



the partnership for water sustainability in bc

Waterbucket eNews on September 26, 2023
<https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

A scenic landscape photograph of a lake with reeds, a forested hill, and a blue sky with clouds. The text is overlaid on the image.

Living Water Smart in British Columbia:

***Blue Ecology offers HOPE
and removes the FEAR***

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 September 26, 2023 announced release of the Blue Ecology video documentary titled *Watershed Moments 2023: A Pathway to Water Reconciliation and Resilience at the Local Scale*. The video features Michael Blackstock, independent Indigenous scholar.

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



Cover Image Credit: photo by Cameron Stephens

¹ <https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

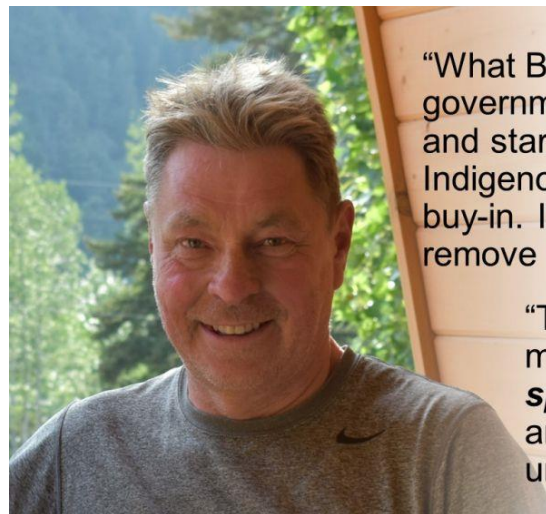
² https://waterbucket.ca/wcp/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/11/livingwatersmart_book.pdf

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

One-Minute Takeaway

Blue Ecology offers HOPE and removes the FEAR

"Non-Indigenous people are afraid of saying the wrong thing, or breaking Indigenous cultural protocol, so they back away from meaningful dialogue out of FEAR. As long as you show a genuine curiosity, the willingness to learn, cross-cultural conversations blossom," observes Michael Blackstock.



"What Blue Ecology offers local government is a foundation, and starting point, that has both Indigenous and non-Indigenous buy-in. I believe this will alone remove some of the fear."

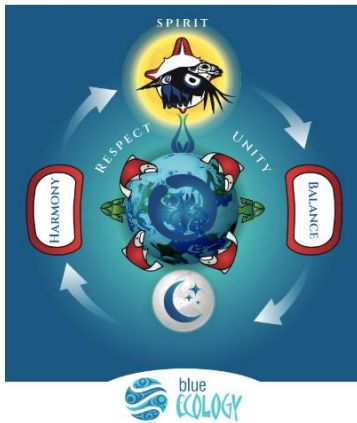
"Then, together, we can move towards the **hope spectrum** more easily and creatively. This is an underlying message."

Watershed Moments 2023: A Pathway to Water Reconciliation and Resilience at the Local Scale, was released to a global audience on World Rivers Day, September 24th. Legendary BC environmental leader Mark Angelo shared this testimonial with his international network...

"...a much-anticipated film on Blue Ecology (or water-based ecology to some) that outlines an incredibly progressive and much needed ecological philosophy interweaving indigenous and western perspectives."

Watershed Moments 2023 seeds the idea that hope lies within the spheres of influence for local governments --- whether Indigenous OR non-Indigenous. At its heart, Blue Ecology is about embracing lessons learned from First Nations oral history, taking responsibility for care of the land, and passing on the intergenerational baton.

BLUE ECOLOGY WATER CYCLE



How to watch the documentary

Click on the link to watch Blue Ecology on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/PMh0m-UIxLI>

The documentary was broadcast by Shaw Spotlight on their community channels, on Shaw Direct channel 299, as well as the Shaw Multicultural Channel.

The initial television broadcast launched on Vancouver Island on World Rivers Day, and was also aired in other regions across British Columbia throughout the month of October 2023.

The Blue Ecology storyline for the documentary also seeds the idea that moving towards the hope spectrum requires a change in attitude in combination with a willingness to apply the five Blue Ecology water cycle principles embodied in the acronym SHRUB.



