



the partnership
for water sustainability in bc

Waterbucket eNews on November 23, 2021

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

A photograph of a forest stream with white water rapids, surrounded by trees and fallen logs.

**Living Water Smart
in British Columbia:
*Growing the Network through
Collaborative Leadership***

Note to Reader:

Waterbucket eNews¹ celebrates the leadership of individuals and organizations who are guided by the vision for [Living Water Smart in British Columbia](#)².

The edition published on November 23, 2021 featured the Partnership's [Annual Report 2021](#)³. Written as a communication tool to present a big picture look at the work of The Partnership, the document comprises a set of "30-second takeaways" that illustrate the breadth and depth of initiatives and programs.

The umbrella for Partnership initiatives and programs is the [Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia](#)⁴. In turn, the Action Plan is nested within [Living Water Smart, British Columbia's Water Plan](#).



¹ <https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

² https://waterbucket.ca/wcp/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/11/livingwatersmart_book.pdf

³ https://waterbucket.ca/atp/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/11/PWSBC_Annual-Report-2021_version-for-waterbucket.ca_.pdf

⁴ <https://www.waterbucket.ca/cfa/sites/wbccfa/documents/media/81.pdf>

Editor's Perspective

At the beginning of 2021, the Partnership leadership reflected on our long-term commitment to collaborative leadership and growing a network. From the outset, we had vowed never to fall into the trap of concentrating our energies on building an organization and thus losing sight of "the mission". This view of the world reflected our history as a roundtable.

Are there other precedents for our approach, we wondered? Or are we unique? In 2015, for example, United States Senator Patrick Leahy reached out to The Partnership to provide an inspirational address at his [2nd Environmental Summit](#) held in Burlington, Vermont.

When I asked why they approached us, the summit organizers responded that they could find nothing in North America comparable to what The Partnership is doing.

Although our Vermont experience provided anecdotal evidence, we decided it was time to research the social science literature to definitively answer this question: Has anyone else tried to do what we have been doing for the past two decades under the "collaboration umbrella" that is the Water Sustainability Action Plan?

Is Our Experience Unique?

Mike Tanner, a founding Director, took on the research task. He found the ground-breaking paper co-authored by Dr. Jane Wei Skillern in 2008. Published in the [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#), her work provided us with the textbook reference to describe what we are doing intuitively!

Fast forward to October 2021. The Partnership leadership reached out to Jane via email. We wanted to learn more about her research findings. Jane responded within minutes. Were we ever impressed!

Within days, we met via Zoom. Jane kicked off the conversation by telling us that she had heard about the work of the Partnership and had long wanted to connect with us.

The focus of Jane's research is on non-government organizations (NGOs). The Partnership is unique in that our main focus is on evolving a network that is government-based. Governments, especially local governments, are also nonprofits.

From experience, we can draw the conclusion that the research findings for an NGO-based network apply equally well to the Partnership's government-based network.

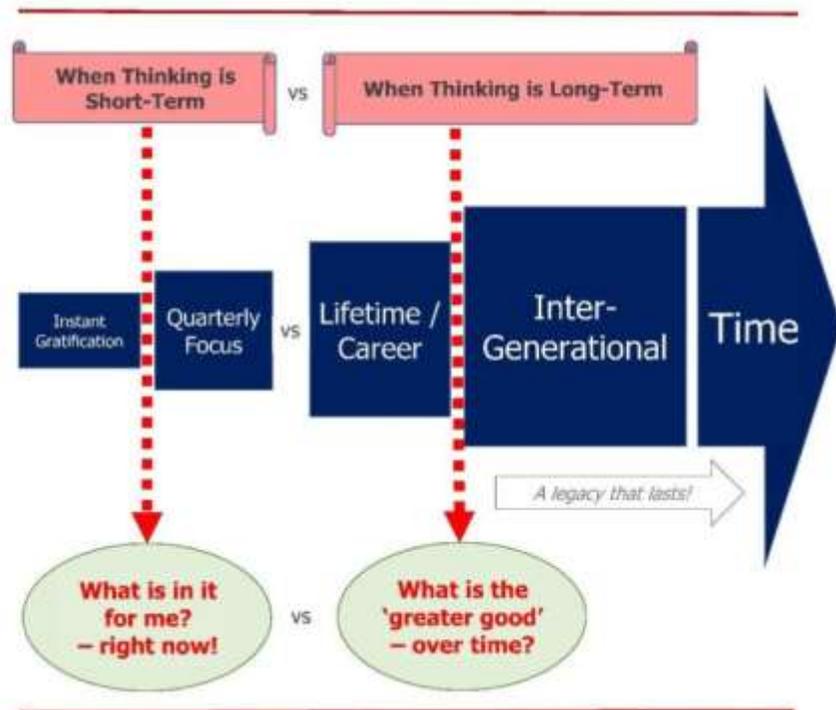
Jane Wei Skillern introduced us to a set of **four counter-intuitive principles** that are critical to collaboration success. Her findings offer insights into how champions in the local government and stream stewardship sectors can ensure that their collaborative efforts can have an impact that is dramatically greater than the sum of the individual parts.



