



the partnership
for water sustainability in bc

Waterbucket eNews on January 30, 2024
<https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

Living Water Smart in British Columbia:

Caring for the land
means going beyond
just doing enough

Note to Reader:

[Waterbucket eNews](https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/)¹ 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)².

The edition published on January 30, 2024 foreshadows the component program that the Partnership will deliver at the 2024 BC Land Summit in May. Blue Ecology and EAP, the Ecological Accounting Process, are strategic priorities of the Partnership. The process for interconnecting the two begins at the BC Land Summit with a cascading and integrated sessions under the banner *Going Beyond Just Doing Enough*.

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)³. 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

¹ <https://waterbucket.ca/wscblog/>

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

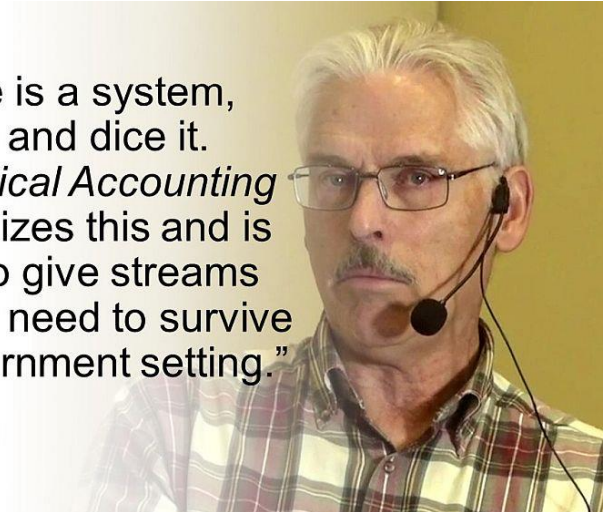
³ <https://www.waterbucket.ca/cfa/sites/wbccfa/documents/media/81.pdf>

One-Minute Takeaway

“Blue Ecology and EAP describe a whole-system approach to caring for our Natural Commons and ecological assets.”

“Because nature is a system, you cannot slice and dice it. EAP, the Ecological Accounting Process, recognizes this and is a financial tool to give streams the support they need to survive in the local government setting.”

Tim Pringle



Caring for the land means going beyond just doing enough

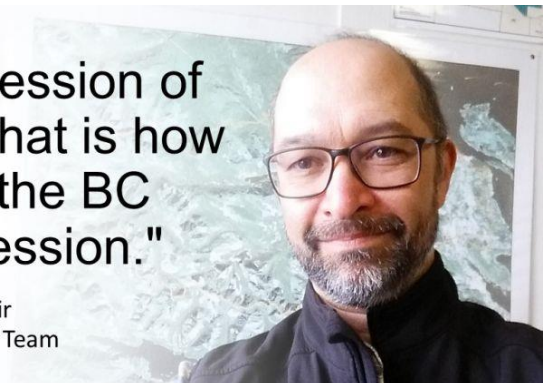
Blue Ecology and EAP, the Ecological Accounting Process are strategic priorities of the Partnership. Since 2016, we have been collaborating with Michael Blackstock and with multiple local governments on Vancouver Island and in Metro Vancouver to advance both because:

- **WATER RECONCILIATION:** Blue Ecology is a methodology for building bridges between Western and Indigenous cultures.
- **RIPARIAN DEFICIT:** EAP is a financial tool for establishing budgets for asset management within stream corridors.

In 2024, our bold leap forward is to interconnect the two tracks. This process begins with a cascading and integrated "Blue Ecology-EAP session" at the BC Land Summit in May.

"EAP is an expression of Blue Ecology. That is how we are framing the BC Land Summit session."

Paul Chapman, Chair
Watershed Moments Team



EAP as an expression of Blue Ecology

"We are talking about a change in attitude so that communities would view natural systems and water differently," emphasizes Richard Boase, co-lead for the BC Land Summit ⁴ session. Richard is also the moderator and face of the Watershed Moments symposia and video series.

"Streams need a place to be. If we cannot get our heads around that, we are not going to keep our streams," continues Tim Pringle, EAP Chair and co-lead for the session. "EAP provides a value picture of a stream system as a land use. The *Riparian Areas Protection Regulation* enables this approach."

