



the partnership  
for water sustainability in bc

Waterbucket eNews on April 4, 2023  
<https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

# Living Water Smart in British Columbia:

*Local governments invest  
in youth at Vancouver  
Island University*



## Note to Reader:

[Waterbucket eNews](https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/)<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>.

A theme dominating the news these days is the shortage of skilled, trained or qualified people. The EAP Partnership is part of the solution in the local government setting. The edition published on April 4, 2023 shared the story behind the story of local governments investing in university youth.

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 provided by Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Research Institute at Vancouver Island University

<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

It took a 6-year program of applied research to evolve the methodology and metrics so that local governments can tackle the **Riparian Deficit**. EAP is the synthesis of Tim Pringle and my knowledge and experience, and reflects what we have learned through a local government blocking blocks process.

Between 2016 and 2022, we completed 9 case studies in collaboration with 13 local government partners in 5 regions of southwest BC. We also built a relationship with MABRRI and involved students in the program. In fact, we relied on students.

With release of the EAP Synthesis Report in June 2022, the timing was right to embed EAP at MABRRI. Within a matter of months, the EAP Partnership came together. The inaugural meeting was on October 27, 2022. That is the moment when Tim Pringle and I figuratively handed the baton to Graham Sakaki to lead the next phase of EAP evolution.

### Third in a series about the Riparian Deficit

Two weeks ago, we drew attention to decade-long investigations by the BC Ombudsperson into failure by local government to employ adequate oversight of stream systems. The consequence is the Riparian Deficit.

Last week, we shone the spotlight on seminal research in the 1990s. Rich Horner and Chris May correlated land use changes and the consequences for stream and riparian health. The EAP Partnership is building on this foundation.

Today's story about the EAP Partnership offers hope for the future. There is work to be done by local government, university students can do it, and they are excited by the opportunity to make a difference.

### EAP Partnership: Program Context / Goals

View EAP implementation through the lenses of collaboration, applied research, and a combined annual budget to “get the best bang for the buck”.

Continue evolving EAP to meet the needs of local governments with a methodology and metrics that result in affordable and effective solutions.

Build capacity, pass on oral history, and continuously train next generations of local government staffs to get the job done.

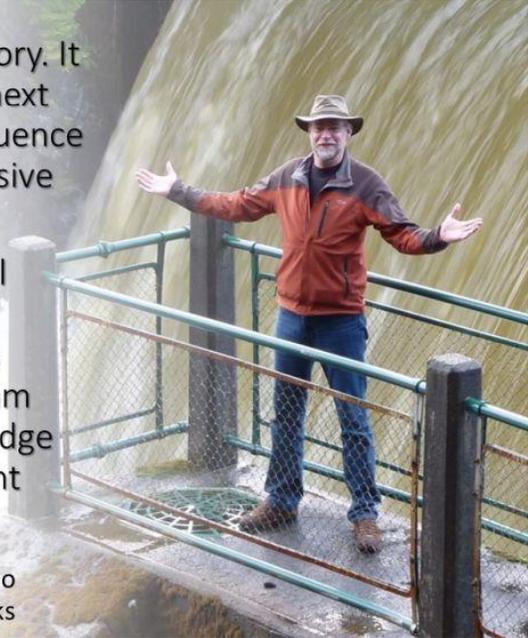
There is no room for expensive consultants. With the perspective of time, it is evident that out-sourcing has not served communities well.

The staff report to Nanaimo Council put it this way: *"This collaboration will help ensure that training and expertise is retained within the university, and can be continually developed. It also supports local governments with internal capacity, rather than exporting knowledge to consultants."*

"The EAP Partnership is a good news story. It is about embedding knowledge in the next generation of people who will have influence in our governments, not funding expensive consultants to learn about EAP."

"It is also about our duty to pass on oral history. For the past 20 years or so, we have believed that all we had to do was put information into a computer program so that it would not be lost. But knowledge is passed on verbally, so that subsequent generations can continue to advance."

Bill Sims, City of Nanaimo  
General Manager, Engineering & Public Works



## EAP Partnership is a network

In addition to the "founding three" local governments, other case study partners are **"mentor members"**. Everyone wants to stay involved with the EAP program, understand what other members of the EAP Partnership are doing, and look for opportunities to either help or support each other.

The EAP Partnership also includes UBCM and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. They are co-funders. In 2019, they formalized an expectation that local governments applying for provincial grants would integrate "natural assets" into their asset management processes.

EAP shows local governments how to do it through an annual budget for maintenance and management of stream systems and wetlands.

The EAP message is timely and local government audiences are receptive to hearing it.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kim A. Stephens".