Meet the Watershed Moments Team

The documentary features **Michael Blackstock** in conversation with **Richard Boase**, a founding Director of the Partnership for Water Sustainability, and **Brian Carruthers**, an independent strategic advisor to local governments.

Michael Blackstock is an Independent Indigenous Scholar, former member of a UNESCO Expert Panel on Indigenous ecology, and co-founder of the Blue Ecology Institute Foundation. His professional career has been with government as a treaty negotiator.

In the documentary, Gitxsan hereditary chief **Hanamuxw** sets the scene for Blue Ecology with an Indigenous perspective on caring for the land. Hanmuxw is both a strategic and cultural leader of his people. He is a principal architect of the [Delgamuukw Title Case⁴](#).

A message of hope: Michael Blackstock believes that a message of hope is paramount in these times of droughts, forest fires and floods. Through the power and magic of collaboration, BC communities can rise to the challenge and adapt to the new climate reality of seasonal extremes.

"Rather than looking through a cumulative effects lens, I also see the concept of '**cumulative healing**' landing as a way to give back to water and land," says Michael Blackstock. "Rather than wondering how much more can we take or impact land before we need to stop, instead we should ask how much longer should we let the water and land heal, before we ask for more."

⁴ <https://publications.gc.ca/Collection-R/LoPBdP/BP/bp459-e.htm>

Editor's Perspective by Kim A Stephens

Blue Ecology is a pathway to Water Reconciliation

Circa 2008, international recognition gave Blue Ecology early credibility and profile when Michael Blackstock was a member of the UNESCO Expert Panel. Within BC, however, there was limited awareness of what he had accomplished. In 2008, I first learned about Blue Ecology when a colleague forwarded an article by Michael Blackstock.

Fast forward to 2016 when the Partnership and the Irrigation Industry Association of BC co-hosted the 4th annual event in the [Water Sustainability Workshop Series](#), held in Kelowna. Through the series, each year we showcased a "big idea" with the objective of giving it profile and raising awareness.

Water Sustainability Workshop Series		
YEAR	LOCATION	ANNUAL THEME
2013	Richmond	Get Your Mind into the Gutter
2014	Victoria	Managing Water Now
2015	Richmond	Feast AND Famine
2016	Kelowna	Flow and Grow
2017	Richmond	Blue Ecology

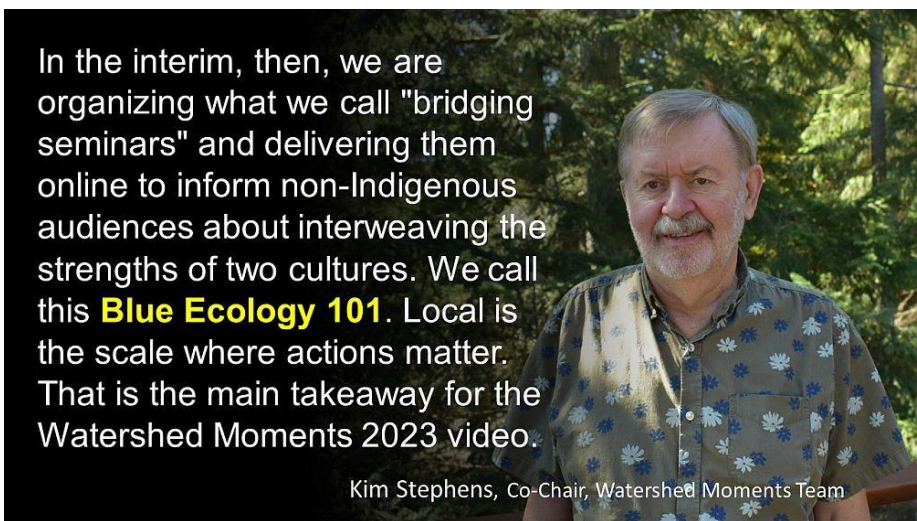


BLUE ECOLOGY 101:

Local is the scale where actions matter

So, we made Blue Ecology the theme for the 2017 workshop in Metro Vancouver. Again, Blue Ecology resonated. And we commenced the process of mainstreaming awareness of Michael Blackstock's work and ecological philosophy into the local government setting. Watershed Moments 2023 is the latest evolution.