Blue Ecology is a Pathway to Water Reconciliation and Resilience at the Local Scale: "Our land ethic has consequences for water," summarizes Paul Chapman, chair of the Watershed Moments Team. "In 2023, the team produced a [90-minute video about Blue Ecology](#) ⁵ which Shaw Cable broadcast throughout BC. The video showcases what it means to apply Michael Blackstock's five Blue Ecology water cycle principles."

Watch the video trailer: Set aside 6-½ minutes. Watch the trailer overview ⁶. It is powerful.



⁴ <https://www.bclandsummit.com/>

⁵ <https://waterbucket.ca/viw/2023/09/25/blue-ecology-is-a-pathway-to-water-reconciliation-3/>

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7nwtEf1CrXE>

Editor's Perspective by Kim A Stephens

With an Attitude Change, Anything is Possible

The Partnership is honoured to be included as an "allied partner organization" for the 2024 BC Land Summit. This 3-day event held once every five years may spark innovation and collaboration, by providing valuable insights about the use and conservation of land and water.

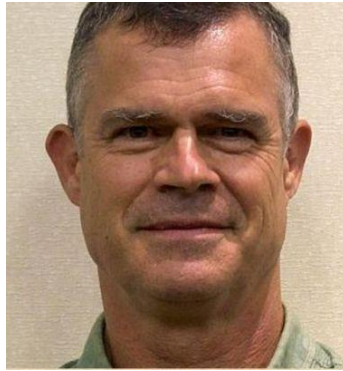
The phrase **attitude change** goes to the heart of what the Partnership session will showcase at the Land Summit. With an attitude change, anything is possible. In the story behind the story, which is about a conversation between Michael Blackstock and Tim Pringle, they reflect on why **caring for the land** is the core value that links Blue Ecology and EAP.



“The cost of changing our attitude is free, says Michael Blackstock, co-founder of the Blue Ecology Foundation Institute.” Kim Stephens

Going Beyond Just Doing Enough

At the BC Land Summit, the Partnership will deliver two 90-minute interactive sessions under the banner *Going Beyond Just Doing Enough*. I have selected the following quotable quotes to provide the reader with a mind map for the Partnership's component of the Land Summit program.

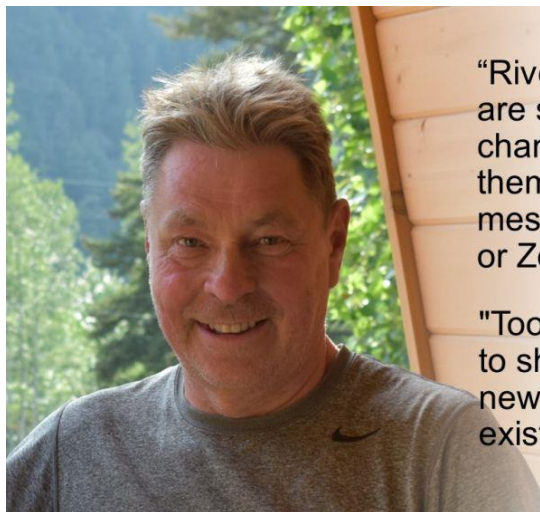


"Blue Ecology and EAP are all about a restorative framework and mindset. This means restoring the interconnectivity and function of natural systems in a way that truly represents their importance." - Richard Boase

"In the first session," states Richard Boase, "we explain what the Blue Ecology vision for an attitude change looks like through a local government lens. Examples of how to achieve **net environmental gain** illustrate how to implement an attitude change at the parcel scale,"

"In the second session," continues Tim Pringle, "we present the methodology and metrics for tackling the Riparian Deficit. And we introduce the training program now underway at Vancouver Island University to prepare next generations of local government staffs. EAP is not an abstract idea!"

"How are Blue Ecology and EAP interconnected?" muses Tim Pringle. "My answer is that Blue Ecology emphasizes the social perspective for protecting watersheds and streams. EAP shows how to achieve that outcome with a financial tool."



"Rivers and streams in BC are sending us a message... change our attitude towards them. It is hard to hear their message, from a boardroom or Zoom room."

"Tools like EAP can be used to shape the future, as our new attitude deploys these existing tools in new ways."

