the IWRG team since it began, and her work is especially focused on the portal which was presented and discussed earlier.
- Future proposals are being developed, including an application to the NSERC Alliance program with Rio Tinto, which will look at the identification of potential thermal refuges for fish as well as thermal habitat use and thermoregulatory behaviour for Chinook salmon and White Sturgeon in the Nechako.



More information about the IWRG can be found at: <https://www2.unbc.ca/integrated-watershed-research-group/research/nechako-river-basin>.



Rio Tinto Water Engagement Initiative (WEI) Update

Presented by: Gina Layte Liston, NWR Core Committee

There are approximately 40 members from different communities and organizations that attend the WEI meetings. It is the role of the group to bring forward any issues or concerns relating to the Nechako watershed including, the Nechako reservoir, Cheslatta station, youth, heritage and culture, etc. The groups interests include fish, wildlife and habitat, culture and Rio Tinto operations.

Rio Tinto intends to develop a Water Use Plan that addresses the interests raised during the WEI meetings.

Cheslatta Nation Update

Presented by: Mike Robertson, Senior Advisor, Cheslatta Carrier Nation & NWR Core Committee

- A partnership is in the works between Cheslatta Nation and UNBC for Cheslatta Archival data integration into the Nechako Portal.
- Making progress with the Kenney Dam Release Facility; a substantial amount of work is scheduled for summer 2023.
- Parallel hydro development project with four communities (Cheslatta, Saik'uz, Stelat'en and Nadleh).
- Cariboo recovery project - working with BC on mitigation, habitat rehabilitation and road decommissioning in the Whitesail and South Ootsa area.
- A substantial amount of archeology projects are going on at Cheslatta and Tatichek Lakes - test results from five different human remains confirms they are 4600 years old.





Aita Bezzola, IWRG/UNBC
Alaina Fontes, City of Prince George
Anna Hixon, UNBC
Aurora Padilla, UNBC
Barry Booth, UNBC
Brian Frenkel, District of Vanderhoof
Chelton vanGeloven, Ministry of Forests
Christina Ciesielski, CSTC
Christiana Onabola, UNBC
Clint Lambert, RDBN & NWR Core Committee
Cora McIntosh, Saik'uz First Nation
Darlene Sanderson, UNBC
Diana Kutzner, Northern Health
Donna Klingspohn, NTLSS
Duncan McKeller, Norman Lake Community
Eduardo Martins, IWRG/UNBC
Erin Nielsen, First Nations Health Authority
Francois Prince, Nak'azdli First Nation
Gina Layte Liston, NWR Core Committee
Ian Rogalski, ECCC
Isaiah Reynolds, Stellant'en First Nation
James Jacklin, Ministry of Forests
Jennifer Cochrane, UNBC
Jessie King, UNBC
John DeGagne, Ministry of Forests
John Simcock, District of Fort St. James
Jonathan Doyon, UNBC
Jordan Cranmer, UNBC & NWR Youth rep.
June Garcia-Becerra, UNBC
Justin Kokoszka, UNBC/NHG
Keri Dresyn, LWRS
Kevin Moutray, District of Vanderhoof & NWR Core Committee
Kim Klaczek, ENV
Kim Menounos, FBC & NWR Core Committee
Kirsten McNeill, ENV
Lara Beckett, RDFFG & NWR Core Committee
Lori Borth, Ministry of Forests
Luc Turcotte, LWRS
Margot Parkes, IWRG/UNBC & NWR Core Committee
Melissa Bates, UNBC
Melissa Nitz, City of Prince George
Mitchell MacFarlane, Takla Nation
Mike Robertson, Cheslatta Carrier Nation & NWR Core Committee
Norm Bilodeau, NWR Core Committee
Oliver Brandes, POLIS
Phil Owens, IWRG/UNBC
Ray Klingspohn, NTLSS
Ray Phillipow, Ministry of Forests
Robert Anderson, Norman Lake Community
Sarah Bartnik, ECCC
Stephen Dery, IWRG/UNBC
Tara Clapp, UNBC/SPS
Tasha Peterson, FBC & NWR Coordinator
Tavia McKinnon, UNBC
Wayne Salewski, NEWSS & NWR Core Committee
William Elkins, Cheslatta Carrier Nation

Additional Information

The meeting package including the agenda and a complete recording of the meeting are available to members at www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/Nechako_Watershed_Roundtable.html

Please connect with the NWR Coordinator at nwrcoordinator@gmail.com to request any additional information from the meeting or about the NWR.



NECHAKO
WATERSHED
ROUNDTABLE

Contact

Nechako Watershed Roundtable

Suite 507, 1488 4th Avenue

Prince George, BC, V2L 4Y2

nwrcoordinator@gmail.com

https://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/Nechako_Watershed_Roundtable.html