The Partnership and Watershed Moments Team are on a journey with Michael Blackstock. It is taking us time to build trust and relationships with First Nations to the point of being able to showcase Blue Ecology in action. But that is okay. Our philosophy is that it is more important to get it right than to get it done.



BLUE ECOLOGY 101:

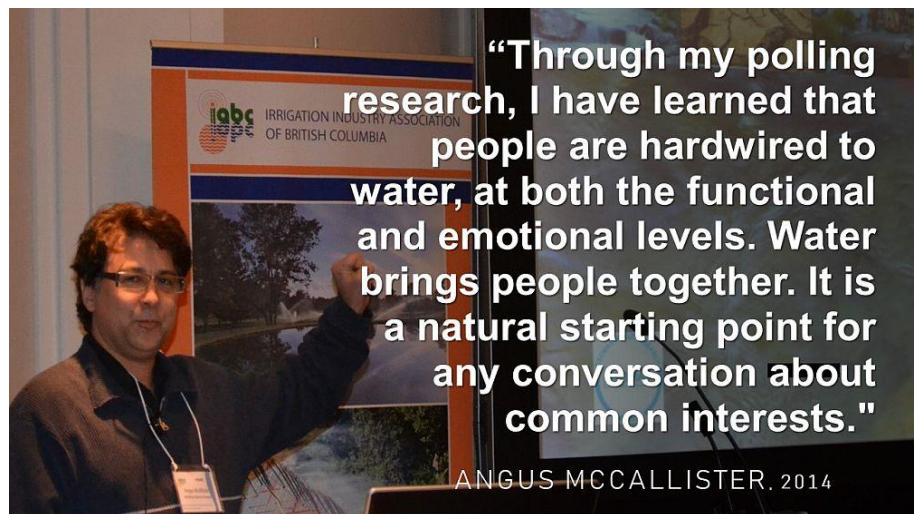
Water brings us together

Watershed Moments 2023 showcases a free-flowing conversation, with Richard Boase steering the process. This allows the chemistry with Brian Carruthers and Michael Blackstock to take its natural course. Brian and Michael have direct experience in interweaving two cultures. This makes the documentary relevant, timely and timeless. The Watershed Moments message is compelling:

*Blue Ecology, a water-first approach to interweaving Indigenous and Western perspectives, is the pathway to “**water reconciliation**” in a changing climate.*

Water brings us together, keynote speaker Angus McCallister demonstrated through a group exercise at our [2014 Water Sustainability Workshop](#)⁵. It is no accident, he stated, that we like to gather around water coolers and watering holes. That is why we focus on Water Reconciliation as our Watershed Moments destination. It is a safe space.

Water brings people together. It is a natural starting point for any conversation about common interests, and by extension, our shared future. Stories unite us. Water does it. And his polling research provides proof, Angus McCallister informed us in 2014.



⁵ <https://waterbucket.ca/cfa/category/partnership-for-water-sustainability-annual-workshop-series/2014-managing-water/>

STORY BEHIND THE STORY:

Blue Ecology is a pathway to Water Reconciliation - an essay by Paul Chapman

"The earliest inhabitants on the land, BC's First Nations, settled near rivers. More recent settlements have followed suit, settling near rivers for fresh water supply, travel, commerce, food supply, recreation, and in our built environments storm water and wastewater services."

"Our rivers, our watersheds are connected to many aspects of our lives. A First Nation perspective would recognize water as life."

Paul Chapman, Chair
Watershed Moments Team



"Climate change has compounded the stresses our modern practices and settlements impose on watershed health and healthy functioning. The new normal includes drought, flood and fire on a seasonal basis."