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



The Time Continuum graphic opposite conceptualizes the way of thinking that underpins the inter-generational mission of the Partnership for Water Sustainability. Influence choices. Capitalize on the REACHABLE and TEACHABLE MOMENTS to influence choices.



The Living Water Smart Network is guided by a shared vision. By pulling threads of understanding from the past through to the present and future, it would help communities reconnect people, fish, land and water in altered landscapes.

Counter-Intuitive Principles for Effective Networks

Focus on mission before organization
Manage through trust, not control
Promote others, not yourself
Build constellations, not stars



“It was exciting to hear about the work of the British Columbia Partnership for Water Sustainability and how their approach has exemplified network leadership as I have conceptualized it.”

“When members of the Partnership were sharing their experience with me, I kept nodding my head in agreement because it was so similar to what I have seen in my research. It is also rewarding to see these ideas validated in practice time and time again.”

Dr. Jane Wei-Skillern, University of California Berkeley
Co-author of the groundbreaking “The Networked Non-profit” (2008)

Create an Enduring Legacy through Collaboration

Are you curious about "the story behind the story" of the Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia? If so, continue reading. You will learn who we are, what we represent, how we came to be, and why we are committed to an intergenerational mission.

A Non-Profit that Provides Services to Government

The Partnership is a registered non-profit society, a legal entity. Operationally, however, we function as the hub for a network in the local government setting - the Living Water Smart Network. We are guided by the collaborative leadership model. An over-arching goal of collaboration is to align efforts around a shared vision for "settlement, economy and ecology in balance".

For The Partnership to be successful in facilitating changes in practice over the long-term, the hard work must be done by our partners. This means the work of The Partnership must be aligned with and support their organizational aspirations and objectives.



This approach reflects our genesis, first as a technical committee and then as a roundtable, before morphing into the present non-profit legal entity. We are growing the Living Water Smart Network. We are not building a conventional organization.

Collaborative leadership uses the power of influence rather than positional authority to engage and align individuals and organizations within a network, and deliver results across organizational boundaries.

The network is the ultimate source of strength of The Partnership. The network also holds the key to intergenerational collaboration. It is how we build bridges of understanding and pass the baton from the past to the present and future.

Counter-Intuitive Principles for Effective Networks

Focus on mission before organization. Effective network leaders build strategies that advance the mission even when it does not result in direct benefits to their organization.

Build partnerships based on trust, not control. Leaders depend upon shared values and trust rather than top-down controls and accountability systems.

Promote others rather than yourself. Network leaders exhibit a strong norm of humility above all else, sharing credit and foregoing opportunities for individual advancement and institutional growth and brand building.

