



the partnership  
for water sustainability in bc

# **Celebration of Our Story: Genesis / First Decade / What Next**

**November 19<sup>th</sup> 2020**

# Celebration of Our Story

## What the Reader Will Learn

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November 19<sup>th</sup> 2020 is a major milestone in the history of the [Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia](#). It marks the first decade since incorporation of “the BC water sustainability committee” as “**The Partnership**”, a not-for-profit society that provides services to government and local communities in support of [Living Water Smart, British Columbia’s Water Plan](#).

Incorporation as an independent legal entity was a transformative decision. It ensures the legacy and sustainability of tools, resources and programs developed under the umbrella of the [Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia](#); and delivered through inter-governmental partnerships.

**A Celebration of Our Story** is structured in two part parts. **Part One** is a reprint of my Editor’s Context, published in [Waterbucket eNews](#). It is high-level. It sketches an outline of many ideas and nuances about the work of The Partnership. **Part Two** is a deeper dive into our history.

In Part Two, we paint a picture of the multi-decade journey. The strokes are broad-brush. There is so much more to the story, with still more to come in the years ahead. In reading Our Story, the reader will learn that the combination of a guiding philosophy, committed team members and timely actions built the foundation for The Partnership’s record of success.



*Kim A. Stephens, MEng, PEng,  
Executive Director  
Partnership for Water Sustainability  
in British Columbia  
November 2020*

# Part One

## Editor's Context

An aerial photograph of Western Canada, showing the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. The map is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue rectangle containing text. The text is in a dark blue, serif font. The map shows the coastline of British Columbia, the interior of Alberta, and the northern part of Saskatchewan. Labels for 'Alberta', 'Edmonton', 'Calgary', and 'Vancouver Island' are visible on the map.

*Reconnect People, Land and  
Water in Altered Landscapes*

***Replace short-term thinking with a long-term  
view that extends out 50, 100 or more years.***

***Decisions made today ripple through time!***

# Reconnect People, Land and Water

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The Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia has reached the 10-year milestone as a legal entity. But our history began long before 2010. Our "**partnerships & collaboration journey**" actually commenced some two decades earlier. A group of like-minded and passionate individuals, including representatives of three levels of government, came together as a committee and created a "water roundtable" that evolved over time into **The Partnership**.

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**And what was the mission of this water roundtable? Champion a water-centric approach to use and conservation of land. Develop tools, resources and programs to support water-centric planning.**

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All of us learn from stories. For this reason, and to celebrate our first decade since incorporation, I am excited to share this "story behind our story" on behalf of my teammates on the Partnership leadership team. We do so with the hope that a look behind-the-scenes will strike a spark and inspire you, the reader, to make a difference in your own community.

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Time has passed quickly. Has it really been a decade? So much water under the bridge, literally. In taking stock of the Partnership's rising trajectory, my teammates and I feel good about the Partnership's track record of accomplishment through partnerships and collaboration with others.

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**The Partnership's guiding philosophy is to help others be successful. When they are successful, we are successful.**

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The Partnership is led by a team of mission-focused volunteers, elders and collaborators. These individuals bring experience, knowledge and wisdom to the Partnership roundtable. This enhances the effectiveness of the Partnership as **the hub for a convening for action network**. Although many on the Partnership leadership team have retired from their day jobs, the water-centric mission continues.

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**Together we keep raising our game. And so do our collaborators. Shared successes leads to more successes. We judge progress by the distance travelled, not the distance remaining. We are optimistic about the future. Over the course of this past decade, the tide has turned. There is a track record to continue building upon.**

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“A vision without a task is but a dream.  
A task without a vision is but drudgery.  
A vision with a task is the hope of the world.”

Church inscription  
Suffolk, England 1786

## Consensus Results in Actionable Visions

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The umbrella for our initiatives and programs is the [Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia](#). In turn, the Action Plan is nested within [Living Water Smart, British Columbia's Water Plan](#). Released in 2008, Living Water Smart was the provincial government's call to action, and to this day transcends governments. I wonder what proportion of our Waterbucket eNews audience realize that the policy, program and regulatory framework is in place for community-based action to adapt to a changing climate?

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**The Living Water Smart vision: we take care of our water, our water takes care of us.**

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Living Water Smart successes are defined by collaboration and a "top-down / bottom-up" approach. Through our initiatives and programs, the Partnership brings together individuals and organizations who share a vision for moving from awareness to action through **collaborative leadership**. Consider, for example, the [Georgia Basin Inter-Regional Education Initiative \(IREI\)](#). This is a unique mechanism for inter-regional collaboration. Endorsed by five Regional Boards, it carries forward the legacy of the late Erik Karlsen.

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Collaborative leadership conceptualizes leadership as shared among members, rather than turning to one heroic leader to guide and be the expert. When you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information, you look to them to create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of their organizations and community.

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**In our Partnership programs, we focus attention on the 4Cs – communication, cooperation, coordination, collaboration. The 4Cs guide what we do.** We live and breathe collaboration. This plays out in everything that the Partnership does. Building trust and respect starts with a conversation. Listen, listen, listen. Conversations lead to dialogue. In turn, dialogue leads to consensus.

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## Shared Responsibility / Stewardship Ethic

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Sixty years ago, President John Kennedy issued a powerful and memorable call to action in his inaugural address. To frame the inter-generational mission for restorative development, I have taken what Kennedy said in 1961 and adapted his quote to reflect our contemporary context:

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**“Embrace shared responsibility. Ask not what your community can do for you. Ask what you can do for your community to reconnect people, land and water in altered urban landscapes.”**

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In my experience, collaboration around a shared vision comes naturally and easily in the BC local government setting. This fills me with hope that reconnecting people, land and water is possible over time. Bringing this vision to fruition in urban areas depends on all the players being guided by a stream stewardship ethic; and being committed to the common good.

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## *Reconnect People, Land and Water in Altered Landscapes*

- 1. Influence choices by individuals and organizations*
- 2. Use the phrase “sustainable and resilient” as a lens for considering approaches that influence choices*

## **Regional Team Concept is a Powerful Motivator**

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The BC culture is that we choose to work together. For example, Randy Alexander, Regional District of Nanaimo, attributes the success of his region's Drinking Water and Watershed Protection program to the following winning formula: **“Our success depends on our ability to leverage our resources with those of others to achieve common goals, and to understand what those common goals are.”**

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In the mid-2000s, members of the Partnership leadership team pioneered a peer-based educational process for building local government capacity. The desired outcome for the process was a consistent regional approach to implementation of green infrastructure and water sustainability practices. Comprising seminars and training workshops, the process was a foundation piece for our "convening for action" programs in three regions. In the course of this work, we learned something important.