Michael Blackstock

STORY BEHIND THE STORY:

Caring for the land means going beyond just doing enough

extracts from "Tim Pringle and Michael Blackstock in conversation"

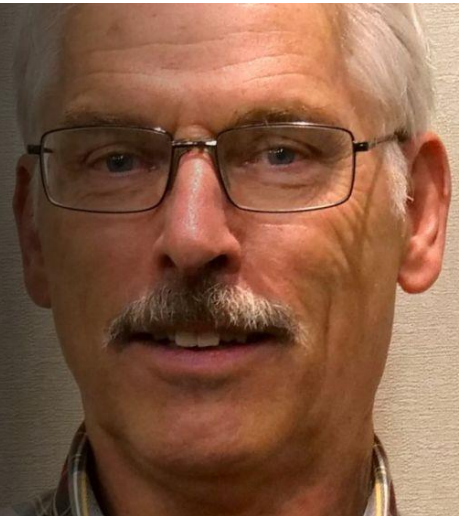
The BC Land Summit is a watershed moment for showcasing new ideas. The audience is comprised largely of players involved in some form of land-related profession...land appraisal, real estate, land planning, agrology, landscape architecture.

Their thinking is financial to quite an extent. And because EAP is a financial approach, the Partnership anticipates that EAP will resonate. Showing how EAP is an expression of Blue Ecology elevates the conversation to a higher plane. The context for that conversation is DRIPA, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

In this story behind the story, Tim Pringle and Michael Blackstock reflect on their interaction since 2016 and what interconnecting EAP and Blue Ecology is all about.

“Think of Blue Ecology as a compass in terms of how it relates to a *water-first* approach. The compass points the way forward. We are on a journey.”

Tim Pringle



EAP as an expression of Blue Ecology

Looking back, a provincial [Water Sustainability Workshop](#) in Kelowna was the genesis for collaboration between Michael Blackstock and Tim Pringle. Held in 2016, and co-hosted by the Partnership, the Kelowna event initiated the Partnership's decision to introduce Michael Blackstock's work to our local government partners.

The Kelowna workshop was a seminal moment. It marks the first time that Michael Blackstock and Tim Pringle made public presentations in a local government setting on Blue Ecology and EAP, respectively.

A 7-year journey, latterly as members of the Watershed Moments Team, is the frame of reference for Michael and Tim's collaboration since the Kelowna workshop. In the course of this journey, Michael and Tim have been evolving the philosophies and methodologies for Blue Ecology and EAP, respectively.



An attitude change costs nothing

Along the way, Michael and Tim each recognized that the other had the same important message for audiences: **take responsibility for care of the land**. It was not until the end of 2023, however, that the aha idea clicked for interconnecting Blue Ecology and EAP.

Coupled with the timely invitation to partner with the BC Land Summit Society, the Partnership has a "springboard opportunity" to promote an attitude change grounded in caring for the land.

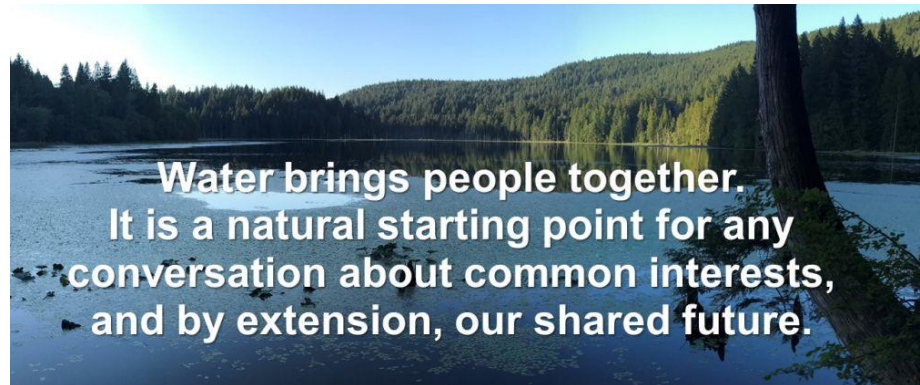
We are implementers

"I am an implementer. That reflects my career history," stated Michael Blackstock in conversation with Tim Pringle. "Blue Ecology theory emerged from practice and from my experience on the frontlines as a forester and as a mediator and a negotiator for the provincial government and BC Hydro over the past 35 years. That is where I saw the gap and the need for Blue Ecology."