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



## One-Minute Takeaway



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*"The framework for the EAP Partnership is foundational and ensures that the Ecological Accounting Process can be embedded into the youth who are the future generations of local government staff."*  
- Graham Sakaki

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A theme dominating the news these days is the shortage of skilled, trained or qualified people. The EAP Partnership is part of the solution in the local government setting. Investing in people takes patience, commitment and time. There is no shortcut to build in-house capacity.

The partners have committed to investing in youth at Vancouver Island University. The mission is to develop next generations of local government staffs so that they have the knowledge and understanding to apply [EAP, the Ecological Accounting Process](#) to land use processes.

### **Five organizations are driving the EAP Partnership forward**

The City of Nanaimo, the Regional District of Nanaimo and the Municipality of North Cowichan are the local governments which have taken the leap of faith to invest in youth. And the Partnership for Water Sustainability is passing the **"EAP baton"** to the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Research Institute (MABRRI) at Vancouver Island University to be the knowledge keeper.

EAP will be embedded in MABRRI. The graphic on page 2 illustrates the 4-step mainstreaming process. The EAP Partnership is in a 3-year transition to move from **Step 2**, which is develop EAP, to **Step 3**, which is embed EAP.

**Dissemination of knowledge:** “A useful aspect of the EAP Partnership is that universities want to disseminate information and share knowledge. Vancouver Island University, as a smaller university, is very focused on applied research and community engagement. This is a good fit for the EAP mission. Dissemination of knowledge is really important,” explains Graham Sakaki, Regional Research Institute Manager.



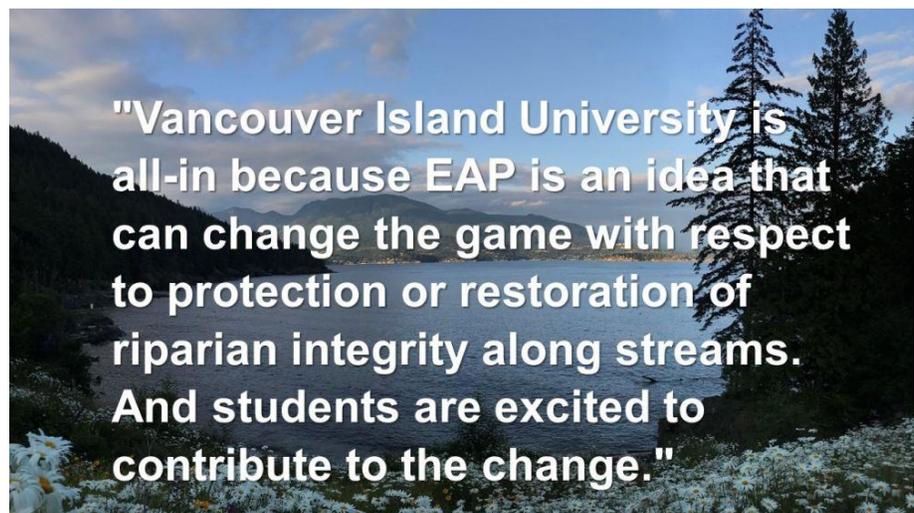
## STORY BEHIND THE STORY:

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### **Local governments invest in youth at Vancouver Island University** - *conversational interviews with Graham Sakaki & Sam Gerrand*

"The story behind the story is about the importance of embedding knowledge of EAP into the youth who are going to be the future of our local governments. The framework that we have set up ensures this will happen," Graham Sakaki emphasizes in conversation about what being an EAP partner means to him and to Vancouver Island University.

"There are lots of partnerships that exist for selfish reasons. But the EAP Partnership is selfless, and from all angles. It is a leap of faith for member local governments. Partnership for Water Sustainability commitment to passing the baton is unwavering."



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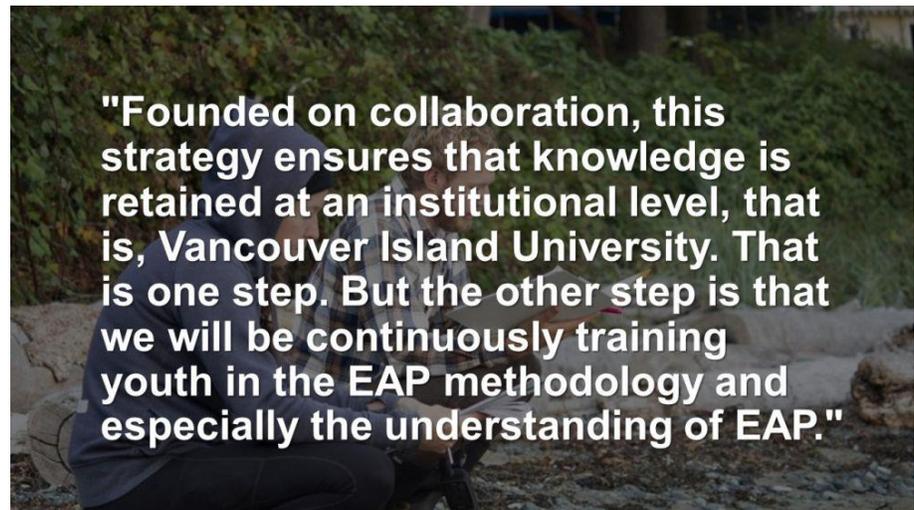
## Youth are the future generations of local government staffs

