



the partnership  
for water sustainability in bc

Waterbucket eNews on March 14, 2023  
<https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

# Living Water Smart in British Columbia:

*Build bridges of understanding,  
pass the baton!*

## 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](https://waterbucket.ca/wcp/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/11/livingwatersmart_book.pdf)<sup>2</sup>.

The edition published on March 14, 2023 featured the Partnership's **Annual Report 2022**. The document is written to inform and engage the reader through a storytelling approach to sharing of information.

The umbrella for Partnership initiatives and programs is the [Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia](https://www.waterbucket.ca/cfa/sites/wbccfa/documents/media/81.pdf)<sup>3</sup>. In turn, the Action Plan is nested within [Living Water Smart, British Columbia's Water Plan](https://www.waterbucket.ca/cfa/sites/wbccfa/documents/media/81.pdf).



Cover Image Credit: photo by Cameron Stephens

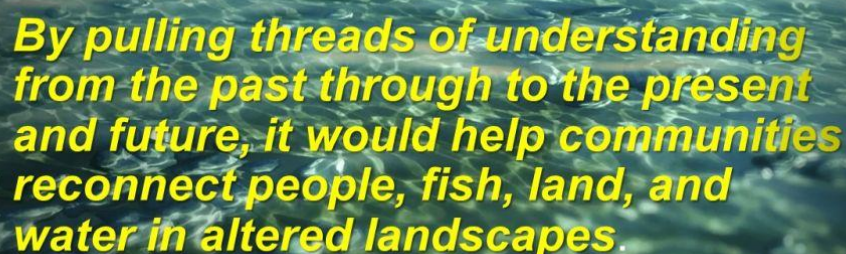
<sup>1</sup> <https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

<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

The Partnership is a legal entity. Operationally, however, we function as the hub for a network, which we describe as the **Living Water Smart Network**. The Partnership leadership team is growing the network. We are not building a conventional organization. The Living Water Smart Network is guided by the collaborative leadership model, and this 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.*

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. In this way, the network is a foundation piece for succession planning and thus continuity.

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

The Partnership's [Annual Report 2022](#) lays out our mind-map for a 3-year transition strategy for ensuring the continuity of the Living Water Smart Network.

The document is not a conventional annual report in the way people typically expect one to look like. Rather, it is written to inform and engage the reader through a storytelling approach to sharing of information.

**We do this because everyone learns through stories!**



*Kim A. Stephens, MEng, PEng (non-practising),  
Executive Director  
Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC  
March 2023*

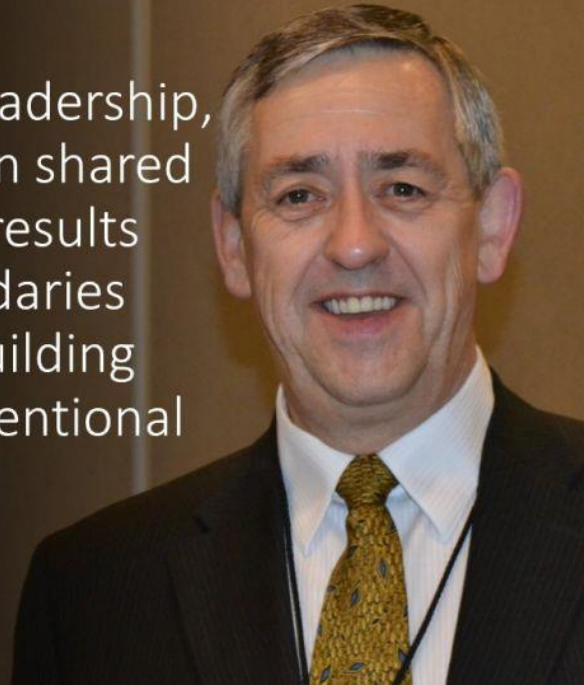




**Collaborative leadership uses the power of influence rather than positional authority to engage and align individuals and organizations within a network. Collaborative leadership deliver results across organizational boundaries.**

"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



**Dr. Jane Wei-Skillern has identified  
four Guiding Principles for  
Collaborative Leadership**

**Focus on mission before organization**

**Manage through trust, not control**

**Promote others, not ourselves**

**Build constellations, not stars**

## One-Minute Takeaway

Over the past 30 years, a series of provincial government initiatives established a direction for water sustainability, including [Stewardship of the Water of BC](#) in 1993, the [Fish Protection Act](#) in 1997, and the [Water Conservation Strategy for BC](#) in 1998. The high-water mark is [Living Water Smart, British Columbia's Water Plan](#), released in 2008.