"We are both implementers," Tim Pringle agreed. "When I reflect on my former career as executive director for the Real Estate Foundation, much of it had to do with getting a deeper understanding of WHY and WHAT proponents wanted to do with our funding. I often travelled to where they worked to see situations from their perspectives. This helped me understand how the foundation could support change in communities that would be for the better."

Understanding begins with a conversation

"So, the story behind this story is that Tim and I recognized our parallel paths and then we joined our efforts," summarized Michael Blackstock. "We did that because we took time to stop and listen to the perspective on the other side."



EAP builds on the "big idea" that use and conservation of land are equal values

Tim Pringle agreed with Michael Blackstock's observation (above), and added that, "The story of how we came together is that, through both Blue Ecology and EAP, we are striving to implement change consistent with the principle that use and conservation of land are equal values. That is the BIG IDEA."

"Where we come together is in recognizing the importance of water and the environment, or rather the ecological assets, in those two contexts. We both understand that water and ecological assets are key to the wellbeing of our communities and key to each other. The more specific idea is who will take responsibility for care of the land?"

Now what

This prompted Michael to ask Tim, "Has the moment come to **reframe 'ecosystem services' as 'gifts of nature'**? If it does not get measured, it does not get managed. EAP helps us measure and assess the trade-offs; and helps us understand when it is time to just let the land heal."



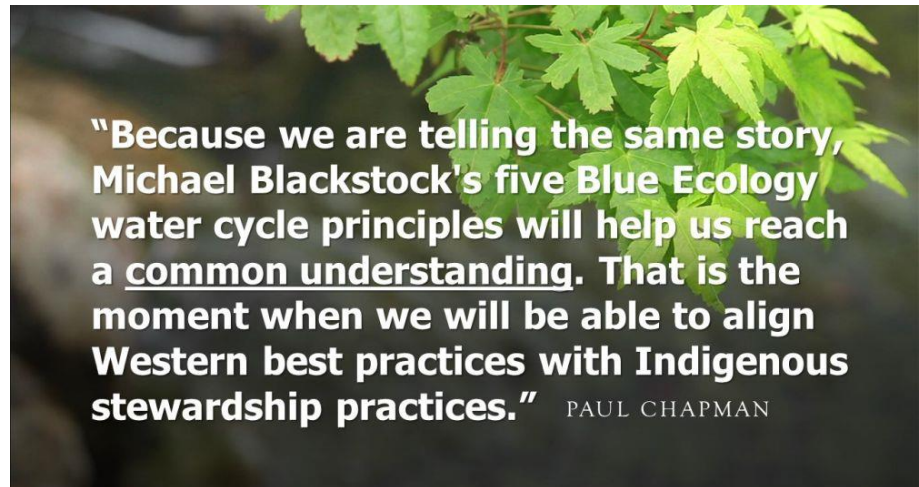
Blue Ecology is a collaborative framework for action at the local scale where communities decide to take action

"Blue Ecology is about interweaving two ways of knowing through a collaborative framework that would help facilitate how Indigenous, provincial and local governments work as leaders on a common problem, the climate crisis. I believe the public intuitively understands 'water is life', and therefore why the Province would focus on water as the core strategy in climate action," explained Michael Blackstock.

"I agree with your thesis," stated Tim Pringle. "The foundational ideas behind what we advocate are IMPLEMENTATION and RESPONSIBILITY. And there is a third idea named OPPORTUNITY. By interconnecting Blue Ecology and EAP, we are also creating a common opportunity. Once all the players acknowledge the common opportunity and goal, it makes it that much easier to understand the philosophy behind Indigenous and Western approaches."

What interweaving means

"Blue Ecology is a tested and credible pathway to hope and reconciliation. By translating what interweaving Indigenous knowledge and Western science means in practical terms for water resource management, the hope is that public service managers will understand and buy-in to the idea," concluded Michael Blackstock.



Professor Serpil Oppermann is Director of the Environmental Humanities Center at Cappadocia University (Turkey) and a past President of the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and the Environment. Her work explores the intersecting perspectives of natural sciences and environmental humanities.