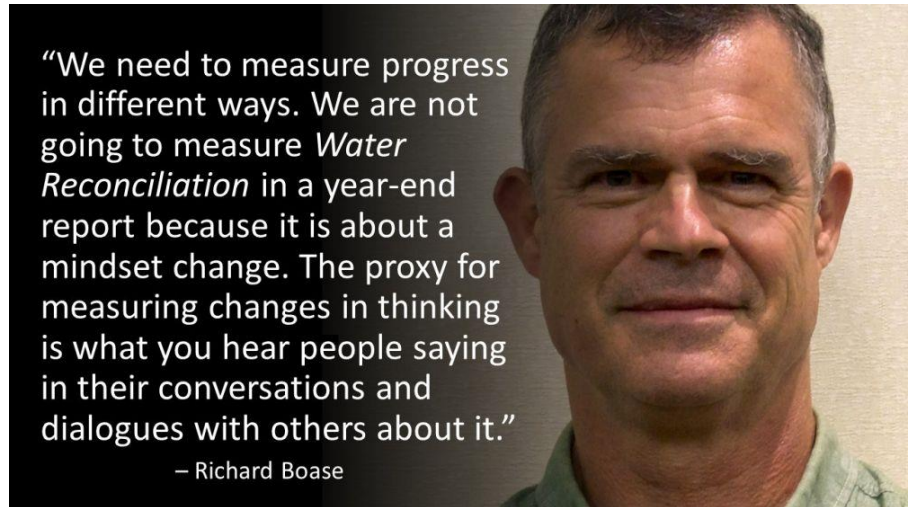
"A hopeful way forward is found in Blue Ecology."

Blue Ecology is about a mindset change

"Blue Ecology shows us a path to interweave Indigenous and Western science to better steward our watersheds. There are four ways that Blue Ecology does this."

"One, it supports **Water Reconciliation**, bringing together cultures over common interests in healthy functioning rivers and streams."

"Two, it builds on collaboration between levels of government and communities."



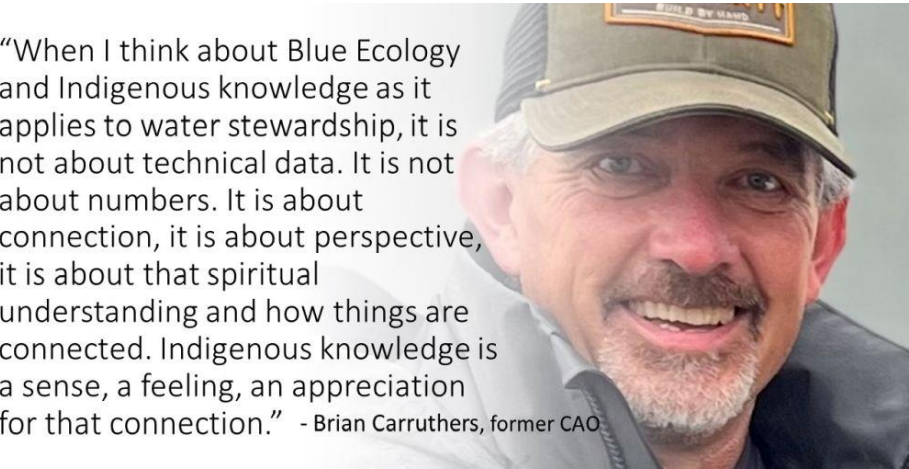
“We need to measure progress in different ways. We are not going to measure *Water Reconciliation* in a year-end report because it is about a mindset change. The proxy for measuring changes in thinking is what you hear people saying in their conversations and dialogues with others about it.”

– Richard Boase

"Three, it promotes healthy functioning watersheds as a bulwark on the frontlines of climate change adaptation."

"Four, application of Blue Ecology principles provides the conditions for resilient and abundant fish habitat."

"The video features Michael Blackstock who presents the Blue Ecology philosophy for interweaving Indigenous and Western water stewardship science. Michael then joins local government governance expert Brian Carruthers in a discussion about real world opportunities for application of Blue Ecology in BC communities."