Since its inception, the Partnership for Water Sustainability has been guided by and acted within the 45 actions in Living Water Smart. The **enduring strength of Living Water Smart** lies in its recognition that collaboration, while important to foster within a legislative framework, also happens outside governments, in communities and non-governmental organizations.

The *Water Sustainability Act* is another key piece; the Partnership is committed to furthering its implementation and collaborating with the provincial government to fill gaps and improve the legislation.

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### Look back to see ahead

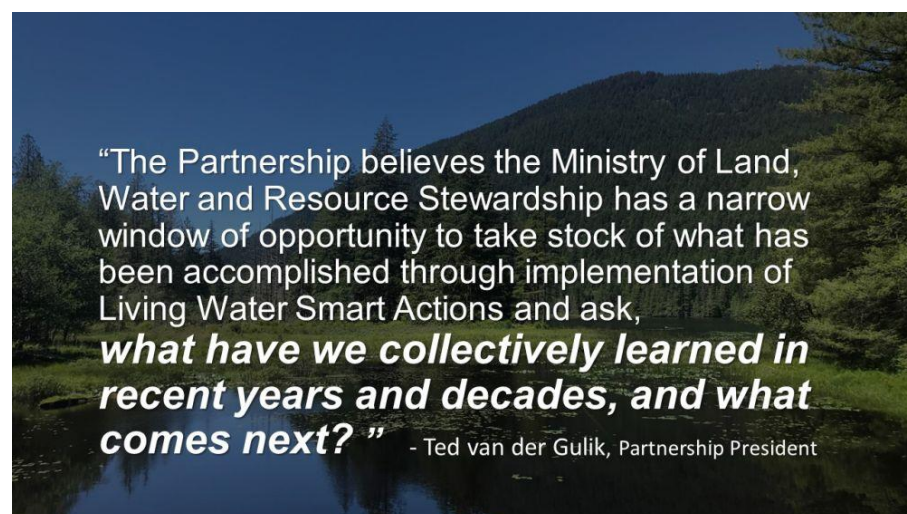
*Over the past 30 years, the hard work of hope has resulted in a policy, program and regulatory framework in British Columbia that enables community-based action to adapt to the changing seasonal water cycle. Living Water Smart successes are defined by collaboration and a “top-down and bottom-up” approach. This brings together decision-makers and community advocates. Successes are milestones along a building blocks continuum.*

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### We are implementers: Look back to see ahead

A Partnership strength is the real-world experience we bring because of our multiple initiatives under Living Water Smart Actions. Under that vision, various building blocks processes have evolved over the decades. Living Water Smart is an idea that transcends governments.

“The **Watershed Security Strategy and Fund**, an initiative of the current provincial government, is the obvious mechanism to revisit, understand, learn from, and leverage past successes in the building blocks continuum. We have tools to help do the job. We can achieve better stewardship of BC’s water resources for present and future generations,” states Ted van der Gulik, Partnership President.

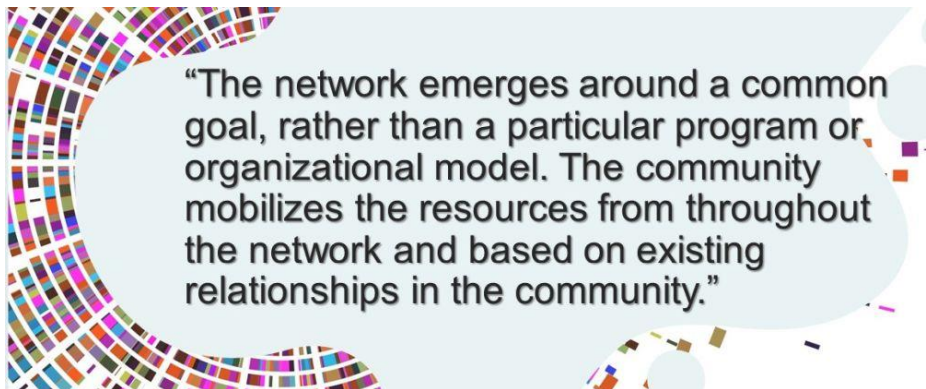


## STORY BEHIND THE STORY:

# The Partnership for Water Sustainability's 3-Year Transition Strategy for ensuring continuity of the network - as explained by Ted van der Gulik, President

Extracted from Annual Report 2022, the "story behind the story" is a 600-word essay written by Ted van der Gulik for his President's Perspective. He paints a broad-brush picture of where the Partnership is heading. It is our road map of Tier One priorities. These build on notable accomplishments in 2022.