To learn about more gems from “Tim Pringle and Michael Blackstock in conversation”, carry on and read the 6-page appendix

Slice-and-dice versus whole-system thinking is the overarching concept that emerged during their conversation. An attitude change is foundational to making the switch. This links to another gem which is that COP28 discovered nature after 27 years! Another gem is the importance of reiterating the mantra, “we are implementers”.

*The attention-grabbing gem, however, is the invitation that Michael has received from an international team of academics which is under contract to Bloomsbury Publishers (of Harry Potter fame) to contribute a chapter to their forthcoming book, **The Bloomsbury Handbook to the Blue Humanities**.*

“We intend this volume to represent the state of the art in Blue Humanities thinking across different disciplines, regions, theories, and methods. Our Handbook is divided into four sections –Discourses, Networks, Forms, and Representations –with a total of thirty-four chapters intended to provide a collective state of the discourse and a series of individual points of entry. At 6,000 words (including notes and bibliography), each chapter will present an overview of current debates and look ahead to new directions in the Blue Humanities. Our hope is that these chapters will inform their readers, stimulate their critical imaginations, and leave them wanting to learn more about the discourse of the Blue Humanities,” wrote Dr. Serpil Oppermann, co-editor.

Appendix

Caring for the land means going beyond just doing enough

More from “Tim Pringle in conversation
with Michael Blackstock” about
interconnecting EAP and Blue Ecology

Tim Pringle and Michael Blackstock in conversation

Our land ethic has consequences for water

“Indigenous peoples believe that water is a living thing. This way of thinking is enough to close Western minds to their core message which is, we must respect and live in harmony with water because water always wins. That is the intellectual challenge that the Partnership is working on through our collaboration with Michael Blackstock. We are seeking that common language that leads our audiences to a common understanding. Our goal is to heighten awareness that our land ethic has consequences for water.”

Kim Stephens

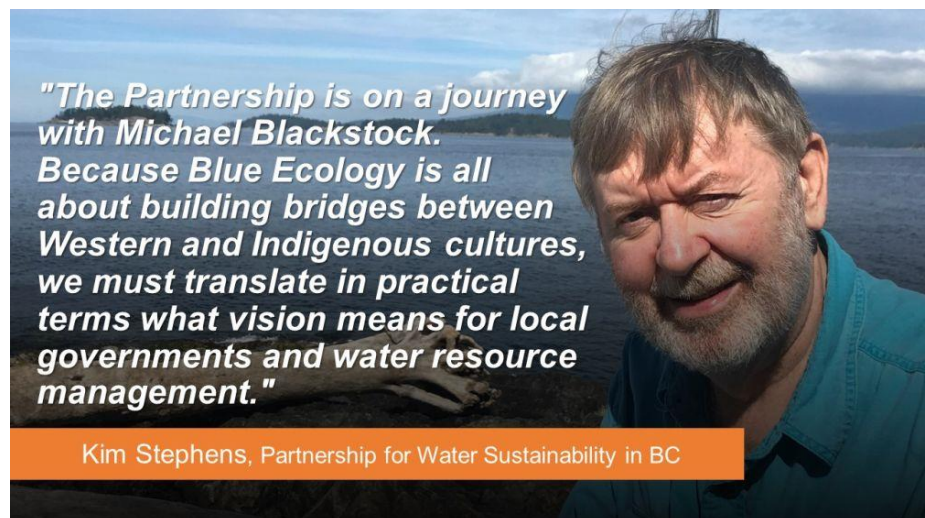
Background

*The idea of interweaving Indigenous knowledge and Western science is an abstract concept for many if not most people working in some aspect of the local government sector. Yet is something that they do need to wrap their minds around because reconciliation is provincial policy and **DRIPA**, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, is a driver for action.*

Blue Ecology is a pathway to Water Reconciliation. The Partnership for Water Sustainability has been all-in with our support of the work of Michael Blackstock since 2016. That is the year that we landed on interweaving Indigenous knowledge and Western science as the “big idea” that we would showcase in the 4th annual event in our [Water Sustainability Workshop Series](#)⁷. We squeezed Michael Blackstock onto a program that was headlined by CBC’s Bob McDonald.

When we observed how Michael Blackstock’s message resonated with the audience, we knew then and there that Blue Ecology is an idea whose time has come. So, we made Blue Ecology the theme for the 2017 workshop that we held 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.