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"In a phrase, the framework for the EAP Partnership is foundational. It is also outcome-oriented. The collaborative nature of the EAP Partnership ensures that the Ecological Accounting Process can be embedded into the youth who will be the future generations of local government staff,"

"We have a commitment from the Partnership for Water Sustainability to provide oversight and mentoring during a 3-year transition period. And three local governments - Municipality of North Cowichan, City of Nanaimo, and the Regional District of Nanaimo - are committed to providing project work experience for students."

"The EAP Partnership will be training graduate students from two master's degree programs, Community Planning and GIS. Potentially, graduate and undergraduate students from other disciplines will come on board."



"It is not just about students learning how to apply the methodology. It is also about passing on to them an understanding of the usability and practicalities of EAP. Many of these students are going directly into local government staff positions after graduation."

"Having knowledge and an understanding of EAP from the inside is so important. It is one thing for someone on the outside to urge municipalities to embrace EAP. It is another when someone on the inside says: *"Hey, if this is what we are thinking, why not just run EAP. I know about it. We will connect to VIU or to the Partnership. Let's go!"*

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## **Foundational framework for EAP Partnership is unique, valuable and viable**

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“The EAP Partnership was set up in a really unique, really valuable and viable way right from the beginning. The Partnership for Water Sustainability made the connections to the three local governments. Together, we met with each individually. Then we all got together as a group to talk about what our values are and what we are really hoping to achieve. The fact that the three are showing their support for the students, and for the training to occur, is a great story.”

“I just wish that partnerships like this existed among all research projects. Unfortunately, they do not. A lot of the time, researchers and research institutes and research students are working in their own silos. They do their work without having the support of community member expertise, municipal expertise, the expertise of organizations like the Partnership for Water Sustainability, and so on and so on.”



“Students will be creating a portfolio of professionals who they know. These are important relationships for students to make. And it is important knowledge that they are gaining too.”

“EAP is cutting edge. It is innovative, very new and very unique. And it has the ability to really change the game. We have been degrading streams and complaining for too long. We need to start maintaining and ensuring that the functions of these streams are improved.”

"We can do a better job of this, and we know that is what we must do. It just takes somebody to come up with the idea for how to do it. And that is what the Partnership for Water Sustainability has done with the EAP methodology and metrics. EAP helps communities establish annual budgets for line items for maintenance and management (M&M) of streams."

## Invest in graduate students to do a deeper dive to support local governments

"When we started talking about the EAP Partnership and the importance and the value that local governments placed on training students, it made sense for VIU to go through Mitacs to obtain additional funding. I believe that being able to provide students with stipend payments for their research goes a long way."



"School is expensive. If you can offer students a stipend payment for research work that relates directly to their degree, it adds a ton of value. It allows the students to stay focused on what they are passionate about, concentrate on their academic career 100 percent, and alleviate a lot of financial stress."

"The local government partners were willing to put some of the money that they are contributing into a Mitacs application. This would return 9 internship units over three years. That means we will be able to hire five students because four will get 2 units and one will get 1 unit. This will allow each student to really deep dive into their thesis work around EAP."

"Willingness by the three local governments to partner with Mitacs and push out some of the money directly to student internship units is PRETTY UNIQUE, especially since it is three different local governments collaborating on the same application to Mitacs."

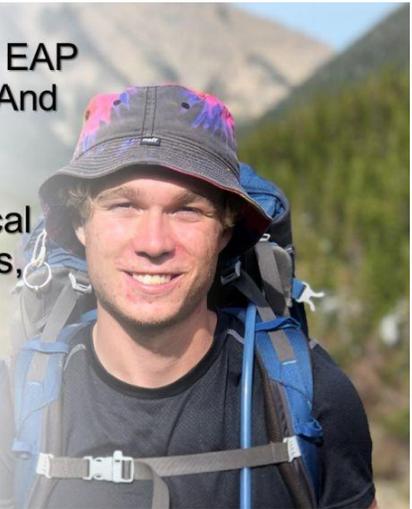
"It is important for people to know that, while the EAP Partnership is committed to embedding EAP at the university and supporting students, the students actually want to work on EAP for their thesis research."

