



the partnership
for water sustainability in bc

Convening for Action in British Columbia

“Think like a Watershed,” advocates Oliver Brandes, leader of the POLIS Water Sustainability Project

Story of POLIS Collaboration with the
Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia



Posted on the waterbucket.ca website

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POLIS Collaboration with the Partnership for Water Sustainability

POLIS Celebrates a Decade of Success in BC

“2013 marks the 10-year anniversary of the POLIS Water Sustainability Project at the University of Victoria, and the entire project team is thrilled to be celebrating this milestone! We couldn’t have made it this far without the support of all our funders, the research community, and those concerned citizens and leaders who share their time and energy and champion our work,” proclaims Oliver Brandes, POLIS Co-Director. POLIS is a centre for trans-disciplinary research.



“How far we have come! Back in 2003, the Water Sustainability Project was a little project with a team of one. It grew out of a visionary idea from Dr. Michael M’Gonigle that fresh water was on the cusp of being a major issue across Canada, and especially in British Columbia. A decade of hard work later—with extraordinary people, wonderful partnerships, and real opportunities to make an impact—we are inspired and empowered by the fact that our research keeps growing and the project continues to improve.”

“We will be marking this year with celebrations, as well as reflections on some of the highlights from our first decade of success.”



Think Like a Watershed

“More than a decade into the 21st century, the idea of collaborative watershed management has come of age, and watershed groups across the province are eager to participate. It is all about learning to think like a watershed. That is our vision,” emphasizes Oliver Brandes.

A Governance System Rooted in Ecological Principles

“Sustainable water management must focus on ensuring all ‘new’ water comes from better use of existing supplies, and from changes in attitudes and water-use habits. By demonstrating the powerful potential of new approaches, new perspectives, and innovation, the Water Sustainability Project team works to develop a clear model for ecosystem-based water governance in Canada—a model based on conservation, stewardship, and sustainability.”

“By examining all actions in the context of the watershed, we can move toward a governance system that is rooted in ecological principles, and shift the focus towards managing the people within a watershed, rather than controlling the watershed itself,” concludes Oliver Brandes.

Dialogue is a Precursor to Action

“Dialogue is always a precursor to action in a healthy democracy. The challenge is to include a broader cast of characters so that more than just the ‘usual’ suspects are involved in decisions. Collaborative solutions are within reach, calling on successful stories of change.”

Through experience,
we have learned that...

To Build Trust & Respect,
It Starts with a Conversation.

Listen, Listen, Listen.

Because...

Conversations →
will lead to Dialogue →
will lead to Consensus

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A BOLD PREDICTION:
...the future *is* shared decision making at the
watershed level
- not *IF* but *WHEN!* -



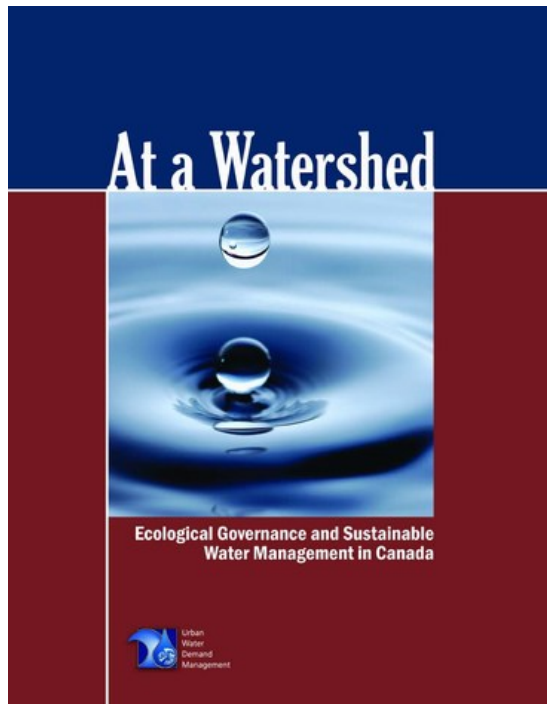
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“Everyone in B.C. agrees that we want to keep our lakes and rivers clean and flowing, and that we have to share it between different uses and different kinds of users: for the environment, for washing and drinking, for farms and for fish, for economic opportunities and, most fundamentally, to ensure ecological function. It seems sensible to sort through competing interests and potential conflicts by getting those interests — and those affected — to talk together.”