The Partnership is on a journey with Michael Blackstock and a core aspect of collaboration is how we interconnect Blue Ecology with EAP, the Ecological Accounting Process.



⁷ <https://waterbucket.ca/cfa/category/partnership-for-water-sustainability-annual-workshop-series/2016-flow-and-grow/>

Caring for the land is the context for conversation

Caring for the land

Both Blue Ecology are striving to wean land and water decision makers and practitioners off a “slice and dice” way of viewing nature by showing them the benefits of a whole-system approach. Success depends on a shift in values so these individuals take on responsibility for care of the land. This principle is a core tenet of Indigenous thought as stewards of the land.

Why interconnect EAP and Blue Ecology

“By bringing together EAP and Blue Ecology around the theme of caring for the land, we are embarking on the next stage of our plan. We aim to raise the bar once more, define higher expectations, and inspire receptive audiences.”

Kim Stephens

Tim Pringle: “EAP happened because of people who cared. Not many but some. Now we have students who are energized by the knowledge. And we work with people, and government, to get them to care.”

“If we all understood the Indigenous philosophy, we would care. That is what I have learned through my conversations with Michael. And that statement got me thinking. If we frame things as caring for the land, that is how we bridge to OUR AUDIENCE.”

“I think one of the things about how people care about water and the land is that it has to be related to the level of experience they have growing up or where they are currently.”

“I think of my childhood living on a farm and the things in nature that I connected to...wanting to know where they were and expecting them to be there. Intrinsic nature drew me in.”

“I do not know how easy it is for someone growing up in an urban environment to have that kind of experience.”

Michael Blackstock: “Yes, that is exactly what I mean when I refer to the spirit of nature and connecting to it.”

A perspective on the urban experience

Tim Pringle: “So what happens to the urban person who does not have that type of experience? That is a question that I think about.”

“I suppose they might see some geese on a pond in a park. Or possibly salmon moving up a stream. But what moves them?”

“How many urbanites even do that? The bigger question is, will the streams even be there for them to do that?”

Michael Blackstock: “I agree, that is a good point about the urban environment. How do you even connect with people from the urban environment?”

“How do we connect with immigrants from other parts of the world who are moving into the urban environment in the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island and Okanagan regions of BC?”

What COP28 means

COP28 stands for the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.



Blue Humanities

“This chapter responds to your expertise in Blue Ecology, which you have created inspiring many blue humanities scholars and others across the globe. Your work suggests that you are the ideal person to write this chapter.”

Dr. Serpil Oppermann, on behalf of the co-editors

An awakening at COP28?

Michael Blackstock: “At COP28, the recent United Nations Climate Change Conference, I was shocked at what they called a breakthrough in their agreements. Did you know that this will be the first COP after twenty-seven where they are linking climate change with nature?”

“It has never before been mentioned before that how we treat nature is related to climate change. It would seem so obvious that they would be linked. But this is the first time.”

“That was a big aha moment for me.”

“Caring for the land...there has always been this wording challenge for me with Blue Ecology. It makes me think of what my dad would say. **A property is useless without water.**”

Bloomsbury Handbook on Blue Humanities

Michael Blackstock: “Bloomsbury, the publisher of the Harry Potter books has invited me to contribute a chapter to a book that will be titled Blue Humanities. This has me looking into this whole nature thing because they want to broaden it out with a water perspective.”

“This invitation has me thinking about a Greek poet named Pindar. In ancient times, they described water as the most valuable thing in nature. And they described gold as the most valuable thing that humans had created. In short, they paired gold and water.”

“People do relate to the phrase *caretakers of the land*, even though it really should be about land and water. But the phrase does not capture the importance of water TO THE LAND.”

“That is where I have always struggled. How do you pair those two, land and water? Blue Ecology is a way to do that but people are not familiar with Blue Ecology. That is the challenge I face in communicating what Blue Ecology is about.”

“Take care of the water and land. Stating that is a start. But it would be nice if there was one word. Nature is a word that encompasses both. But is that obvious to everyone?”

“So, it does come back to finding language that people can relate to and then stepping up to the next level. But for me, that next level has to have that reverence for water.”