### **A student perspective on why EAP is attractive**

"When Graham offered me a choice of projects for my thesis, EAP seemed like a perfect balance of something related to municipal planning and my personal interests," continues Sam Gerrand, the first graduate student who has chosen to build his research around EAP.

**"What really struck me about EAP is the application of science. And it is a way of communicating expert knowledge to people who are involved in the political process, the planning process, and actually implementing changes on the ground."**

Sam Gerrand, BSc  
Student Research Assistant,  
Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research  
Institute, Vancouver Island University



"The other thing that is cool is that my dad used to work in riparian area management. So I spent a lot of my childhood following him around creeks and I had a lot of lessons from him. So I definitely have a passion for wild spaces, creeks and water. EAP is a great blend."

"Mitacs funding will free up a lot of time for me to work on EAP. This will improve my experience and the quality of my work. The work feels so much more engaging and meaningful when it is useful and needs to be done. EAP will be relevant to what I expect to be doing in my career."

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## Closing Quotable Quotes

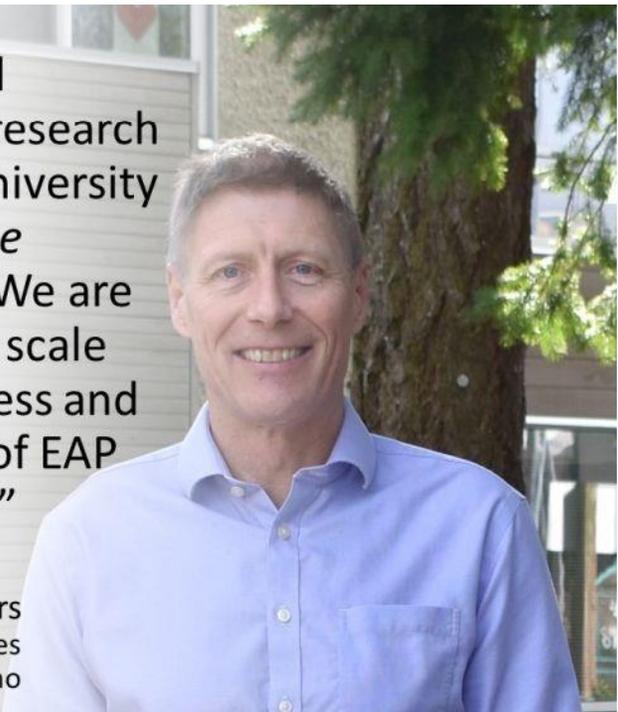
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**“Partnerships with local governments and others are essential. They allow students to work on collaborative projects. Everyone benefits.”**

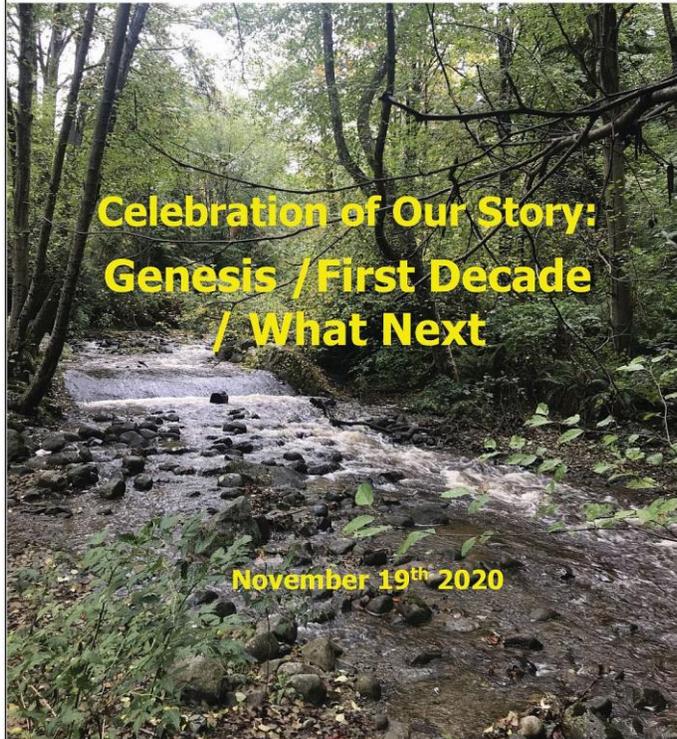
“The partnership between local governments and the MABRRI research institute at Vancouver Island University is the pilot for upscaling *EAP, the Ecological Accounting Process*. We are applying EAP to relatively small scale streams to illustrate its usefulness and effectiveness. The application of EAP will grow from there, I am sure.”

Murray Walters  
Manager – Water Services  
Regional District of Nanaimo





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<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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