



the partnership  
for water sustainability in bc

Waterbucket eNews on November 30, 2021

<https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

A wide-angle photograph of a sunset over the ocean. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that reflects on the water. The sky is filled with dark, dramatic clouds. In the foreground, there are dark, jagged rocks. A small pool of water is visible in a crevice between the rocks at the bottom center of the frame.

**Living Water Smart  
in British Columbia:  
*Creating a Culture for  
Urban Watershed Restoration***

## Note to Reader:

[Waterbucket eNews](#)<sup>1</sup> celebrates the leadership of individuals and organizations who are guided by the vision for [Living Water Smart in British Columbia](#)<sup>2</sup>.

The edition published on November 30, 2021 featured historical resources readily accessible and downloadable from the [waterbucket.ca](#) website. These documents help focus attention on the importance of oral history as an effective way to pass on experience and understanding over time as the intergenerational baton is handed off.

The umbrella for Partnership initiatives and programs is the [Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia](#)<sup>3</sup>. In turn, the Action Plan is nested within [Living Water Smart, British Columbia's Water Plan](#).



<sup>1</sup> <https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

<sup>2</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>3</sup> <https://www.waterbucket.ca/cfa/sites/wbccfa/documents/media/81.pdf>

## Editor's Perspective

Changing the way communities conserve, use and develop land depends on establishing higher expectations and challenging decision-makers and practitioners to embrace shared responsibility. It takes time to change the culture, no matter what the setting.

By 2010, as documented in [Beyond the Guidebook 2010](#), it was evident that British Columbia was at a tipping point in the local government setting. There were strong reasons for optimism. Implementation of a new culture based on "**designing with nature**" appeared to be within our collective grasp.

### Generational Amnesia is a Growing Concern

Fast-forward to 2021. Generational amnesia potentially puts at risk much of the good work that has been accomplished in the past two decades. Knowing one's history is important. By pulling threads of understanding from the past, the Partnership believes that passing on the "oral history" would help everyone make informed decisions that result in better outcomes.

The intergenerational benefits of knowing one's oral history would ripple through time. In sharp contrast, there are risks and consequences associated with re-inventing the wheel because "they don't know what they don't know".

In the 2000s, the call to action was a simple one: **What do we want this place to look like in 50 years and beyond?** Once a community collectively decides what kind of future it wants, the next step is to determine what tools would make it possible to bring the shared vision to fruition. That is when the hard work begins.

It requires intergenerational commitment. This relies on an understanding of oral history in order to benefit from and build on experience.

### Settlement, Economy and Ecology in Balance

In the mid-2000s, we observed that insertion of the word team in 'regional approach' had a profound impact on how practitioners viewed their world. We realized that this framing is a powerful motivator for aligning efforts at provincial, regional and local scales to achieve the objectives and targets in [Living Water Smart, British Columbia's Water Plan](#).

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

**What is the Goal?** Everyone who is involved in the land planning and development process must understand “the goal” in doing business differently. Otherwise, the status quo results in unacceptable consequences. This approach to peer-based education led to development of the **Responsibility Matrix** as a communication tool to focus all on the players in the local government setting on their individual roles and responsibilities in striving to achieve “the goal”.

**Settlement, economy and ecology in balance.** This would be the desired outcome in aligning efforts through a team approach, agreeing on “the goal”, and doing business differently to create a desired future that answers the question: *What do we want this place to look like in 50 years and beyond?*



Kim A. Stephens, MEng, PEng,  
Executive Director  
Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC  
November 2021