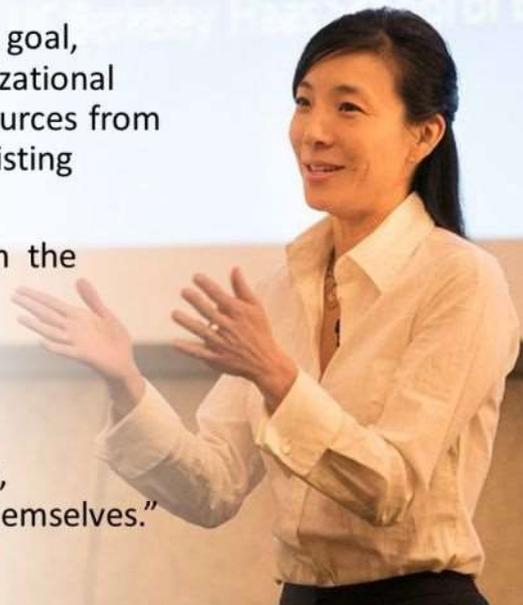
Build constellations rather than lone stars. Leaders who catalyze successful networks acknowledge their weaknesses as readily as their strengths. The goal is to build the larger system that is necessary for delivering on the mission, not to become the “market leader”.

Research by Dr. Jane Wei-Skillern reveals that:

“The network emerges around a common goal, rather than a particular program or organizational model. The community mobilizes the resources from throughout the network, and based on existing relationships in the community.”

“The solution is emergent and comes from the community members themselves, rather than being pushed from the top down.”

“And finally, once a network is up and running and proves itself to be effective, it becomes the primary vehicle for change, rather than the individual organizations themselves.”



New Network Leader

The mission statement for the research by Dr. Jane Wei-Skillern is:

"To champion network leaders, and the networks that they serve, to nurture change on the challenges that dwarf us all."

"Based on fifteen years of research on successful networks across a range of fields and contexts, and more than two centuries of collective experience of nonprofit network leaders themselves, the four counter-intuitive principles are the common norms that effective networks have in common," states Dr. Jane Wei-Skillern.

"They challenge us to examine the characteristics of our own collaborations and they provide guidance on how to ensure that the impact of our collective work is dramatically greater than the sum of the individual parts."

To learn about these principles and much more, visit <https://newnetworkleader.org/>

"Embracing collaborative leadership, growing a network based on shared aspirations, and delivering results across organizational boundaries differs in every way from building an organization in any conventional sense."

Mike Tanner, Founding Director
Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC



2021-An Extraordinary Year

Reflections by Ted van der Gulik, Partnership President

Looking back, 2021 is an extraordinary year of accomplishment for the Partnership. We continued to elevate our game and in so doing demonstrated what is possible. We provided leadership for a range of initiatives of provincial importance. These four stand out:

- **Groundwater Licensing** is a cornerstone of the *Water Sustainability Act*. It is the biggest endeavour the Province of BC has taken on in its water management history.
- **EAP, the Ecological Accounting Process**, is game-changing. It provides local governments with a methodology and metrics to integrate stream corridor systems within Asset Management Budgets.
- **BC Landscape Water Calculator** is aligned with the next iteration of the provincial government's [Water Conservation Condition](#). This is the contractual mechanism for infrastructure grants.
- **Blue Ecology** is an ecological philosophy whose time has come. Interweaving Indigenous knowledge and Western science would be the foundation for a whole-system approach to [Water Reconciliation](#).

These successes were achieved through the power of collaborative leadership. The process involves bringing the right people together in constructive ways with good information, such that they create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of their organizations and communities.

Looking ahead to 2022, the Partnership and our partners in the Living Water Smart Network are poised to build on these breakthrough initiatives. We will also be celebrating the 20th anniversary of [Stormwater Planning: A Guidebook for British Columbia](#). The Partnership is the steward for the Guidebook.

In 2022, the Partnership will publish the fourth in the Beyond the Guidebook series of guidance documents. Tentatively titled [Flowing Towards "Water Reconciliation" within the Georgia Basin/Salish Sea](#), Beyond the Guidebook 2022 will showcase parallel streams of effort by our local government partners in five sub-regions over the past two decades. This work is ongoing under the umbrella of the Georgia Basin Inter-Regional Education Initiative, launched in 2012.