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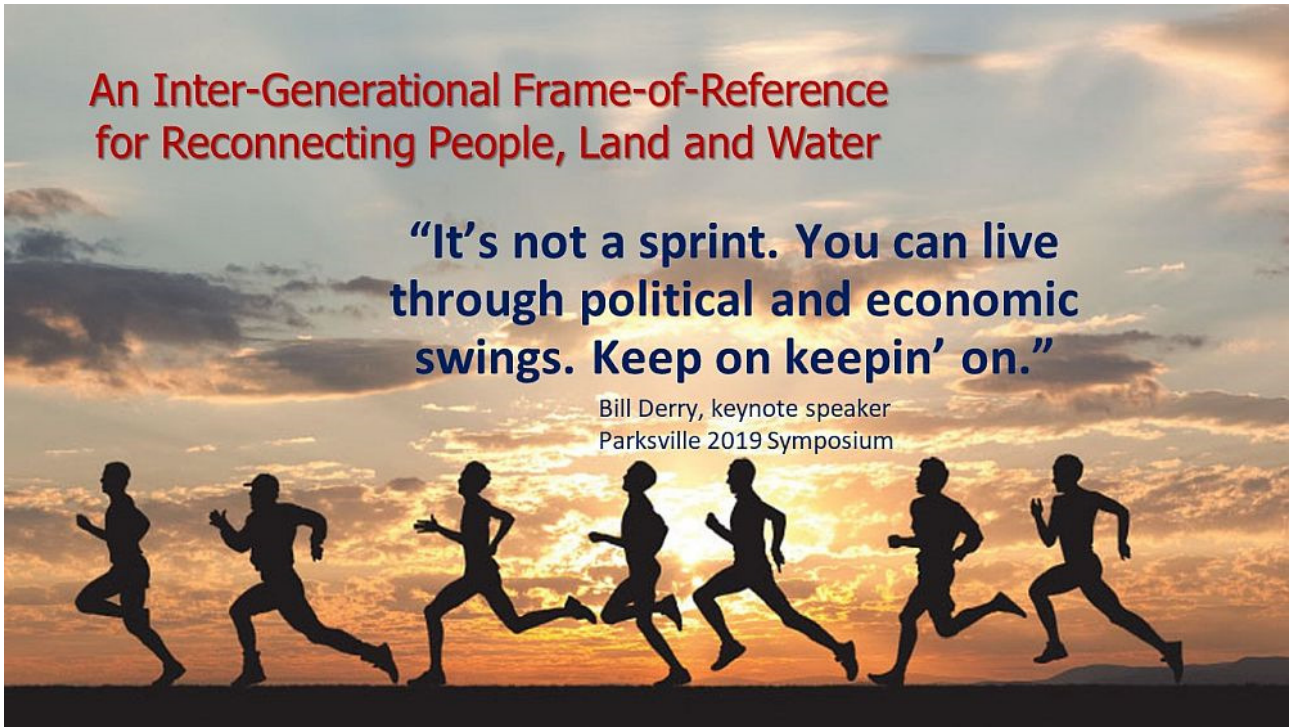
We observed a profound difference in how practitioners view their world when we used the phrase **regional team approach** rather than **regional approach** to describe collaboration. Insertion of "team" implies there is a personal commitment. It also suggests there is a game plan and a coachable context. It is a powerful motivator. It reinforces the notion of collaborative leadership.

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## An Inter-Generational Frame-of-Reference for Reconnecting People, Land and Water

**“It’s not a sprint. You can live  
through political and economic  
swings. Keep on keepin’ on.”**

Bill Derry, keynote speaker  
Parksville 2019 Symposium



## Cathedral Thinking in the Local Government Setting

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Our work related to collaborative leadership is inspired by an inter-generational vision for **growing the restorative footprint** of BC communities. This will take time. It requires all hands on deck. There is no shortcut. Collaboration between the stewardship and local government sectors is a lynch-pin.

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When folks in the local government and stewardship sectors respect and trust each other, collaborate for the greater good and align their efforts, beneficial outcomes result. Time and again, I have seen that these ingredients are foundational in the quest to reconnect people, land and water in the urban setting. **The phrase “cathedral thinking” aptly describes an inter-generational vision that transcends governments.**

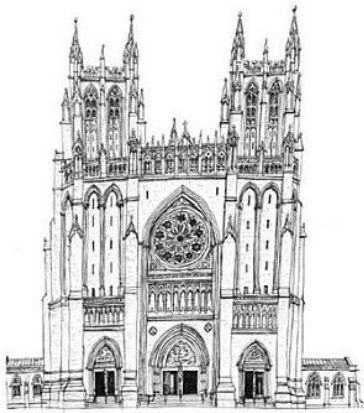
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We can learn from our ancestors. The builders of great cathedrals in medieval times thought in terms of multiple generations carrying out their work, to complete a dream that would not be realized until long after the originator’s death. So what is my takeaway message? **Replace short-term thinking with a long-term view that extends out 50, 100 or more years.**

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## Part Two

# A Short History



### **Cathedral Thinking:**

*A far-reaching vision,  
a well thought-out blueprint,  
and a shared commitment to  
long-term implementation*

# Storyboard for ‘A Short History’

Storyboard Caption	page
<b>In the Beginning...</b> <i>The right people came together in the right place at the right time; and ‘raising the bar’ has been ongoing for over three decades.</i>	6
<b>Water Sustainability Action Plan is the <i>raison d’être</i> for The Partnership</b> <i>The Action Plan uses existing and emerging provincial policies, legislation as starting points and builds on them</i>	7
<b>The Partnership: Overview of the Journey</b> <i>Change rarely occurs overnight. The process is incremental. The journey is described in terms of five distinct eras.</i>	9
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<b>A Water Conservation Strategy for BC</b> <i>Precedent-setting Partnership Agreement defined the period from 1997 through 2002; and set the stage for ‘collaborative leadership’.</i>	11
<b>Living Water Smart in BC</b> <i>A top-down and bottom-up framework that leveraged partnerships defined the period from November 2002 through November 2010.</i>	12
<b>First Decade as “The Partnership”</b> <i>A strength of The Partnership is being able to cross boundaries with comfort and draw players together for the benefit of the whole.</i>	19
<b>What Next</b> <i>The Partnership is moving forward with a four-prong plan. They are building blocks in reconnecting people, land and water.</i>	22

## Right People in the Right Place at the Right Time

*“The Partnership personifies what is envisioned by the term ‘collaborative leadership’. Expressed another way, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Is it good luck or good management when a group of individuals come together as a team? It is both. We share a vision for water-centric community development, guided by an understanding of how a community’s land ethic impacts on water.”*

*“Timing is everything. In 2002, revitalization of the BC water sustainability committee was coincident with a change in provincial government. It was the combination of the two that made it possible for us to champion alignment of efforts at cascading scales (provincial, regional, local) and pioneer a ‘top-down & bottom-up’ approach to collaboration. These concepts are foundation blocks for the Water Sustainability Action Plan.”*

- Kim Stephens  
November 2020

## In the Beginning....

Incorporation of the **Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia** as a not-for-profit society on November 19<sup>th</sup> 2010 was a milestone moment. Incorporation culminated a multi-year effort; and signified a bold leap forward. The Partnership has not looked back. Now, our journey stretches over three decades.

***In the First Decade of this Century:*** The provincial government and Real Estate Foundation of BC (REFBC) jointly funded the work of the “BC water sustainability committee” through an arrangement with the BC Water & Waste Association (BCWWA). By 2010, however, the committee was at a fork in the road. Ensuring success in delivering the [Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia](#) through an expanding inter-governmental partnership network meant the time had come to morph the committee into a self-sustaining legal entity.

Premier Gordon Campbell was set to make the public announcement at the **2010 BC Land Champion Awards Gala** hosted by the REFBC. However, the Premier’s surprise resignation two weeks earlier meant that it was Jack Hall, REFBC Chair, who announced: 1) creation of The Partnership as a society; 2) appointment of Tim Pringle, the REFBC’s founding Executive Director, as the Partnership’s founding President; and 3) recognition and honouring of Tim Pringle with the inaugural [British Columbia Land Champion Award](#).

***Impact of Unprecedented Droughts:*** Some founding members of The Partnership began the “water sustainability journey” in 1992. Three record droughts within a 5-year period was the trigger for looking at water differently in British Columbia. The droughts set in motion a paradigm-shift. After 1992, no longer was the question “why would we conserve water in a rain forest”. Instead, the spotlight shifted to “how will BC become water efficient and therefore drought-resilient”.

In 1992, a group representing local government water utilities convened as a water conservation technical committee under the umbrella of BCWWA. Within five years, the momentum generated by this group spurred the provincial government to create [A Water Conservation Strategy for British Columbia](#), released in 1998.

The Strategy, in turn, spawned the Water Sustainability Action Plan, released in February 2004. The Action Plan then informed development of [Living Water Smart, British Columbia’s Water Plan](#), released in June 2008.

## A Teachable Moment Created the Opportunity

*“The drought, forest fires and floods that British Columbia experienced in 2003 created a ‘teachable moment’ for change in the way we view water in this province. Capitalizing on this opportunity, our roundtable of land and water champions created the Water Sustainability Action Plan. The government of BC funded Action Plan development.”*

*“Timing is everything – a successful outcome requires that the right people be in the right place at the right time. Producing an Action Plan that was credible was made possible through a precedent-setting approach to collaboration that involved representatives of multiple provincial government ministries. This helped us get the attention and blessing of Premier Gordon Campbell, and resulted in provincial government funding for implementation of Action Plan initiatives.”*

- Kim Stephens  
May 2020

## Water Sustainability Action Plan is the *raison d'être* for The Partnership

Released in February 2004, the [Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia](#)<sup>1</sup> introduced a framework for building partnerships. It also demonstrated what could be achieved through a ‘top-down & bottom-up strategy’ – especially when it aligns efforts at the provincial, regional and local scales to respond and adapt to a changing world.