“I relate Blue Ecology to the give back ethos where there is that reciprocal relationship. If we see water as a gift, we give back.”

What is Intrinsic Nature?



View nature as a whole-system

“Nature appears more fragmented because we have to slice it into categories and dice those categories into bits before we can value bits of those bits.”

“The sum of these parts is far short of the whole and does not capture the interconnectedness and holism of nature.”

“In addition, our view of nature is biased to those aspects of it that can be measured and particularly to those that can be valued.”

John Henneberry
(1952-2021)

Tim Pringle: “My approach to EAP has been influenced by the work of the late John Henneberry at the University of Sheffield in England. He pointed out that you cannot slice and dice nature because it is a system. If you do not have a system understanding, then slicing and dicing may give you the wrong direction, the wrong conclusion or a useless conclusion.”

“That is a lot of where we are with land and water management as it has evolved in the last century or so. It is so people-centric that it just overlooks intrinsic nature.”

“What is intrinsic nature? What does it mean?”

“Consider this example. Sir Issac Newton gave us the intrinsic understanding of what happens when gravity acts on a falling object. But Newton did not tell us what gravity is.”

“We are kind of stuck with that way of thinking when we look at land use. It deals with WHAT HAPPENS. It deals with the action, the changes, the modifications, maybe some restoration.”

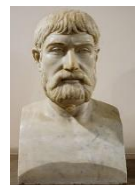
“BUT IT DOES NOT DEAL WITH THE SPIRIT OF WHAT NATURE IS or the intrinsic part of what humanity’s connection to the land might be. It is not in the equation.”

“For those who do want to do a better job in their roles related to land and water, helping them to see the intrinsic part of it would be ideal. And that is what we hope to accomplish using EAP as the means to an end.”

Michael Blackstock: “This brings us back to COP28. If they have only thought of this for the first time, that in itself tells us something about the way our language and thinking has been around nature.

“Obviously our minds as a society are not there yet. Just look at COP28 and what that tells us. We have to find a way to relate to the way people think.”

Tim Pringle: “Michael, you also made a good point with your reference to Pindar the Greek poet about water versus gold. There is a long history in the non-Indigenous culture about water having a primary place. We just forget to pay attention.”



Green Infrastructure Continuum

Continuum metaphor

“The Partnership uses the term ‘green infrastructure continuum’ to frame how green infrastructure understanding and the state-of-the-art around it are building on experience and evolving over time. The continuum idea provides context for milestones on the green infrastructure journey in British Columbia.”

“The continuum idea is a metaphor for hope. It allows us to answer the question, how well are we doing? Hope springs from a systematic and adaptive approach that builds on a solid foundation, and consistently gets it right.”

Kim Stephens

Tim Pringle: “Michael, you and I have talked a number of times about the 1990s and early 2000s when green infrastructure ideas were getting momentum. One of the things that came out of that was the [Riparian Areas Protection Regulation](#).”

“Of course, regulation is not a solution for everything. But it can be helpful. Looking back on that legislation, it had a positive framework. That is, there was some science to say what minimum protection of riparian areas should occur, and that land use should respect whatever those limits are.”

“Also, that local governments would have more involvement in protecting streams through the way they could regulate use of land. But the weakness in that legislation was putting too much responsibility or authority in the hands of the qualified environmental professionals who would work on behalf of proponents and then recommend what setbacks would be. This typically resulted in less-than-ideal outcomes.”

“It is worth sometimes looking at how legislation has the right concepts in it but does not necessarily deliver the result. It puts a finger on how much oversight can local government have, and what is that oversight.”

“In my mind, Michael, part of what you are talking about is oversight that is more socially based for the community. It is not in the hands of the elected ones or their employees who are going to do it. It is in the hands of the whole community. But we are not really there.”

“It is too easy for people to put off their awareness and call it the responsibility of someone else.”

We are Implementers

Michael Blackstock: “Tim, because you and I are implementers, we are trying to figure out how to make this happen. If the implementers think something is possible, then it is not really that out there. It is not fantasy.”

“I like your comment that we cannot slice and dice nature because we will just get an incorrect impression. It has to be looked at as a whole system. The whole system includes water and land.”