**Create a Legacy:  
Settlement, Economy and Ecology in Balance**

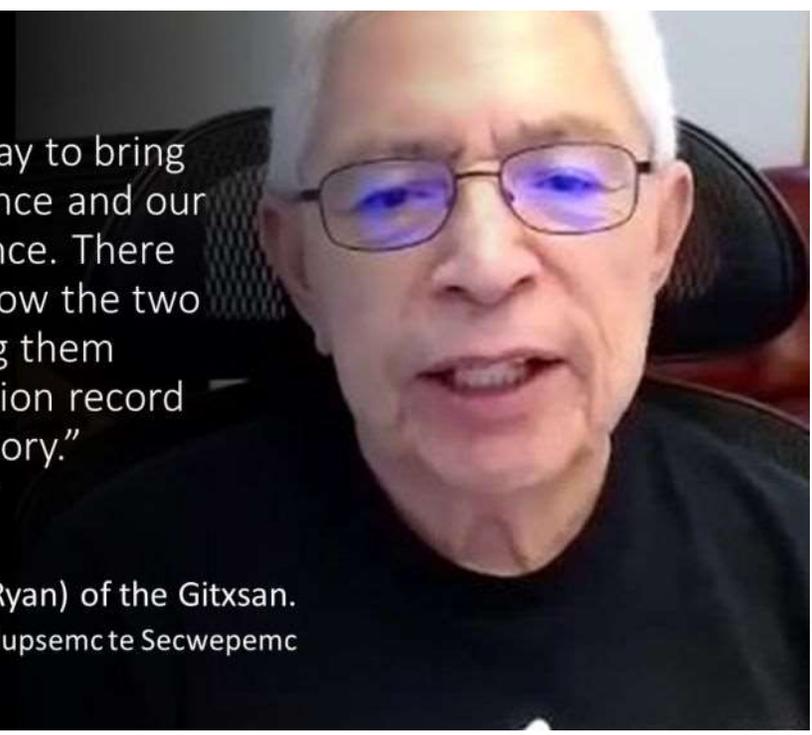
1. Influence choices by individuals and organizations
2. Use the term “water reconciliation” as a lens for considering approaches that influence choices

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

**Decisions made today ripple through time!**

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**Creating a culture for urban watershed restoration relies on knowing the oral history of an area. And as the First Nations who have settled these lands for 1000s of years tell us, passing on the oral history is key to sharing a collective memory over time. Each generation must be receptive so that experience is passed on.**



“We are inching our way to bring together Western science and our own (Indigenous) science. There are different ways of how the two interact when we bring them together. The observation record for us is in the oral history.”

Chief Hanamuxw (aka Don Ryan) of the Gitxsan.  
Negotiator/facilitator for Stk'emlupsemc te Secwepemc

## Creating a Culture for Urban Watershed Restoration in British Columbia

For the past two decades, the Partnership for Water Sustainability has been building a library of resources on the [waterbucket.ca](http://waterbucket.ca) website. Many of these resources have provided the curriculum backbone for the peer-based educational program delivered by the Partnership under the umbrella of the Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia.

With the passage of time, however, knowledge of the existence and significance of historical resources is easily lost. This is one of the consequences of "**generational amnesia**". Hence, the purpose of this edition of Waterbucket eNews is to draw reader attention to two of many invaluable resources on the [waterbucket.ca](http://waterbucket.ca) website. These are easily found by going to the [Publications and Downloads dropdown](#)<sup>4</sup> on the Convening for Action community-of-interest.

We invite you, the reader, to take a few minutes to do some exploring. You never know, the process might very well trigger an Aha Moment. To pique reader curiosity to dive into the archives, we are featuring a key Backgrounder from 2009.

The title, [Shared Responsibility Underpins a Regional Team Approach to Creating Our Future](#)<sup>5</sup>, embodies three foundational concepts for creating a climate for change and adapting to the new reality of weather extremes in the form of **atmospheric rivers, heat domes** and **bomb cyclones**.

The case study experience and learnings presented in this 2009 resource as well as other Backgrounders were incorporated in [Beyond the Guidebook 2010: Implementing a New Culture for Urban Watershed Protection and Restoration in British Columbia](#)<sup>6</sup>. This is a different kind of Guidebook. It tells the stories of how change is implemented, through long-term commitment, and by "designing with nature" on-the-ground in British Columbia.