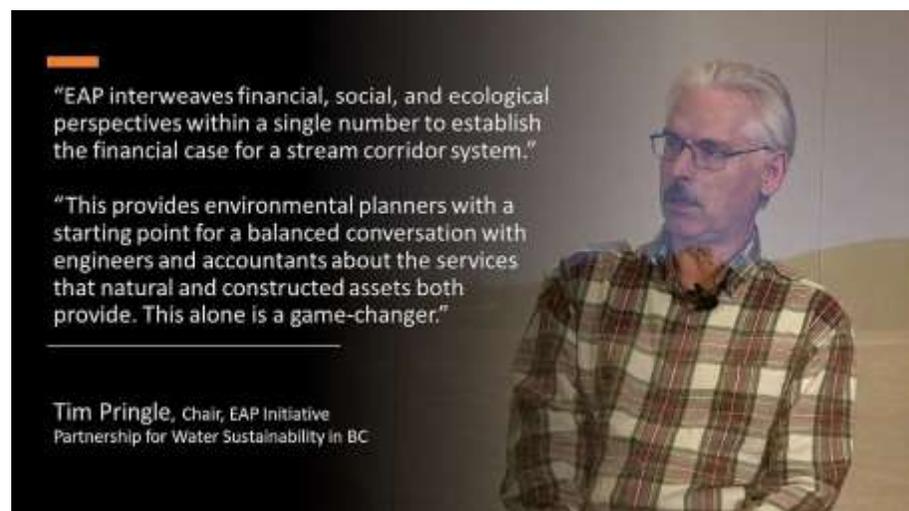
Groundwater Licensing:

In mid-September 2021, The Partnership released a [Groundwater Licensing Primer](#) that laid out WHAT must happen to rectify a chaotic situation, provide a dedicated budget, and get groundwater licensing implementation back on track.



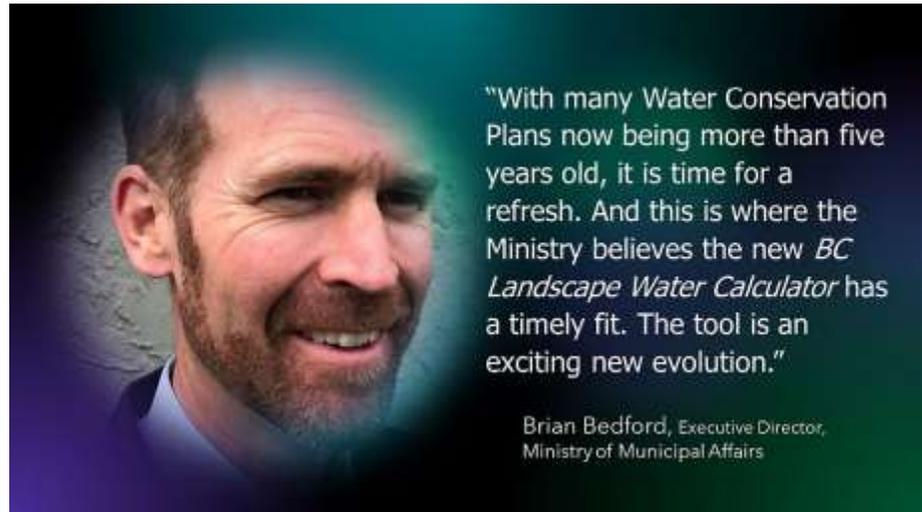
EAP, the Ecological Accounting Process:

The goal of making the financial case for the stream has been realized through a systematic process founded on case study applications to test, refine and mainstream EAP. A notable outcome is **Riparian Deficit**, a new way of defining "loss of riparian integrity".



BC Landscape Water Calculator:

BC's new reality is longer, drier summers. Targeting seasonal outdoor water use represents the best opportunity to achieve "water use in balance with a changing water cycle".



Blue Ecology / Water Reconciliation:

More than a decade ago, international recognition gave Michael Blackstock's [Blue Ecology](#) research early credibility and profile. The initiative is guided by a vision to build a bridge between two cultures through a water-first approach.