**Model for a New Business As Usual:** When developing the Action Plan, we applied lessons we learned from delivering [A Water Conservation Strategy for BC](#) several years earlier. The irony is that the Strategy was seen as a success, yet in our minds we had failed. Why would we believe that, the reader may well ask?

Well, the model for the Strategy was a traditional top-down one. The Province appointed an expert team; the team created the Strategy; the team then fanned out and made presentations over a 3-year period. This approach is neither self-sustaining nor self-perpetuating.

**We vowed that the Action Plan would be built from the bottom up. We recognized that our commitment must be sustained over the long-term. And that means decades. A few years is not enough.**

**The Action Plan Explained:** The Action Plan uses existing and emerging provincial government policies, legislation as fundamental starting points and builds on these. The target audience is comprised of those who share a vision for creating transformational change in the way water resources are valued and managed in British Columbia.

The main goal of the Action Plan program is to foster (nurture) and encourage (motivate or cheer on) province-wide implementation of fully integrated water sustainability policies, plans and programs.

The focus of the 2004 Action Plan document is on the *framework for building partnerships*, and that is the tag-line. The document is a communication tool – that is, it articulates the vision and the desired outcomes for a *water-centric approach* to development.

**The water-centric approach recognizes that the greatest impact on water occurs through our individual values, choices and behavior – that is, our land ethic.** The water-centric approach also enables consideration and application of an ecosystem perspective that links physical, biological and human perspectives.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.waterbucket.ca/cfa/sites/wbccfa/documents/media/81.pdf>

## Integration and Shared Responsibility

*“Land use planning and water management practices are intertwined. For this reason, the intent of the Action Plan is to influence choices and encourage action by individuals and organizations - so that water resource stewardship will become an integral part of land use and daily living.”*

*“Partnerships hold the key to building broad-based support for improving water management practices, and for integration of water management with land use.”*

*“The Action Plan has been developed as a shared responsibility. It recognizes that numerous groups and organizations implicitly share a vision for integrated water management.”*

- Executive Summary,  
Water Sustainability  
Action Plan for BC,  
February 2004

**Action Plan Elements:** The bottom-up approach is founded on partnerships. Success relies on a ‘**partnership architecture**’ that solidifies commitment to achieving practical outcomes under the umbrella of the Action Plan.

**Continuum of Water Use:** Building from the bottom-up means that the Action Plan is an amalgam of partnership initiatives - described as Action Plan Elements. These link people, land and water. The outer ring in this Action Plan image symbolizes a continuum of water use by people and communities, and from an ecosystem perspective:



**Three Threads for Building Partnerships:** In 2004, the Action Plan comprised six elements. Over time, and as support has grown provincially for water stewardship in a changing climate, the original six have spawned new program elements. Three ‘threads’ reflect the breadth of roles that The Partnership plays:

### **Thread One – Initiator >**

*where The Partnership is the vehicle for direct action.*

### **Thread Two – Collaborator >**

*where The Partnership is the vehicle provider for others.*

### **Thread Three – Educator >**

*where The Partnership spans boundaries as the connector of initiatives or is an education facilitator.*

## Water, Water Everywhere....

*“The summer of 1992 has once again heightened awareness throughout British Columbia of the limited capabilities of many existing water supply sources. Although there is a perception that BC is water-rich, the reality is that we are often seasonally water-short (mainly because of storage limitations) during the period when water demand is heaviest due to lawn and garden irrigation.”*

*“For the third time in six years, drought conditions have been experienced in the southern part of BC, and in particular the Greater Vancouver region. The 1987 drought is one of the most extreme on record, with a return period rating in the order of 100 years. It followed a relatively benign period of almost half a century.”*

- magazine article  
co-authored by:  
Kim Stephens  
Ted van der Gulik  
Tom Heath  
September 1992

## The Partnership: Overview of the Journey

Change rarely occurs overnight. The process is incremental. Thus, the “water sustainability journey” currently stretches over five decades – from the 1980s through the 2020s. The journey has five distinct eras. Identified below, the significance of each era is reflected in the title. Each era is a building block in a process that is long-term in scope:

- **1987 – 1992** > *The Genesis - Unprecedented Droughts*
- **1992 – 1997** > *BC Response to National Action Plan*
- **1997 – 2002** > *A Water Conservation Strategy for BC*
- **2002 – 2010** > *Living Water Smart in BC*
- **2010 – 2020** > *First Decade as “The Partnership”*

## The Genesis – Unprecedented Droughts

The 1987 drought resulted in an unprecedented test of the capacities of water supply sources throughout BC to provide for existing regional populations, raising concerns regarding the possible consequences of continued growth.

A legacy of the 1987 drought were two landmark water resource projects. Both were influential in shaping water supply and water conservation planning for decades to come. One study was completed for the Metro Vancouver region; the other for the Okanagan Valley.

***Regional in Scope, Provincial in Significance:*** These landmark projects focused attention on the need for a water conservation strategy for British Columbia. The urgency of the situation was accentuated by the severity of drought conditions in 1990 and 1992.

Three professional engineers were integral to these landmark studies: Tom Heath (Metro Vancouver), Ted van der Gulik (Okanagan) and Kim Stephens, who was common to both. Looking back, their work laid the foundation for the core competency of The Partnership.

The three were founding members of the BCWWA Water Conservation Committee in 1992. The inaugural meeting of this committee coincided with publication of a magazine article co-authored by this trio, and titled [Water, Water Everywhere ...Does British Columbia Really Need A Water Conservation Strategy?](https://www.waterbucket.ca/cfa/sites/wbccfa/documents/media/218.pdf)<sup>2</sup> In 1992, the three were instrumental in changing the nature of the conversation about water in BC.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.waterbucket.ca/cfa/sites/wbccfa/documents/media/218.pdf>

## Same People, Different Hats

Kim Stephens and Nancy Bonham (Metro Vancouver) interchanged roles. Kim chaired the BCWWA committee and was Secretary of the BC Provincial Committee. Nancy chaired the BC Provincial Committee and was Vice-Chair of the BCWWA committee.

## Why A ‘Made in BC’ Response

*“A BC concern was that the National Action Plan was being driven by Ontario, and there were ideological overtones that made the BC committee uncomfortable. Our discomfort was a galvanizing consideration in making the bold decision to hold a series of events in smaller BC centres.”*

*“Having province-wide representation imbued the committee with confidence, strength and credibility to move into a policy vacuum and speak on behalf of BC communities in a way that had not been done before.”*

- Kim Stephens  
November 2020

## BC Response to National Action Plan

This section covers the 5-year period from 1992 through 1997. The period was defined by the [National Action Plan to Encourage Municipal Water Use Efficiency](#). Launched in 1994, this was an initiative of the Canadian Council of the Ministers of the Environment (CCME).

The *B.C. Provincial Committee of the National Task Force*, formed in fall 1994, merged with the re-named *BCWWA Water Use Efficiency Committee* (WUEC) in fall 1995. In practice, this meant that the same people would wear different hats depending on the meeting context. This resulted in efficient use of time.

***A Defining Moment:*** The National Action Plan provided a focus and a *raison d'être* for influencing water policy in British Columbia. The National Action Plan opened the door for the committee to carve out a leadership role vis-à-vis provincial water stewardship. It was a defining moment. Years later, the experience gained would prove essential and invaluable for implementation of the Water Sustainability Action Plan.

**During this foundational era, the committee was a “committee of water utility managers”** - with province-wide representation stretching from Vancouver Island through Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley on the South Coast; and extending inland east into the Okanagan and West Kootenays and north to the Central Interior.