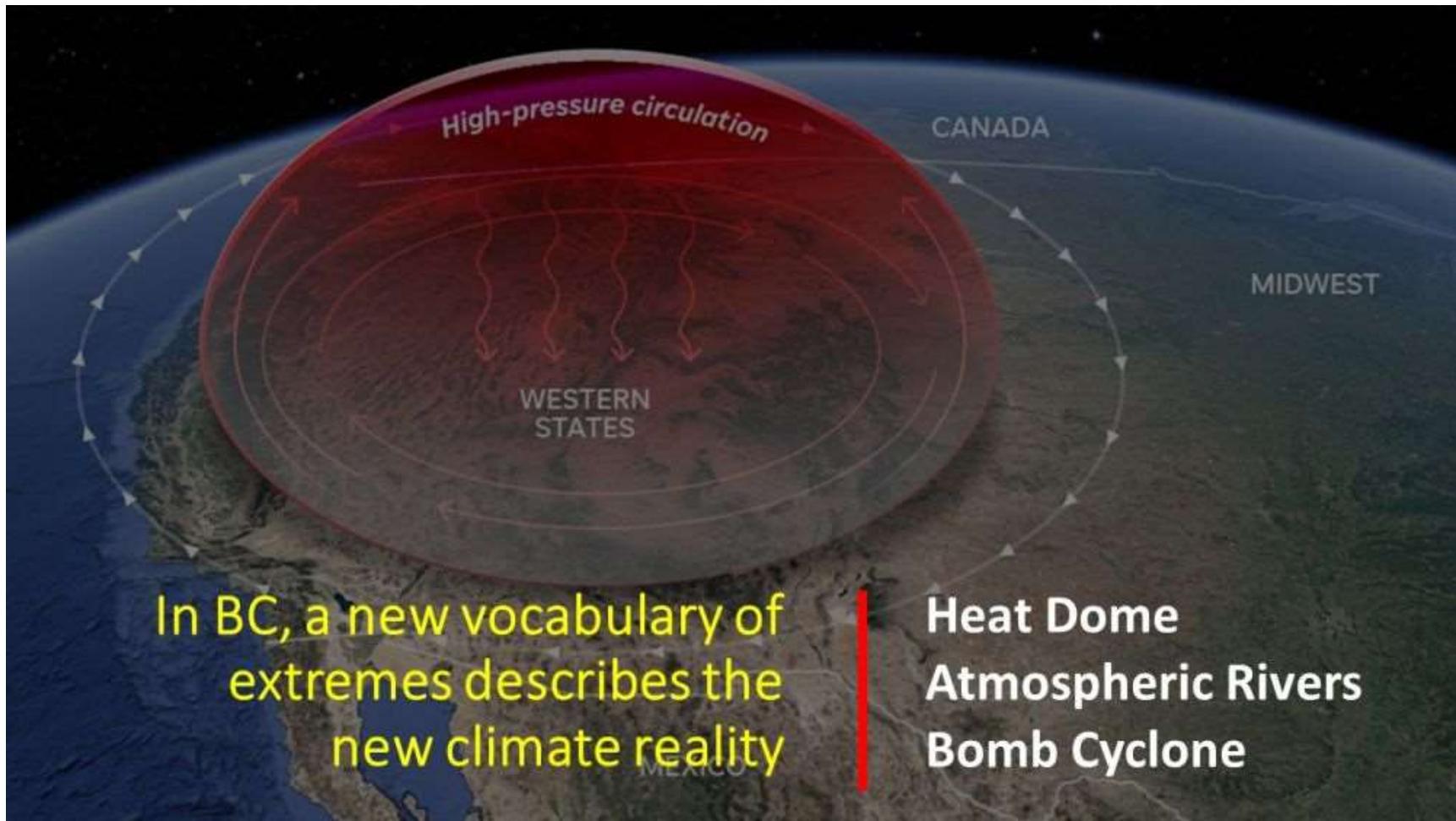
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<sup>4</sup> [https://waterbucket.ca/cfa/category/publications\\_resources/](https://waterbucket.ca/cfa/category/publications_resources/)