To Learn More: The POLIS Water Sustainability Project began as part of the *POLIS Project on Ecological Governance*. It works to develop innovative legal, institutional, and practical approaches that embody the principles of ecological governance, providing the foundation for a comprehensive legal and policy framework for sustainable water management.

Oliver Brandes was the principal author of **At a Watershed: Ecological Governance and Sustainable Water Management in Canada**, published in 2005.



POLIS Collaboration with the Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC

“Our collaboration with Oliver Brandes and the POLIS Project dates back to the genesis of the Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia when we operated as the Water Sustainability Committee under the umbrella of the BC Water & Waste Association. We first met Oliver Brandes in September 2004



when Lynn Kriwoken (now an Executive Director in the Ministry of Environment) introduced him to the partners. A meeting outcome was that we agreed to collaborate. By March 2005 the partnership had formalized our relationship with POLIS through a *Statement of Collaboration*,” recalls Kim Stephens, Partnership Executive Director.

“In our Statement of Collaboration, we defined the partnership framework in terms of influencing practitioners (professionals and others) whose vocations deal with or impact upon water issues. This influence will shift practice in British Columbia to address water resource management as an integral part of land use and landscape development or redevelopment,” adds Oliver Brandes.



“We agreed to collaborate to promote development and province-wide implementation of a fully integrated *Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia*; and thereby achieve a more holistic approach to water management in BC.”

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Launch of Convening for Action in BC in February 2005

“The month before, in February 2005, we had launched *Convening for Action in British Columbia* at the 3-day Okanagan Conference organized by the Canadian Water Resources Association,” continues Kim Stephens. “Hosted by the City of Kelowna, the conference was designed to be a transformational event that would be the catalyst for change.”

“In the spirit of inter-association collaboration, we provided the core content for Day Three. This



positioning fitted well with our convening for action mantra: **What / So What / Now What.**

Our team of Oliver Brandes, Lynn Kriwoken and Kim Stephens provided the Now What part of the program,” states Ray Fung. He served as Chair of the Water Sustainability Committee from 2003 through 2008.

Next: 2005 Workshop on “Achieving Water Balance”

“After the Convening for Action initiative was launched in February 2005, the Penticton Workshop in April 2005 was the first regional event organized under the Convening for Action (CFA) umbrella. Oliver Brandes was one of our star performers that day,” states Kim Stephens.

“Held as an adjunct to the BCWWA Annual Conference, this full-day technical transfer session connected the dots between water resource planning, climate variability and risk management; explored the tools and techniques available through demand-side management; and gave participants ‘hands-on’ planning practice to demonstrate how to achieve a water balance without relying on new sources and infrastructure,” explains Ted van der Gulik, Chair of the Water Balance Model Partnership.



This is the “BC process” for moving from Awareness to Action

1. WHAT is the issue?

The form of land development impacts how water is used and how water runs off the land.

2. SO WHAT can be done?

Influence practitioners to ‘design with nature’

4. THEN WHAT?

Replicate in other communities

3. NOW WHAT can we do?

Implement the Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia



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CAVI-Convening for Action on Vancouver Island

“The following year, in September 2006, we launched *CAVI-Convening for Action on Vancouver Island* at a consultation workshop held in conjunction with the Water in the City Conference,” reports Eric Bonham, a former Director in two provincial Ministries. “Oliver Brandes was a founding member of the CAVI Leadership Team. He has provided us with a strong link to academia and access to his research.”