The CCME goal driving the National Action Plan was: *“achieve more efficient use of water in Canadian municipalities in order to save money and energy, delay or reduce expansion of existing water and wastewater systems, and conserve water.”*

***Moving Into a Policy Vacuum:*** The committee conceived and implemented a bold 3-year program of transformative conferences to develop a ‘Made in BC’ response to the 1994 National Action Plan. Conferences were held in three cities in three regions: Rossland (1995), Kamloops (1996) and Nanaimo (1997).

The three events were building blocks and sequentially addressed the WHY, WHAT, HOW questions regarding water use efficiency. It was this program that resulted in the paradigm-shift from “why do we need water use efficiency” to “when will we implement water use efficiency”.

So, the reader may wonder, what was the outcome? Prior to conclusion of the series, the Ministry of Environment appointed a Provincial Working Group to produce [A Water Conservation Strategy for BC](#).

## A Spotlight on Success Stories

*“When the Working Group was developing the Water Conservation Strategy, I frequently reminded my colleagues of the importance of celebrating success stories. My refrain was that we must emphasize and reinforce the good work of those leading by example. It makes it so much easier to accelerate changes in practices, I would say, when we are able to say: look at that community, they are already doing it.”*

*“This perspective is reflected in the Executive Summary which opens with this statement: British Columbia is on its way to becoming a water-efficient province. In a recent survey, 76% of 127 respondents have already developed, or are in the process of creating water use efficiency programs.”*

*“At the time, it was very much about creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.”*

- Kim Stephens,  
Communications Chair,  
WUEC Executive  
Committee for Provincial  
Water Conservation  
Strategy Implementation  
(1998-2001)  
November 2020

## A Water Conservation Strategy for BC

This section covers the 5-year period from 1997 through 2002. The 18-member Provincial Working Group, supported by Ministry of Environment staff and resources, developed the [Water Conservation Strategy](#)<sup>3</sup>. Fast-tracked, it was released in September 1998 at the Annual Convention of the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM).

UBCM provided the setting for the Ministry of Environment to announce a precedent-setting Partnership Agreement between the Ministry, Environment Canada and BCWWA. The purpose of the agreement: implement the Water Conservation Strategy through an Executive Committee of the Water Use Efficiency Committee (WUEC).

The term of the Partnership Agreement was 1998 through 2001. Very importantly, the agreement provided the committee with funding to hire a part-time coordinator. Having this support enabled us to leverage volunteer efforts and expand our reach.

**Strategic Directions:** The Water Conservation Strategy identified 10 strategic directions aimed at minimizing barriers to whole-system actions, and encouraging a broader understanding and adoption of water use efficiency actions. The Water Conservation Strategy opened the door to ecosystem-based thinking and the water balance approach. It also connected a myriad of dots in laying out a framework for action.

For three years, 1998 through 2001, the WUEC Executive Committee successfully delivered an outreach program that spread the word about the Water Conservation Strategy. However, exhaustion took a toll, and 2002 was essentially a lost year. Participation dwindled to a handful of individuals. And then, in November 2002, came the resurrection and reincarnation of the WUEC as the [Water Sustainability Committee](#).

**It Helps to Have a Teachable Year:** The committee was re-built, energized, and primed for action. No longer was it a committee of utility managers. It was a diverse partnership. In 2003, BC had a *teachable year*. The combination of drought, forest fires, floods and pine beetle awakened public awareness that BC’s climate was changing.

These events served as a springboard to launch the [Water Sustainability Action Plan](#) at the beginning of 2004. In the early years of implementation, we would say that the **Water Sustainability Action Plan addressed the fine print in the Water Conservation Strategy.**

<sup>3</sup> [https://waterbucket.ca/wuc/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2015/08/A-Water-Conservation-Strategy-for-BC\\_1998.pdf](https://waterbucket.ca/wuc/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2015/08/A-Water-Conservation-Strategy-for-BC_1998.pdf)



## Erik Karlsen

1945 - 2020

Director, Regional Growth  
Strategies, Municipal Affairs

Chair, Agricultural Land  
Commission (2005-2010)

*“Erik Karlsen was our ‘eminence grise’. When he retired from government, he turned his mind to the work of the committee. Influential in government, and the architect of BC’s Georgia Basin Initiative, Erik crafted the think pieces that guided the process for development of the Water Sustainability Action Plan.”*

*“Erik challenged us intellectually and helped all of us push the boundaries of our comfort zones. This brought out the creativity in everyone. The effect was powerful. Erik’s first drafts would focus the brainstorming. The result was a philosophical foundation and framework that has guided The Partnership to this day.”*

- Kim Stephens  
November 2020

## Living Water Smart in BC

This section covers the 8-year period from November 2002 through November 2010. The period was ultimately defined by [Living Water Smart, British Columbia’s Water Plan](#)<sup>4</sup>, released in June 2008.

***Restructuring and Renewal Process:*** Re-built as the Water Sustainability Committee (WSC), our journey began anew in January 2003 with a mostly new cast of players, many of whom became the founding members of The Partnership in 2010. Restructuring involved going well beyond the water industry world of BCWWA because we:

- broadened and enhanced the capabilities of the WSC roundtable to advance water-centric planning;
- recruited individuals who shared our values and brought diverse backgrounds and experience at multiple scales; and
- developed links and partnerships with groups outside the water industry.

Renewal involved a soul-searching process that extended over many months. The process united the team behind a shared mission, formulated a guiding philosophy, crystallized strategic objectives, and produced a management architecture for mobilizing partnerships.

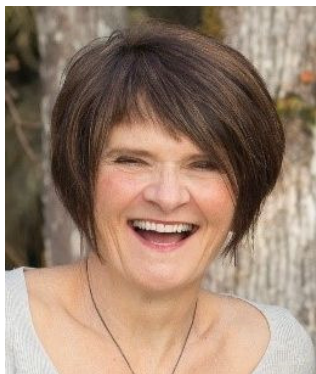
The foundation built by the WSC team enabled the WSC to immediately move into a provincial vacuum and begin to fill a provincial need as a “water roundtable” in the local government setting. Moreover, the WSC was buttressed by the support provided by multiple provincial government ministries.

**Inspiration for ‘The Partnership Vision’:** A *Briefing Paper* produced by the WUEC incarnation of the committee, and released in early 1997, laid out a partnership framework for aligning the efforts of BC’s water suppliers, the Province, and public advocacy groups in working towards common goals. This is a foundation document for those wishing to understand the history and evolution The Partnership.

Titled [Developing a Partnership to Advance Water Use Efficiency in BC](#)<sup>5</sup>, the Briefing Paper provided the WSC incarnation of the committee with a point of departure. A key moment in the 2003 process occurred when reference to the Briefing Paper inspired this vision statement: **“Stewardship of a limited and vital resource, water, actively supported by an aware and educated citizenry.”**

<sup>4</sup> [https://waterbucket.ca/wcp/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/11/livingwatersmart\\_book.pdf](https://waterbucket.ca/wcp/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/11/livingwatersmart_book.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://waterbucket.ca/wuc/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2020/11/1997-Briefing-Paper.pdf>



## Lynn Kriwoken

Executive Director (retired),  
Ministry of Environment &  
Climate Change

*“Lynn Kriwoken played an instrumental role in the creation and launching of the Water Sustainability Action Plan. A true visionary, she immediately saw the value of the WSC as an advisory group to government at a time when BC was in transition after the 2001 election.”*

*“Lynn connected the dots between her Ministry’s Service Plan and the Action Plan potential. There was a natural fit. Her advocacy within government was essential to securing a flow of provincial funding that got the ball rolling and resulted in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Without Lynn Kriwoken, there would not have been an Action Plan. It really is that simple.”*

- Kim Stephens  
November 2020

**Charting a New Course:** The 2001 provincial election resulted in a change in government, with Gordon Campbell elected as Premier. His grasp of water issues meant that BC’s top decision-maker was a ‘water champion’ whose interests encompassed the vision for the Water Sustainability Action Plan. In his mandate letter to the Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection, for example, the Premier framed objectives for three key areas of the Ministry’s Service Plan as follows:

- *“increased service delivery through partnerships;*
- *facilitation of community initiatives to protect and restore their local environment; and*
- *the strategic shift from sole protector of the environment to shared stewardship – sharing responsibility for the environment with others.”*

Thus, this statement of intent crafted by Lynn Kriwoken became our call to action: **The Water Sustainability Action Plan provides an umbrella for on-the-ground initiatives that are informing Provincial policy through the shared responsibility model.** In 2003, this ‘top-down and bottom-up’ context for action represented a remarkable paradigm-shift in guiding philosophy for government.