<sup>5</sup> [https://waterbucket.ca/wcp/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2021/11/PWSBC\\_Living-Water-Smart\\_Shared-Responsibility\\_2021.pdf](https://waterbucket.ca/wcp/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2021/11/PWSBC_Living-Water-Smart_Shared-Responsibility_2021.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.waterbucket.ca/cfa/sites/wbccfa/documents/media/403.pdf>

## The Era of Weather Extremes is Upon Us



## Flashback to "Beyond the Guidebook 2010"

"In 2005, we said this would be a different kind of guidebook. We said that the Guidebook would be the 'telling of the stories' of how change is being implemented on-the-ground in BC. Before the chapters could be written, however, the regional case studies had to run their course," stated Glen Brown in 2010. At the time, he was an Executive Director in the provincial government.

"Well, it is five years later, and [Beyond the Guidebook 2010](#) is the story of how we got to here and where we are going next. This is the Water-Centric Guidebook. If one goes back 10 years, there was a void of policy and legislation. This led us down an educational path as the logical alternative. We took the Stormwater Planning Guidebook, which is a document released in 2002, and we moved it to implementation."

"A good idea is immediate, but preparation for implementation can take 5 to 10 years. Change will then take place quickly, states the Guidebook in the chapter titled *Building Consensus and Implementing Change*. It has taken patience and consistent messaging over the past decade to incrementally build consensus, facilitate a culture change, and start implementing a new way of doing business."

On February 10, 2009 the Ministry of Community Development sent out a circular to all Municipal and Regional District Chief Administrative Officers, Engineers and Planners regarding the Beyond the Guidebook provincial initiative. The Circular explained how a number of provincial initiatives support and/or complement each other.

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*Rollout of **Beyond the Guidebook 2010** commenced with a study session at the 2010 Annual Convention of the Union of BC Municipalities.*

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## The New Business As Usual

Chapter 1 is the ‘call to action’. The future desired by all will be created through alignment of federal, provincial, regional and local policies and actions.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of why [Stormwater Planning: A Guidebook for British Columbia](#) was a catalyst for action to implement a ‘design with nature’ approach to rainwater management and green infrastructure.

Chapter 3 describes the steps in an incremental process for building practitioner capacity in BC to implement the **New Business As Usual**.

Chapter 4 introduces the stories of three regional initiatives; they demonstrate that the practitioner culture is changing as an outcome of collaboration, partnerships and alignment.

Chapter 5 describes the inter-connected elements of an **Outreach & Continuing Education Program** for advancing a ‘water-centric’ approach to community development.

Chapter 6 describes six outcomes resulting from local governments embracing a ‘top-down and bottom-up’ strategy to implementing the **New Business As Usual**.

Chapter 7 provides local governments with ‘how to’ guidance for developing outcome-oriented urban watershed plans, with emphasis on a necessary course correction for **Integrated Stormwater Management Plans (ISMPs)**.

**Guiding Principles:** Beyond the Guidebook 2010 drew on BC case study experience to illustrate how success will follow when local government elected representatives, administrators, and practitioners:

1. Choose to be enabled.
2. Establish high expectations.
3. Embrace a shared vision.
4. Collaborate as a ‘regional team’.
5. Align and integrate efforts.
6. Celebrate innovation.
7. Connect with community advocates.
8. Develop local government talent.
9. Promote shared responsibility.
10. Change the land ethic for the better.

## Quotable Quotes about Beyond the Guidebook 2010

“Most people really want to do their part to improve the environment but generally they are at a loss for how to proceed. The Guidebook provides a simple and easy-to-grasp road map. We can accomplish much if we adopt some of the splendid suggestions regarding urban watershed protection in the Guidebook, both in terms of specific projects or improvements that are easy to implement but also with regard to the process by which we can change our culture and attitudes.”