Below, the highlighted quotable quote is also extracted from Annual Report 2022. In clear terms, Dr. Jane Wei-Skillern conceptualizes **how a network gets to its "mission impact"**.



## Make it so!

"The long-term success of the Partnership is founded on recognizing when there is either a need or a watershed moment, and then creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. We have done this repeatedly over the years and decades. Notable examples are [EAP, the Ecological Accounting Process](#), and the suite of online calculators that the [BC Agricultural Water Demand Model](#) has spawned," wrote Ted van der Gulik.

"Last October, the Partnership leadership team convened in Nanaimo. We looked back to see ahead. We reflected on how we would ensure the continuity of the Partnership network. We emerged from our session with the concept for a 3-year transition strategy to create a self-fulfilling prophecy once again."



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***Ensure that where everyone is going is indeed the right way***

*During the period between 2006 and 2011, the CAVI-Convening for Action on Vancouver Island program served as a “proof of approach” for collaboration within a region. By 2012, the partner regions were primed for formal collaboration between regions to help each other move forward.*

*A desired outcome which is transformational in scope and impact, is that all local governments would learn from each other’s experience and would understand **how** natural systems support municipal services and would be able to fully **integrate** this understanding and associated methodologies into programs, planning and funding.*

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"The Partnership itself is a unique approach to collaboration because we place the emphasis on growing the network within a constellation of networks. We know that from our conversations with Dr. Jane Wei-Skillern of the Haas Business School at the University of California Berkeley."

"A foundational idea is that we are not building a PWSBC organization per se. But there will always be the need for an “engine” or guiding force, which is the Partnership leadership team. And we cannot just be cheerleaders and facilitators. We must also continue to develop tools and resources that others may not even contemplate. That is one of our strengths. That sets us apart."

**"Growing and sustaining the network is very much about finding those to whom we can pass the baton."**

"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. It is so similar to what I have seen in my research. It is rewarding to see these ideas validated in practice time and time again."



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## **Year One of the 3-Year Transition Strategy**

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"Currently, a challenge facing many organizations is the loss of oral history and long-term understanding due to organizational amnesia. This reality is uppermost in our minds as we proceed with Year One of a 3-year strategy," continued Ted van der Gulik.

"With the foregoing in mind, our [Annual Report 2022](https://waterbucket.ca/atp/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2023/02/PWSBC_Annual-Report-2022_as-published.pdf) <sup>4</sup> is structured in two parts. First, we provide context – we describe how the Partnership embodies collaborative leadership and how we achieve our intergenerational mission through the power and continuity of the network. Then we highlight three Partnership priorities for 2023."

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<sup>4</sup> [https://waterbucket.ca/atp/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2023/02/PWSBC\\_Annual-Report-2022\\_as-published.pdf](https://waterbucket.ca/atp/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2023/02/PWSBC_Annual-Report-2022_as-published.pdf)

## Three priorities align with desired outcomes for a 3-year transition strategy

"The defining question is this: Who among the **next generation** will step forward, accept the baton, and provide the type of leadership that would ensure continuity of the network? We have an answer for EAP which is foundational to municipal asset management for sustainable service delivery. EAP is our precedent and our first model for a 3-year transition strategy."

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### ***Vision for training the next generation***

*"We believe that incorporating students from Vancouver Island University and other universities will support understanding and experience within municipal governments on the importance of EAP, and simply understanding EAP. Fortunately, most of VIU's Master of Community Planning, and Master GIS students find themselves working within municipal governments."*

Graham Sakaki,  
Regional Research Institute  
Manager, MABRRI

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"The Partnership has embarked upon a 3-year program to embed EAP in the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Research Institute (MABRRI) at Vancouver Island University. MABRRI has accepted the baton and will lead the next stage of EAP evolution. They believe in EAP and are committed to meeting the needs of local government through training of the next generations of planners and local government staff. They have bought into the vision."

"Learning from the EAP precedent, we are committed to doing something along the same lines with either the provincial government or other partners. For example, this may be where our objective is to ensure the legacy of tools that others may be relying on for their water use decisions such as those related to water licensing. This means we must establish relationships with a new generation of provincial decisionmakers and staff."

"In 2023, our big idea is to convene a workshop for senior managers in the provincial government, up to and including Deputy Ministers. The theme would be helping people meet their mandate. We would build strategically and communicate and coordinate with early adopters."

**"At the end of the day, ensuring continuity of the network is really about how organizations continue within the network."**





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

November 19<sup>th</sup> 2020

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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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