**Advisory Group to Government:** The terms of engagement for provincial funding anticipated that the WSC roundtable would advise government on how to implement ‘a watershed / landscape-based (water-centric) approach to community planning’. We unveiled the Action Plan vision, in a half-day session titled **Charting a New Course: A Vision for an Integrated Approach to Water Management**<sup>6</sup>, conducted as part of the 2003 BCWWA Annual Conference (in April).

Then, in November 2003, Lynn Kriwoken organized a provincial focus group workshop in Kelowna to “develop strategies to maximize the effectiveness of the Water Sustainability Action Plan”. More than 40 representatives from various sectors within the water industry and from the broader community travelled from three regions to participate.

**A focus group action item<sup>7</sup> immediately became a mandate to create the waterbucket.ca website through an inter-agency partnership that included provincial ministries, regional districts, BC Hydro, BC Gas, Environment Canada and others.**

<sup>6</sup> [https://waterbucket.ca/wuc/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2020/11/WSAP\\_Charting-A-New-Course\\_April-2003.pdf](https://waterbucket.ca/wuc/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2020/11/WSAP_Charting-A-New-Course_April-2003.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [https://waterbucket.ca/cfa/files/2012/08/2003\\_Water-Save-Tool-Kit\\_Focus-Group-Workshop\\_Agenda.pdf](https://waterbucket.ca/cfa/files/2012/08/2003_Water-Save-Tool-Kit_Focus-Group-Workshop_Agenda.pdf)

## Vision for Water Sustainability Roundtable

*“The roundtable idea originated with Erik Karlsen. He had been the provincial government lead for a cross-border summit that British Columbia and Washington State co-hosted.”*

*“Although it was a highly successful event, and participants were energized by the experience, that energy did not translate into lasting action. Talk is cheap.”*

*“This disappointing outcome focused Erik Karlsen’s creative mind on how to facilitate moving from talk to tangible and lasting action on the ground. Thus, the Water Sustainability Action Plan became the vehicle for putting Erik Karlsen’s wisdom into play.”*

*“As a co-author of the Action Plan guidance document, Erik Karlsen framed the over-arching goal of the roundtable as achieving critical mass such that the idea of ‘integrated water management’ takes off – and ultimately becomes mainstream.”*

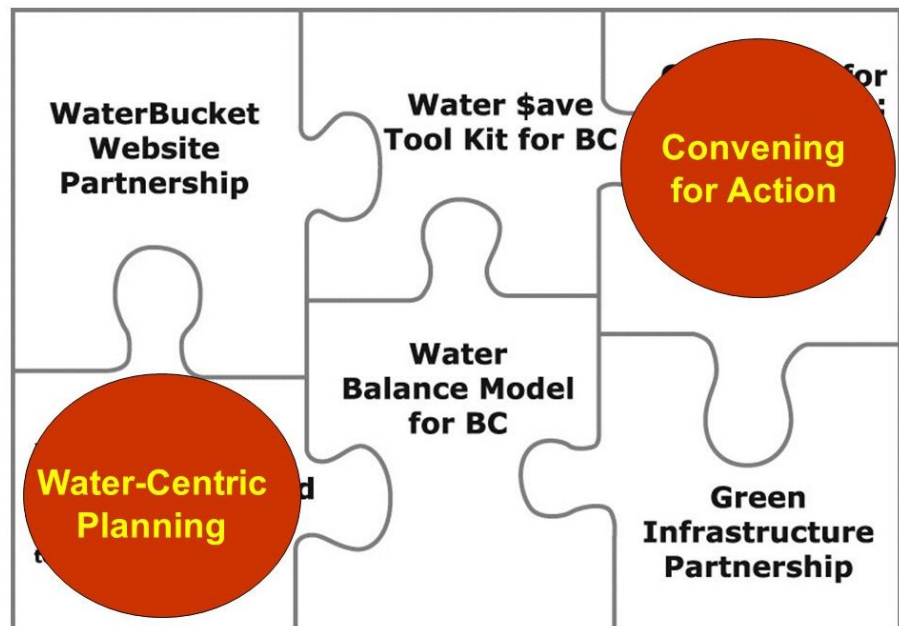
- as posted on  
waterbucket.ca

**Action Plan Elements:** Everything is connected. And so, a jigsaw puzzle was the original branding image for the [Water Sustainability Action Plan](#). Shown below, the six initial program elements holistically linked water management with land use. Each element involved collaboration and partnerships. Thus, an interdisciplinary network quickly took shape, with the WSC as the hub.

**Early Evolution of Action Plan Elements:** Released in 2002, the [Watershed / Landscape-Based Approach to Community Planning](#) was a product of Metro Vancouver’s Technical Advisory Committee. Erik Karlsen was the principal author. The WSC embraced it as guiding philosophy and incorporated it as an Action Plan Element. Within two years, we simplified it to **water-centric planning**.

In 2005, the [Water Sustainability Roundtable](#) became [Convening for Action: Roundtable on Water Sustainability](#). Then, in 2006, we reimagined it as [Convening for Action in British Columbia](#). This Action Plan Element also flowed from the experience of Erik Karlsen in leading the Georgia Basin Initiative in the 1990s.

**Gordon Campbell’s Vision for a Water Summit:** Release of the Water Sustainability Action Plan initiated planning within government for a 3-day [Premier’s Water Summit](#), with the WSC being responsible for Day #3. But it never happened. We realized that it would be better to build grassroots momentum for a Summit, rather than start with a Summit. And so, a vision for [Convening for Action in BC](#) took shape!





**Ray Fung, P.Eng.**  
WSC Chair (2003-2008)  
GIP Chair (2008-2010)  
Director, The Partnership

Director of Engineering &  
Transportation (retired),  
District of West Vancouver

*“Convening for Action is a provincial initiative that supports innovation on-the-ground, and has undertaken regional demonstration initiatives and programs on Vancouver Island and in Metro Vancouver, as well in the Okanagan Basin and Thompson River Region.”*

*“This provincial initiative is creating an opportunity to embrace all components of the water cycle through integrated water management. It will turn ideas into action by building capacity and understanding regarding integration of long-term, strategic planning and the implementation of physical infrastructure.”*

- 2008

**Convening for Action in BC:** In February 2005, exactly one year after release of the Water Sustainability Action Plan, the final day of the 3-day **Okanagan Conference on the Future for Water** was the forum for a presentation that launched **Convening for Action in BC**. The guiding vision for the initiative succinctly states that: **In a fully integrated landscape, water is the unifying element.**

The launch was followed by a technology transfer workshop in April 2005, again held in the Okanagan. Co-developed and co-hosted by the WSC and two provincial agencies, and titled **Demand Management Strategies – Achieving Water Balance**<sup>8</sup>, the workshop is historically significant as the first “convening for action event”. It introduced key concepts that we have built upon over the years.

**South Okanagan Sub-Regional Pilot:** Beginning in late 2005, the Action Plan partnered with the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen to ‘convene for action’ at a sub-regional scale. Collaboration enabled the **South Okanagan Regional Growth Strategy** to establish a provincial precedent: **a water-centric strategy!**

The South Okanagan pilot was the centrepiece for the **Whistler Mini-Summit on Water Stewardship and Sustainability**, held in May 2006. The Summit tested a dialogue approach to audience engagement. It also introduced the **Settlement Change in Balance with Ecology** way-of-thinking about water sustainability. Erik Karlsen was a central figure.

