

Draft CWB Climate Change Emergency Declaration – DRAFT ONLY !! – FOR DISCUSSION

The Cowichan Watershed Board is a local governance model created in 2010 to provide leadership for sustainable water management in the Cowichan/Koksilah watersheds, ancestral home of the Quw'utsun First Nation. The CWB is co-chaired by Cowichan Tribes and the Cowichan Valley Regional District and represents a unique partnership between First Nations and local government. Through this model, Cowichan Tribes and the CVRD work together to advance whole-of-watershed health, demonstrating a commitment to moving down the path of reconciliation.

The CWB recognizes climate change to be the defining issue of our time and that we are at a defining moment. From shifting weather patterns resulting in summer drought that threatens our rivers and the salmon and related ecosystems that rely on them, to increased winter precipitation and rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, the impacts of climate change are impacting our lives. Globally, climate change threatens food production, human health and safety and ecosystem resilience at an unprecedented scale. Without drastic action today, adapting to these impacts in the future will be more difficult, more costly or impossible.

We are already experiencing significant impacts to things that are important to our community as a result of climate disruption: salmon populations are at risk in the Cowichan & Koksilah watersheds, water needs of agriculture and industry exceed supply, our forests and communities are at risk of wildfire, winter flooding is damaging our homes and our aquifers are failing.

Clearly, one of humanity's principal challenges in this century will be to stop climate change. The CWB recognizes the gravity of the situation and the fact that we are experiencing a climate change emergency –which will only become worse without immediate and meaningful action by all levels of government, industry and individuals - here in the Cowichan Valley and around the world.

This Declaration speaks to the responsibility to acknowledge and address our climate emergency. Respecting and engaging through our principles: Responsibility, Transparency, Partnerships, "Whole of Watershed" thinking and *Nutsamaat kws yaay'us tth qa*, the CWB commits to working to implement climate change mitigation measures to address our priorities: ensuring sustainable surface and ground water supplies, acceptable water quality and sustainable aquatic ecosystems and communities in the Cowichan and Koksilah watersheds. The CWB realizes that without effective intervention, the disasters of today will be dwarfed by future catastrophic impacts and that we have a role to play in ensuring a positive future for the generations that follow.

Western scientists, and Indigenous peoples, through knowledge of, and connection to, the land have declared we are facing a climate emergency of existential dimensions. Should climate change continue unchecked over the next decades, future generations will inherit a world racked by ecological, cultural and economic crises. The Cowichan Watershed Board, recognizing that *Mukw' stem 'o' shilhukw'tul* – everything is interconnected – are committed to ensuring water and watershed sustainability in the face of climate change and to engage in these efforts in a manner that does not contribute to further disruption of our climate.