

## Participant Feedback on Watersheds 2014: Towards Watershed Governance in B.C. and Beyond

### What Worked

- The combination of different types of sessions for different learning styles (big ideas keynotes, panels, workshops, and open-structured sessions)
- The consistent inclusion of First Nations' perspectives—integrated throughout all sessions, but also as thematic, standalone sessions
- The opening setting-the-scene talk was important for establishing a tone for the entire event, particularly with two speakers who could play off one another to set context
- Co-hosting with Cowichan Tribes; numerous speakers and participants expressed gratitude at being invited and warmly welcomed to the Cultural Centre on Cowichan Tribes territory
- Having a diversity of local and national-level funders, which allowed for flexibility and openness, and none placed unreasonable constraints on how money could be used.

### What Needed Work

- Certain panels and workshops would have been more effective with smaller groups; some workshops weren't quite hands-on enough
- Some participants felt that having speakers/activities during lunch didn't give the necessary time for informal networking, conversation, or debriefing
- Some participants were disappointed by the noticeable lack of delegates in attendance from the provincial government
- The event could have included more industry perspective, or an explanation of why this wasn't a focus
- More "free space" would have been appreciated by some of the participants

### What We Learned: Keys to Future Success

- Certain topics were more polarizing than others; this was mainly the case with the more academic sessions, which tended to have more technical language; so, it is critical to have engaging academics who have an ability to communicate to diverse, non-expert audiences
- Scholarship participants really enjoyed the informal Pecha Kucha session at the pub on Tuesday evening; in future this could perhaps be opened to all participants and integrated into the main event (although part of what worked about it was the smaller group size)
- Even with the extensive case studies, workshops, and face-to-face time with watershed organization experts, participants still wanted more; at future events there is interest in taking more in-depth approaches by, for example, exploring a specific problem and working through it as a group
- The conversation on watershed governance has notably "matured" from previous events hosted in Canada, but there is still a critical need for capacity building, particularly given that numerous provinces are still establishing new governance models
- It is important to keep a continuing flow/dialogue over the course of the event; participants responded more to sessions in which the presenters picked up and built on previously discussed ideas/themes and reinforced them; this may involve more time from the organizers to work with individual presenters to ensure the tone and key themes are effectively emphasized
- Based on the survey responses and informal feedback, this event was extremely well received; however, both the time and financial resources required cannot be underestimated
- At future events, it may be more engaging to "break up" the schedule more with, for example, a field trip in the middle (could even be on the event site to reduce logistics) or even some outdoor sessions to provide a different environment
- It will be important to keep momentum going and ensure participants have an easy way to stay connected and share information; the Canadian Freshwater Alliance has offered to help with this
- Ensuring First Nations' perspectives are integrated throughout the event was very important, and must be continued at future events

### Participant Feedback in Numbers

- **82.8%** enhanced their networks/contacts\*
- **71.9%** developed new skills and ideas\*
- **57.1%** are now aware of and able to mobilize new possibilities in their watersheds\*
- **74.1%** felt the resilience concepts discussed allowed them to think differently about their watershed and/or generated new ideas for how to be successful\*\*

\*Based on responses from 65 participants (approximately one-third of attendees)

\*\*Based on live responses from 31 individuals at event

## Selected Testimonials

"I can't thank you enough, and your amazing team, for putting together an incredibly valuable and powerful forum ... a tremendous opportunity to learn and connect with a diverse group of water leaders. I know there will be a significant legacy from this."  
— *Watersheds 2014* Funder

"I really enjoyed the approach. This is exactly the kind of thing that CWN should be supporting."  
— *Watersheds 2014* Funder

"There was a very positive influence of First Nations in this forum and I would encourage continuing to build on this success in the future. Thanks to your team for all the hard work and pulling off a great forum!"  
— *Watersheds 2014* Participant

"The main thrust of the gathering was one of warmth, giving, sharing, and unity of purpose ... I must say I have waited three decades to witness such a coming together as what happened at Duncan."  
— *Watersheds 2014* Participant

"It was amazing how welcoming, approachable, and informative the professionals were. It felt like we all had something to contribute, and, to protect our water, it will take us all."  
— *Watersheds 2014* Participant

"I liked having access to this event. That makes it easy for everyone to participate."  
— *Watersheds 2014* Satellite Participant

## Sessions with the Most Impact

### Big Ideas Keynotes

- *Taking the Pulse & Setting the Scene: Water Attitudes & the Emergence of Watershed Governance* led by Oliver M. Brandes and Angus McAllister
- *Water as Our Relative: Redefining How We View Water in Governance Processes* led by Carrie Terbasket
- *Social Finance 101: Emerging Ideas to Support Community-Led Governance Initiatives* led by Ken Gauthier

### Panels

- *Successes & Challenges: From the Front Lines of Watershed Governance* led by Anna Warwick Sears, Barbara Veale, and Lydia Hwitsum
- *First Nations and Water Governance: Understanding the Framework* led by Marlowe Sam, Deana Machin, and Larry George

### Workshops

- *Legal Tools for Watershed Protection* led by Deborah Curran
- *Straight from the Source: Drinking Water Source Protection Planning* led by Mike Donnelly, Reg Whiten, and Mike Fox
- *A New Bag o' Tricks: Engaging "the Public" in Watershed Governance* led by Susi Porter-Bopp

## Feedback on *Watersheds 2014* Satellite Events

### Feedback in Numbers\*

- **Over 75** individuals from B.C., Alberta, Ontario, and Australia attended via satellite event
- **88.9%** would host and/or participate in this type of virtual event again based on their *Watersheds 2014* satellite experience
- **66.6%** were either satisfied or very satisfied with their *Watersheds 2014* Satellite Event experience; the remaining 33.3% were moderately satisfied

### What We Learned: Keys to Future Success

- The size of satellite events was quite varied (from 3 to 20 attendees); overall feedback indicates that even though some events were small there was demand for this aspect of the forum
- Multiple satellite attendees would have liked to see the whole conference available via live streaming; one suggestion was to have a more formalized "virtual conference" component for a portion of the full registration fee at future events
- The satellite events were successful at offering regional opportunities for people working in water governance locally to network and engage

\*Percentages are based on responses from 9 individuals, most of whom were organizers of a satellite event