**Green Infrastructure Partnership (GIP):** In the Lower Mainland, the GIP served as the umbrella for ‘convening for action’, with the WSC as the secretariat. Launched in 2004, the GIP pioneered the **Showcasing Green Infrastructure Innovation Series** in 2006 as a way to provide peer-based education through ‘sharing & learning’. The GIP then partnered with **CAVI-Convening for Action on Vancouver Island** to introduce the approach to Vancouver Island in 2007 and 2008.

**CAVI-Convening for Action on Vancouver Island:** Launched in September 2006 as an adjunct to the **Water in the City Conference**, CAVI adapted the South Okanagan experience to the regional scale. Beginning in 2007, two provincial governmental ministries and Real Estate Foundation of BC (REFBC) jointly funded a multi-year program under the CAVI umbrella. Eric Bonham, a former Director in both the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Ministry of Environment, infused the CAVI Leadership Team with his passion for a 50-year vision.

<sup>8</sup>[https://waterbucket.ca/cfa/category/okanagan\\_basin\\_on\\_the\\_ground\\_changes/2005\\_penticton\\_water\\_in\\_water\\_out\\_workshop\\_british\\_columbia\\_on\\_the\\_ground\\_changes/](https://waterbucket.ca/cfa/category/okanagan_basin_on_the_ground_changes/2005_penticton_water_in_water_out_workshop_british_columbia_on_the_ground_changes/)



**Eric Bonham**, P.Eng.  
CAVI founding member

(retired) Director, Ministry of  
Municipal Affairs

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*“The ‘regional team approach’ is founded on partnerships and collaboration; and seeks to align actions at three scales – provincial, regional and local.”*

*“Everyone needs to agree on expectations and how all the players will work together, and after that each community can reach its goals in its own way.”*

- Eric Bonham  
2008

**Living Water Smart, British Columbia’s Water Plan:** The experience gained through the Water Sustainability Action Plan informed development of [Living Water Smart](#), released in June 2008. The Action Plan program built a ‘convening for action network’ in the local government setting, fostered sharing and learning within regions and between regions, and showed how to align efforts at multiple scales through **“top-down and bottom-up” collaboration**.

**Implementation Themes:** Living Water Smart was the provincial government’s call to action, and to this day transcends governments. The vision: [we take care of our water, our water takes care of us](#). The 45 Living Water Smart commitments were grouped into five themes:

1. **Governance, legislation, regulatory change (i.e. Water Sustainability Act, 2014)**
2. **Efficiency, outreach, public awareness**
3. **Science, information and learning**
4. **Watershed planning and restoration**
5. **Community Planning and development**

**Implementation in Local Government Setting:** The partnership umbrella provided by the Water Sustainability Action Plan allowed the Province to leverage partnerships to greatly enhance the profile and resulting impact of Living Water Smart. The convening for action network played a vitally important supporting role for two of the the five theme areas – that is, numbers 2 and 5 above. In [Beyond the Guidebook 2010](#), Lynn Kriwoken is quoted as follows:

*“In effect, the Action Plan partners and the WSC in particular are functioning as the on-the-ground Living Water Smart implementation arm with local government. The in-kind support from local government is substantial and growing, and means my team can focus our work effort on legislative reform. While legislation is a foundation piece, collaboration takes place outside the legislative framework. That is why we constantly emphasize that Living Water Smart is about motivating and inspiring everyone to embrace shared responsibility.”*



### Mike Tanner

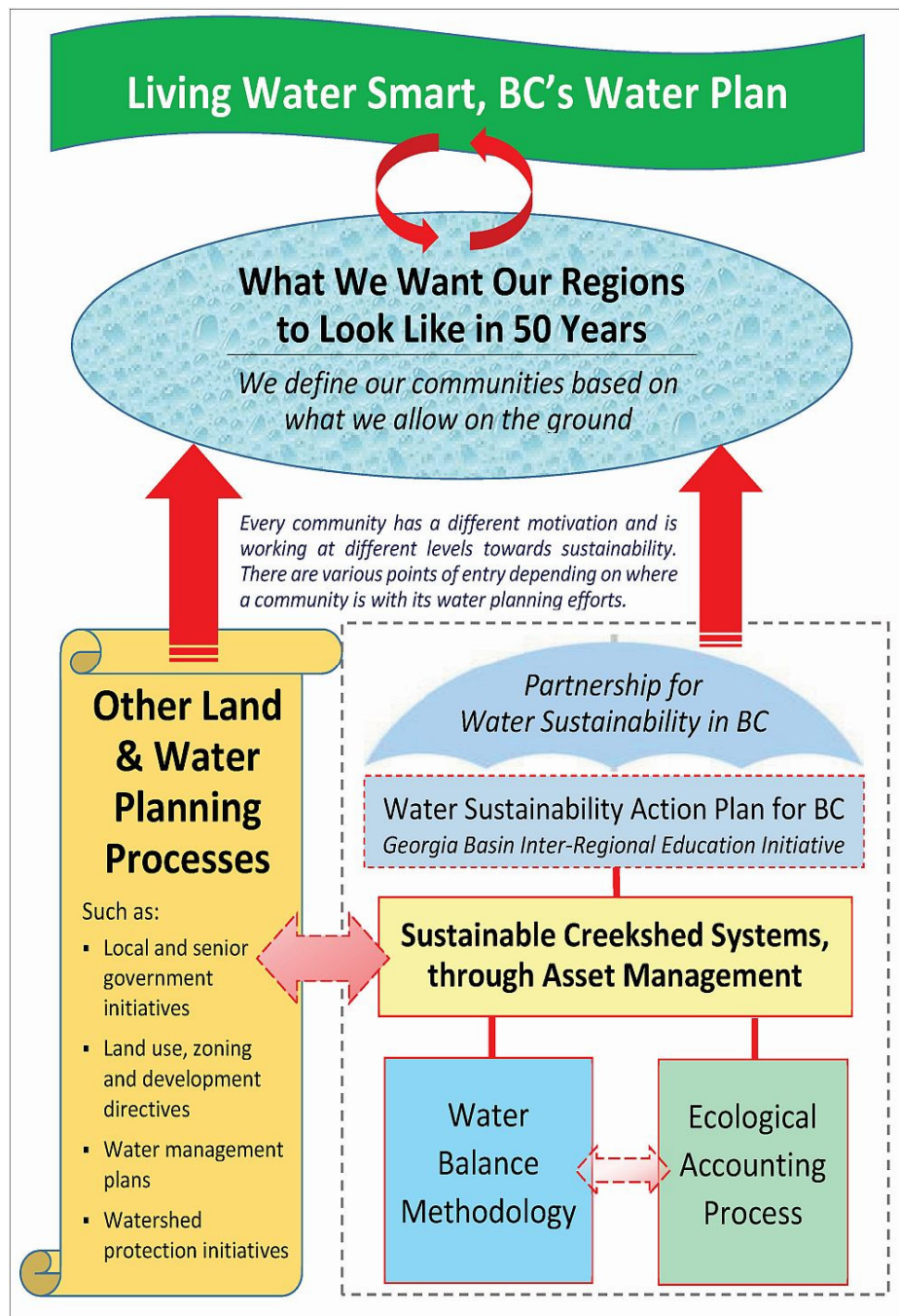
Director, The Partnership  
Chair, Waterbucket.ca  
(retired) Senior Manager,  
BC Hydro PowerSmart

*“The waterbucket.ca website and the weekly Waterbucket eNews provide the Partnership with two media platforms to share successes within BC and beyond. When the Minister of Environment announced the launch of waterbucket.ca in 2005, the mantra was: If the topic is water, just go to waterbucket.ca.”*

*“The vision has been fulfilled. Users tell us that waterbucket.ca dominates Google searches. Even better, 60% of our world-wide audience is in the 18-34 age demographic.”*

- November 2020

**Living Water Smart in the Local Government Setting:** The image below is a mind-map that illustrates how everything is connected, in particular how initiatives are nested within initiatives. This mind-map provides the reader with an over-arching context for understanding the work of The Partnership in the Living Water Smart era, in particular these two foundational program elements: the Vancouver Island Learning Lunch Seminar Series and the Beyond the Guidebook Initiative.