“In this vein, I have an example to share you. I have been asked by [Nature Kids BC](#) to write the introduction to a new publication on freshwater for kids. Picking up on your point, we slice and dice water into fresh and salt and treat them differently. But the two are connected within a system.”

Appearance versus Reality

Tim Pringle: “As I reflect on your Harry Potter connection, I think about what we are both dealing with. One of the things is the difference between appearance and reality. What I mean by that is that it also goes to the changing baseline syndrome that Daniel Pauly talks about.”

“What people see now is what they think is normal, right or acceptable. But appearance and reality are not the same thing at all. It connects to the idea of slice and dice. It connects to the idea of the spirit of nature. Or what intrinsic nature is.”

What we take in is the appearance of things but that is not necessarily what the reality is. That is a challenge for us.”

Michael Blackstock: “In other words, what we see is a relic of its former self.”

Tim Pringle: “Michael, that is a good way to put it.”

“There is a kinship between EAP and Blue Ecology, and we need to repeat this again and again going forward.”

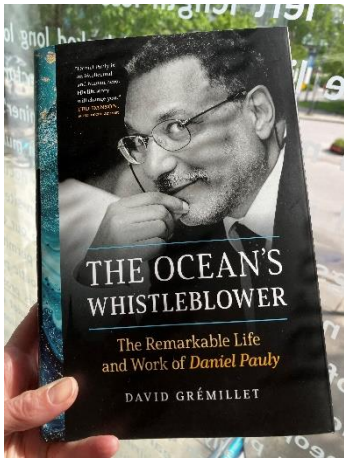
“If people understand what the framework is, and why it is shaped the way it is...and that is, to help local governments improve their OVERSIGHT...then EAP as an expression of Blue Ecology has the potential to make a difference.”

“We can only do steps at a time. We are not going to do it all at once.

“And certainly, EAP is not the whole solution for anything. But it is going to help local governments IMPROVE THEIR OVERSIGHT, THEIR OWN KNOWLEDGE....and it is going to walk them away from having consultants substitute for that knowledge.”

Michael Blackstock: “In today’s world, it is very difficult to make things happen if organizations are not functioning. We are just trying to plant seeds for the moment when things are ready to function in a better way. That is all.”

“In re-capping our conversation, a commonality is that both EAP and Blue Ecology are trying to help individuals and governments break away from slice-and-dice thinking, and in the process show them the way to whole-system thinking.”



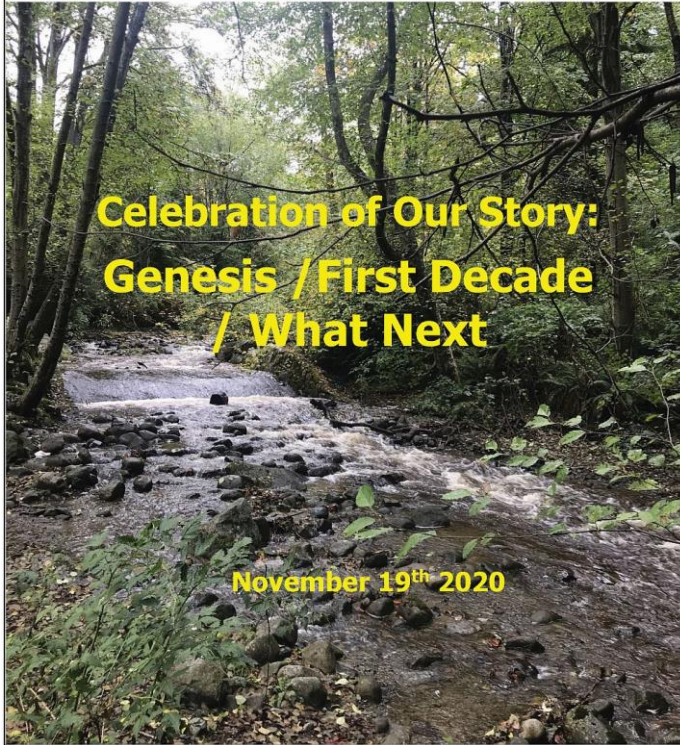
Shifting Baseline

“You can have a succession of changes. At the end you want to sustain miserable leftovers. And the question is, why do people accept this? Well, because they don’t know that it was different.”

Dr. Daniel Pauly



the partnership
for water sustainability in bc



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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