Georgia Basin Inter-Regional Educational Initiative (IREI):

Launched in 2012, the IREI facilitates peer-based education among local governments located on the east coast of Vancouver and in the Lower Mainland. In 2016, five Regional Boards – Cowichan Valley, Nanaimo Region, Comox Valley, Capital Region, and Metro Vancouver - recommitted through 2021 to collaborate and work as a team.

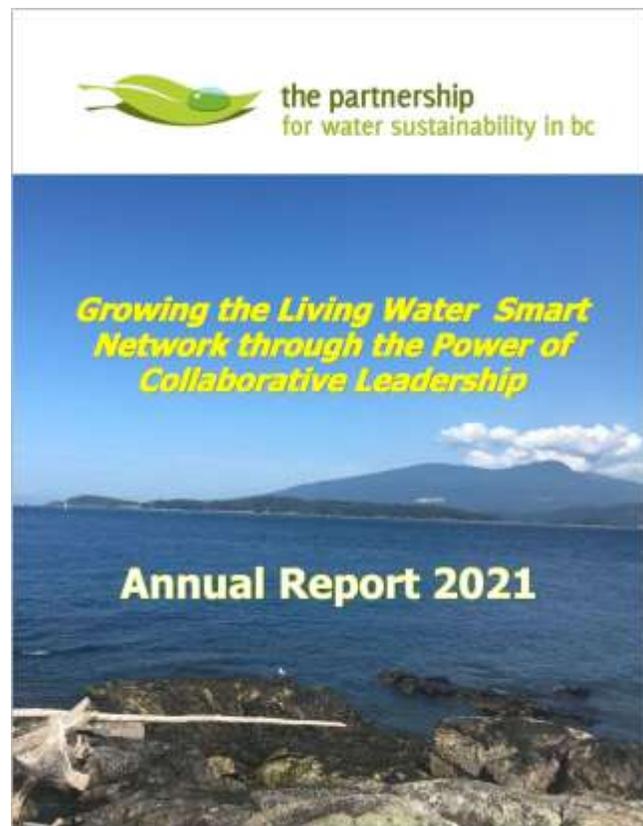


*2022 is the 10th
anniversary of the IREI*



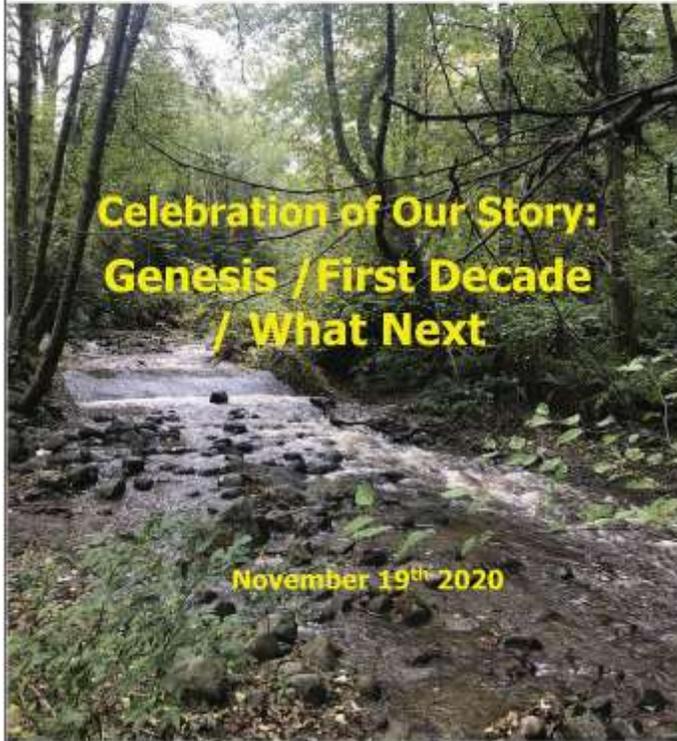
**Download a copy of the
"Annual Report 2021"**

https://waterbucket.ca/atp/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2021/11/PWSBC_Annual-Report-2021_version-for-waterbucket.ca_.pdf





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TO LEARN MORE, VISIT:

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

About the Partnership for Water Sustainability in British Columbia

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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