**John Finnie, P.Eng.**

General Manager of  
Regional and Community  
Utilities (retired), Regional  
District of Nanaimo

CAVI Chair (2006-2011)

*“Learning Lunches created opportunities for local government representatives to share ideas and discuss innovative approaches and solutions to local water problems.”*

*“Generally limited to about 50 attendees, these seminars ran for about 5 hours. By sharing ideas, attendees often left with fresh ideas or solutions to one or more of their own local problems. The sessions also provided opportunities to develop camaraderie and professional networking opportunities. Some of the connections and relationships established through the series continued for many years, or even a lifetime.”*

- November 2020

**Vancouver Island Learning Lunch Seminar Series:** Delivered under the CAVI umbrella, this precedent-setting approach to peer-based education was undertaken from 2008 through 2015. The capacity-building objective was to foster informed water-centric decisions by local governments. This lynch-pin target in Living Water Smart provided the starting point for curriculum design:

***“All land and water managers will know what makes a stream healthy, and therefore be able to help land and water users factor in new approaches to securing stream health and the full range of stream benefits.”***

(ref: page 43)

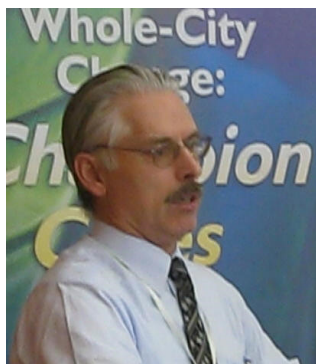
The curriculum connected dots, drawing on a number of provincial guidance documents, in particular [Stormwater Planning: A Guidebook for British Columbia](#). The spotlight was on how to achieve desired water sustainability outcomes through consistent implementation of effective green infrastructure practices.

Initially envisioned as inter-departmental in a small group setting, the concept quickly mushroomed in scope as an inter-governmental and inter-regional program. The nine local governments in the Cowichan and Comox valleys volunteered to collaborate as two Living Water Smart demonstration regions. This was the genesis for a **regional team approach guided by collaboration**, and the springboard to the [Georgia Basin Inter-Regional Education Initiative](#) in 2012.

**Beyond the Guidebook Initiative:** To help upgrade the state-of-practice for land development and drainage, an inter-governmental partnership developed the Water Balance Model and Express decision-support tools as an extension of the Stormwater Guidebook.

These online tools were the subject for a second, and interconnected, program of education and training that also supported Living Water Smart. Formally launched in 2007 with endorsement by DFO and government of BC, the [Beyond the Guidebook Initiative](#) built on the Guidebook foundation to **encourage application of a whole-system, water balance approach to reconnect hydrology and ecology**.

The Beyond the Guidebook Initiative has expanded. The Partnership now has three categories of guidance documents. These share the stories of local government leaders who are applying science-based understanding to achieve whole-system, water balance outcomes.



## Tim Pringle

Founding President

Founding Executive  
Director (1988 - 2008),  
Real Estate Foundation

*“The Partnership is the evolution of many initiatives around water sustainability in BC. The Partnership is building on and continuing the work that has gone on before under the umbrella of the Water Sustainability Action Plan.”*

*“The Action Plan has led to growing collaboration regarding the role of water sustainability in shaping our communities. Water sustainability is a metaphor for managing the built environment sustainably. Incorporating the Partnership as a legal entity is a natural outcome. This demonstrated record of collaboration is our strength going forward.”*

- November 2010

## First Decade as “The Partnership

During the period 2008 through 2010, it was clear that the scope of Action Plan partnerships had evolved beyond what could or should be undertaken by a technical committee of BCWWA. For example, the total investment of resources by the Water Balance Model Partnership and the Waterbucket.ca Partnership was substantial. Moreover, an independent structure was necessary to ensure the sustainability of Action Plan tools and programs.

**Legal Standing of The Partnership:** With the above as the context for an exciting new phase of the journey, The Partnership was incorporated as a non-profit society on November 19, 2010. Six years later, in November 2016, the new Societies Act came into effect in British Columbia. It provided clarity regarding types of societies. This clarity helped the Partnership define its identity.

**The Partnership Provides Services to Government:** Each pre-existing society was asked whether it wished to designate itself as a “member-funded society” by including a statement to that effect in its constitution. A member-funded society is funded primarily by its members to carry on activities for the benefit of its members.

If a society receives government funding above a certain threshold, it cannot be a member-funded society. Hence, the choice was made for us. The Partnership is not, and cannot be, a member-funded society. The reason is that The Partnership is funded almost exclusively by government because it provides services to government.

**Defining Initiatives in the First Decade:** A strength of The Partnership is that we can cross regional boundaries with comfort and draw players together for the benefit of the whole, and as a result, encourage an inclusive sustainability vision. The past 10 years are defined by the success of four major major programs:

- Georgia Basin Inter-Regional Education Initiative (IREI)
- BC Agricultural Water Demand Model Program
- Ecological Accounting Process (EAP)
- Vancouver Island Symposia Series on Water Stewardship

CAVI morphed into the IREI when the Boards of five regional districts – Metro Vancouver, Capital Region, Cowichan Valley, Comox Valley, and Nanaimo Region - passed Resolutions that endorsed the unique mechanism that The Partnership provides for collaboration.



**Ted van der Gulik**  
President, The Partnership

(retired) Senior Engineer  
Ministry of Agriculture

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*“The BC Landscape Water Calculator allows a user to divide their property into ‘hydrozones’ (planting areas). Then they can test various combinations of plant types and irrigation systems. The objective is to be at or below the allowable water budget set by the local government partner.”*

*“The power of the tool is that it is linked to the provincial 500 metre gridded climate dataset that was built for the Agricultural Water Demand Model. This is what establishes the allowable water budget. It is a real number based on average climate data for the period 2000 through 2010 for the active growing season.”*

- June 2020

**Georgia Basin Inter-Regional Education Initiative:** Launched in 2012, the IREI facilitates peer-based education among local governments located on the east coast of Vancouver Island and in the Lower Mainland. The IREI builds on the legacy of Erik Karlsen whose leadership inspired the original [Georgia Basin Initiative](#) in 1994.

**Nested Initiatives / Cascading Objectives:** The IREI is nested within the Water Sustainability Action Plan which, in turn, is nested within Living Water Smart. Cascading is the reverse way to think about this nesting concept. Each successive layer in the cascade adds depth and detail to enable the move from awareness to implementation (action).

A desired outcome of inter-regional sharing and learning is a common understanding of the science and consistent application of a whole-system, water balance approach to community development. Branded as [Sustainable Creekshed Systems, through Asset Management](#), the goal of this approach is to **reconnect hydrology and ecology**.

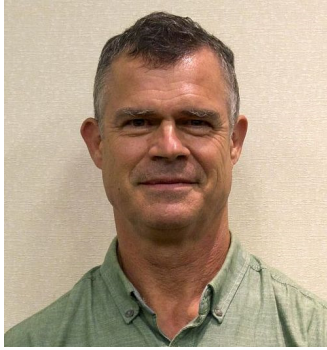
**High-Level Endorsement / Grant Funding:** In 2016, The Partnership asked the five regional districts for Board Resolutions that: 1) expressed their support for The Partnership; and 2) endorsed IREI program objectives through 2021. Having this clear demonstration of support was a difference-maker for The Partnership. We secured senior government grants to fund the IREI program through 2021.

**Agricultural Water Demand Model Program:** This water management planning tool calculates current and future agriculture water demands in British Columbia, and accounts for climate change. Led by Ted van der Gulik, the tool and implementation program flowed from one of the 45 actions and targets in Living Water Smart.

**A Family of Science-Based Tools:** The Partnership is program delivery manager for this multi-year and province-wide program. We are currently in our Second 5-Year Implementation Agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture. The annual budget is generally up to \$0.5 million. This provides context for the scope of the program.

The Partnership has developed several spin-off tools. The first one was the BC Agriculture Water Calculator (2015). It supports the provincial government’s application process for all new water licences. The newest tool is the BC Landscape Water Calculator.