– June 2010

Dr. Bernard Bauer, Director of the Okanagan Sustainability Institute, University of BC Okanagan

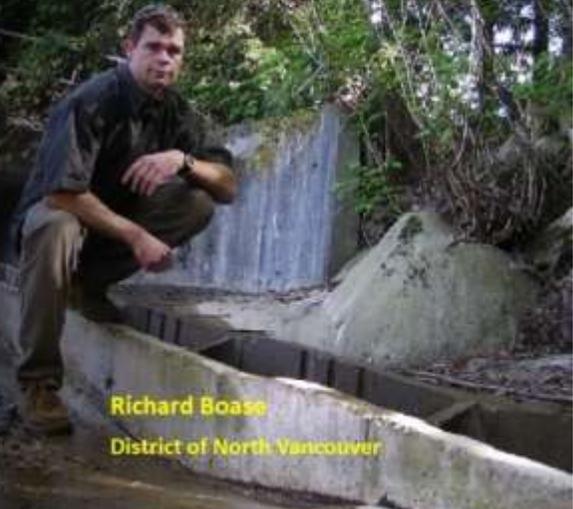


“So many of us in local government are still searching for the magical ‘silver bullet’ that with the stroke of a pen will resolve all our watershed issues and challenges while at the same time stimulate economic activity and accommodate growth.”

“While the search continues, it is important to note that the practical solution is around us everywhere, and is staring right at us.”

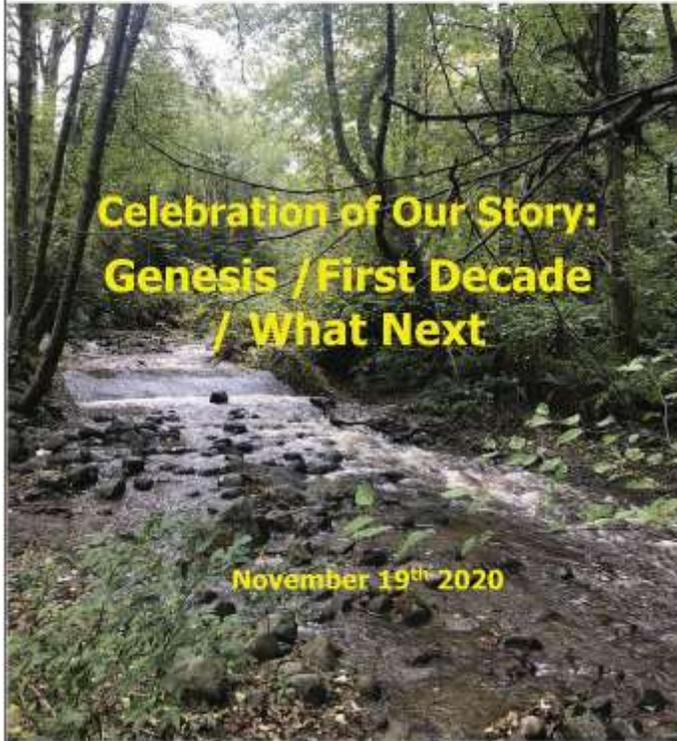
“Soil, vegetation and trees can do more for our watersheds than decades of planning, consulting and complicated engineering design will ever achieve.” – June 2010

Richard Boase  
District of North Vancouver





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TO LEARN MORE, VISIT:

<https://waterbucket.ca/about-us/>

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## About the Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia

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Incorporation of the Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia as a not-for-profit society on November 19, 2010 was a milestone moment. Incorporation signified a bold leap forward.

Over two decades, the Partnership had evolved from a technical committee in the 1990s, to a “water roundtable” in the first decade of the 2000s, and then to a legal entity. The Partnership has its roots in government – local, provincial, federal.

The Partnership has a primary goal, to **build bridges of understanding** and pass the baton from the past to the present and future. To achieve the goal, the Partnership is growing a network in the local government setting. This network embraces collaborative leadership and **inter-generational collaboration**.

The Partnership believes that when each generation is receptive to accepting the inter-generational baton and embracing the wisdom that goes with it, the decisions of successive generations will benefit from and build upon the experience of those who went before them.

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