“The CAVI initiative is the hub for a ‘convening for action’ network that facilitates alignment of regional and local actions with provincial goals. We primarily work in the local government context, with a focus on community and regional planning systems, to influence uptake of strategies that will integrate decisions about use and conservation of land with water and watershed sustainability outcomes. The guiding philosophy is ‘design with nature,’” explains Tim Pringle, Partnership President.



Worth Every Penny Workshop: “Over the years, Oliver Brandes has made a substantial contribution to the CAVI initiative,” adds John Finnie, CAVI Chair from 2006 through 2011. “In October 2008, POLIS co-hosted *Showcasing Green Infrastructure Innovation at the University of Victoria*. In September 2010, he and Kirk Stinchcombe were the co-stars when the Regional District of Nanaimo hosted the *Worth Every Penny Workshop*.”

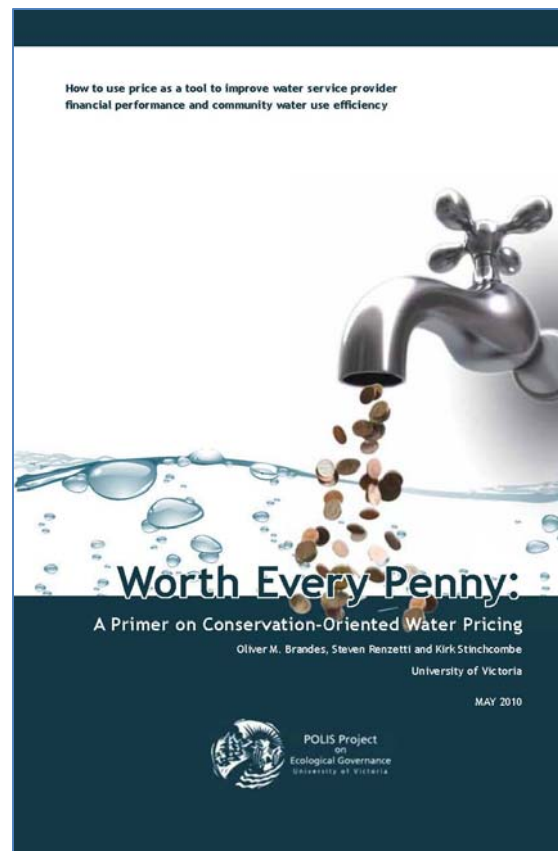


“The workshop was part of the rollout to stimulate a national dialogue on sustainable water management. The workshop program was a unique blend of research and practice,” explains Kirk Stinchcombe. “Moving to effective water pricing will take time and probably a bit of courage on the part of municipal leaders.”



Kirk Stinchcombe and Oliver Brandes are co-authors of **Worth Every Penny: A Primer on Conservation-Oriented Water Pricing**.

“Effective conservation-oriented water pricing can help reconcile growing communities with the health of local watersheds and engage individuals and businesses to change their behaviour and begin reducing their water footprints,” states Oliver Brandes.



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Vancouver Island Summit: “In October 2012, Oliver Brandes was part of our presentation team for the ‘CAVI Forum within the VIEA Summit’. The annual State of the Island Economic Summit is organized by the Vancouver Island Economic Alliance,” continues Derek Richmond, current CAVI Chair.



“The theme for the Forum was **Mission Possible: Settlement, Economy and Ecology** in balance. If you are going to align efforts on a watershed scale, then getting it right at the front-end means looking beyond your boundaries to envision the bigger picture.....in other words, global thinking for local action. It means you are **communicating** and **cooperating** with others to ensure that your **collaborative** results are **coordinated** in a timely manner.”

“Oliver made an impact on our audience when he spoke to the theme that the future is shared decision making at the watershed level. In fact, his attention-grabbing commentary led directly to Oliver being invited by Gail Adrienne, Executive Director of the Nanaimo & Area Land Trust to make the keynote presentation at an event organized by the Nanaimo River Watershed Roundtable.”