Integration of the BC Landscape Water Calculator, as a foundation piece for the next generation of water conservation programs in BC, would help communities bring to fruition the vision for water sustainability. Use of the tool would help local governments achieve their water budgets and associated demand reduction targets.



## Richard Boase

Section Manager  
District of North Vancouver  
Moderator, Vancouver Island  
Symposia Series

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*“Every team member involved in delivery of the Symposia Series is passionate about what she or he does. This is what we hope and believe will inspire our audience to apply what they absorb from the series. It is best to view the series as an important milestone in a journey. We hope to bring others along with us.”*

*“Success will follow because the series will have seeded participants with information that allows them to carry on and follow a path that is right for them. Each participant will have reached their own conclusions based on what they got out of the series, and what resonated with them individually.”*

- October 2020

**Ecological Accounting Process:** Led by Tim Pringle, the EAP program is a flagship initiative that supports [Asset Management for Sustainable Service Delivery: A BC Framework](#). The Partnership initiated EAP concept development in 2015 to support the whole-system, water balance approach (*refer to image on page 17*). Within a year, The Partnership was ready to proceed with a 3-stage program to test, refine and mainstream EAP. By the end of 2021, we will have completed 10 demonstration applications spread over five regions.

**Methodology and Metrics for Valuing Natural Assets:** Local governments have existing tools in the form of policies and legislation for **‘maintenance and management’ (M&M) of ecological assets**, which are used for infrastructure services. What they have lacked to date, however, is a pragmatic methodology and meaningful metrics to support decision-making and implementation.

EAP provides local governments with a methodology and metrics so that they can calculate the financial value of the land within the stream setback zone, expressed as dollars per km. Using this information, they have a defensible basis for proposing a baseline annual budget for restoration of the stream system (which is the natural asset) within the setback zone.

**Reconnect Hydrology and Ecology:** EAP uses the parallel concepts of the **Natural Commons** and the **Constructed Commons** to enable elected persons, local government staff, practitioners and residents to consider ecological services and use of land (development) as equally important. These are foundational concepts for a local government’s asset management strategy that strives to reconnect hydrology and ecology.

**Vancouver Island Symposia Series:** Beginning in 2017, a shared vision for the [Vancouver Island Symposia Series on Water Stewardship in a Changing Climate](#) as a “convening for action” forum has evolved through a building blocks approach: Nanaimo in 2018; Parksville in 2019; and the [2020 Virtual Symposium](#).

The series is aimed at a continuum of audiences – ranging all the way from “boots in the creek” streamkeepers to elected representatives who decide what work will be funded. The unifying theme for the Symposia Series is the power of local government collaboration with the stewardship sector.

Delivered under the IREI umbrella, the Symposia Series is co-led by The Partnership and the Nanaimo & Area Land Trust (NALT). The series team includes representatives of all three levels of government.



## Derek Richmond

CAVI Chair (2011 – 2016)  
Founding Director,  
The Partnership

(retired) Manager of  
Engineering, City of Courtenay

*“Regardless of the complexity of problems with which we are faced, my passion for water resources has taught me the importance of clear visioning, partnering and cooperation with all stakeholders, and that collaboration is essential for success.”*

*“While it may be tempting to believe that we can function successfully within our own silos, my experience and more recently the world-pandemic, prove otherwise. Our future success will be measured by our ability to maintain water resources in balance with ecology, economy and education.”*

- November 2020

## What Next / The Second Decade

We hope that the reader has been informed by the foregoing synthesis of five eras. A decadal moment, such as a 10-year anniversary, is a time to both reflect on the past and look ahead. While this **Short History** paints a picture of The Partnership story over the past three decades, the strokes are broad-brush. Space does not permit delving into the finer details. There is so much more to the story, with still more to come in the years ahead. And so, we close with final reflections.

**A Distinctive Modus Operandi:** With incorporation of The Partnership in November 2010, the founding members translated a shared vision into a distinctive organizational model that would: stand the test of time; and, be guided by an over-arching goal > *that the focus of The Partnership remain squarely on the “Action Plan mission”* -

**Facilitate the move toward a more sustainable approach to water resource management – at all levels from the province to the household (Water Sustainability Action Plan)**

The organizational model is an “inside-outside” structure in which the concept of “committed volunteers” is entrenched. **Inside-Outside** means that The Partnership is connected to government but is independent of government. Thus, The Partnership carries on when governments change. **Committed Volunteers** means that The Partnership exists to advance the mission, at minimal overhead cost, and not build a bureaucracy. We believe our track record over the First Decade shows that we have succeeded in staying true to this vision.

**Why The Partnership is Successful:** The enduring success of The Partnership is founded on being able to consistently evolve with the times, while all the time providing quietly effective leadership. Erik Karlsen described the leadership provided by The Partnership in these terms – it is about having an innate sense to recognize just how far to get ahead of the crowd and then circle back and support from behind. Richard Boase uses a sheepdog metaphor to describe this process.

**The ability to adapt, renew and evolve is relatively easy when one has a solid guiding philosophy.** We are successful when our partners are successful. We use existing and emerging provincial government policies and legislation as fundamental starting points and build on these. When individuals are invited to join the Leadership Team, it is because there is “a job to be done”. Invitees will represent organizations that have a shared interest or mission in implementing the Action Plan, and will feed outcomes back into their organizations.



**Peter Law**

Founding Director,  
The Partnership

(retired) Senior Biologist,  
Ministry of Environment

*“As we move forward into the next decade, our leadership team will continue to strengthen our partnerships with ‘not for profit’ organizations to achieve two objectives - assist us in our mission; and benefit from our tools and expertise. In particular, we see the stewardship sector of BC – whose members work to monitor, protect and restore natural aquatic ecosystems - as an important partner.”*

- November 2020

### ***Reconnect People, Land and Water in Altered Landscapes:***

The Partnership believes that communities could build on what some have known since the 1980s and, in so doing, offset the neglect of past decades. At every scale, there are challenges and solutions that are going to need to be embraced. We have the thinking figured out. We can take lessons learned and bring them back to our regional and local context, and inspire people to do better.

The Partnership provides a unique mechanism for collaboration. We develop tools and programs, and we bring people together. At the end of the day, however, reconnecting people, land and water requires that local governments commit to implementing an Actionable Vision -

**An actionable vision for land and water is driven by leadership that mobilizes people and partnerships, a commitment to ongoing learning and innovation, and so importantly a budget to back it up.**

**Action Plan Elements:** In the Second Decade, a mix of Living Water Smart program initiatives are building blocks for reconnecting people, land and water. These fall under four main program areas:

**Asset Management for Sustainable Service Delivery:** The goal is that local governments would apply EAP to account for ecological systems and services in asset management strategies. The commons is a foundational concept underpinning EAP. See the final page.

**Local Government and Stewardship Sector Collaboration:** When citizen talent is aligned with a local government that is visionary and focused, outstanding achievements are not only possible, but realistic.

**Water Conservation & Resiliency Plans:** With many plans in BC being more than 5 years old, a provincial requirement for plan updates provides a reason for using the new BC Landscape Water Calculator.

**Interweaving of Western Science and Indigenous Knowledge:** First Nations bring the spiritual dimension of water. When we are in tune with that way of reimagining water basics, it opens the door to reconnecting people, land and water (and ecology and hydrology too).

**Blue Ecology**, the ecological philosophy formulated by BC’s Michael Blackstock and recognized by UNESCO, is a water-first approach. Blue Ecology interweaves the best threads of Indigenous cultural knowledge and Western science into a stronger and more flexible system of knowledge. The Partnership embraces Blue Ecology.

## The Commons Concept



### Foundational concepts that underpin EAP, the Ecological Accounting Process

Natural Commons	Constructed Commons	Institutional Commons
As defined by the EAP, a natural commons is an ecological system that provides ecological services used by nature and the community.	Communities rely on a range of services such as roads, underground utilities and parks to support life-style and property enjoyment. These are <b>commons</b> . Through taxation, they are maintained and managed in order to ensure the availability of desired services.	Services such as fire protection and schools are a related kind of constructed commons.



**the partnership**  
for water sustainability in bc