“When I think about Blue Ecology and Indigenous knowledge as it applies to water stewardship, it is not about technical data. It is not about numbers. It is about connection, it is about perspective, it is about that spiritual understanding and how things are connected. Indigenous knowledge is a sense, a feeling, an appreciation for that connection.” - Brian Carruthers, former CAO

"The discussion is moderated by Richard Boase from the Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC and includes a question-and-answer segment from a Blue Ecology seminar audience."

"Through their interaction we learn how:

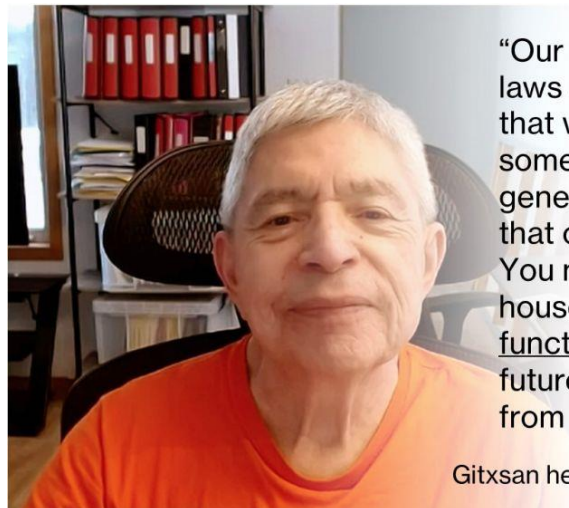
- On the ground success can inform provincial policy,
- Blue Ecology links Climate Adaptation and DRIPA through Water Reconciliation,
- Action on the local scale is where hope lies as we observe and participate in change."

"The Watershed Moments vision is to examine and promote examples of Blue Ecology in action and then adapt the Blue Ecology framework province-wide."

Blue Ecology is about caring for the land

"Gitxsan hereditary Chief Hanamuxw sums up the intentions of Blue Ecology while describing the Gitxsan Wilp system that attaches community wellbeing to the wellbeing of the natural systems we rely on."

"Blue Ecology is building a shared culture of stewardship," concludes Paul Chapman.

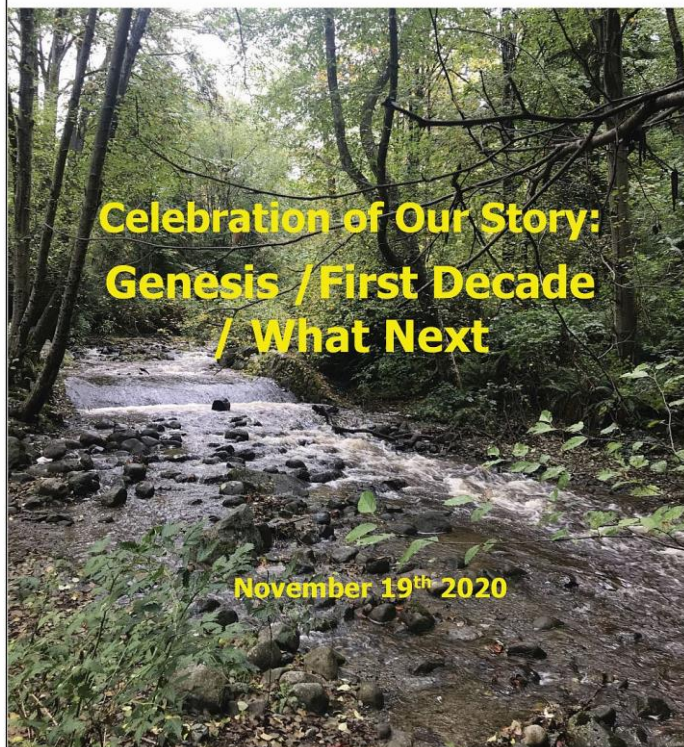


"Our Gitxsan legal system, laws and traditions dictate that we have to leave something for the next generations. In our language, that concept is *gwelx ye'enst*. You must leave a functioning house group **and** a functioning landscape for future generations of people from the house."

Gitxsan hereditary chief Hanamuxw



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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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