**DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE:**

**XWULQW’SELU WATERSHED PLAN**

**XWULQW’SELU COMMUNITY GUIDANCE GROUP**

**BACKGROUND**

Two initiatives are underway to support Cowichan Tribes’ stewardship of the Xwulqw’selu watershed: a Watershed Planning process, and a Riparian Guardians program.[[1]](#footnote-2) Working side-by-side, these two initiatives will further the expression of, and respect for, Cowichan Tribes’ presence, jurisdiction, laws, knowledge, and stewardship in the Xwulqw’selu Watershed.

Ensuring the Watershed Plan and Guardians Program are grounded in and reflect community priorities is of utmost importance. Cowichan Tribes is establishing an Xwulqw’selu Community Guidance Group as one core way to ensure this work is done in a good way.[[2]](#footnote-3)

In an effort to ensure that the work of the WSP Planning Team and Xwulqw’selu Riparian Guardians Program is accountable to the interests of Cowichan Tribes, the Guidance Group will remain apprised of the ongoing undertakings of each respective team and program, and provide guidance on matters brought forward. This group builds a shared understanding of management options and their consequences and deliberates together about key uncertainties and trade-offs in an effort to reach consensus and make recommendations to decision-makers. Matters discussed at this group are not an indication of formal decisions, but rather based on perspectives shared by the group, provide insight and consideration in decision-making contexts, such as Cowichan Tribes standing committees, and the WSP Planning Team.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Xwulqw’selu Community Guidance Group is to share stories, knowledge, language, and ideas, and learn about ways to practice syuw'entst (proper ways of being) and snuw'uy'ulh (teachings) in the Xwulqw'selu Watershed. A multi-generational group will offer guidance (including cultural, technical, and land-based perspectives) to Lulumexun on what is important to Quw'utsun Hwulmuhw Mustimuhw, while also learning about and considering other values and interests in the Xwulqw'selu Watershed. Group members will help to spread the word and make connections with these initiatives with Quw'utsun Mustimuhw (and with any other groups or committee's members may find relevant):

1. Come together to share stories, knowledge, language, and ideas, and learn about ways to practice snuw’uy’ulh and syuw'entst in the Xwulqw’selu watershed.
2. Reflect, discuss, and give guidance to Lulumexun staff and contractors on what is important to Cowichan Tribes in the Xwuqlw’selu Watershed, including advice and direction on:
   * specific priorities to be explored by the Watershed Plan and Guardians Program
   * ways to realize Cowichan Tribes’ vision and outcomes for a healthy watershed and make progress on Cowichan Tribes’ stewardship goals
   * ways to address emerging issues, topics, and challenges as they arise
3. Help to spread the word and make connections with these initiatives in the broader community.
4. Learn about and consider what other interests are coming forward in the Watershed planning process, and give guidance on how to bring Cowichan Tribes’ perspectives and priorities into those other forums.

**PROCESS TO DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Cowichan Tribes Xwulqw'selu Community Guidance Group is an advisory table, not a decision-making body. It makes recommendations to the Government to Government (G2G) Table through the Planning Team. The Planning Team draws on input from multiple sources, including but not limited to the Advisory Tables, to support the decisions of the G2G Table (i.e., developing briefing material for the G2G Table). The G2G Table will seriously consider the Guidance Group’s advice, but is not bound to it. The Planning Team will report back on how the Guidance Group’s advice was considered. With respect to the Riparian Guardian Program, the Guidance Group makes recommendations to the relevant committees and leadership within Cowichan Tribes who will seriously consider the Guidance Group’s advice, and report back on how it was considered.

While the Guidance Group seeks consensus on its recommendations, consensus is not a requirement. Once sufficient information has been brought to the table, the group has finished deliberating, and is ready to make a decision on a recommendation or proposal, each member will report one of three levels of support:

* **Endorse**: Indicates the Member’s full support,
* **Accept/Support:** Indicates that the Member may not be fully satisfied but acknowledges the decision is suitable and achievable under the circumstances, and importantly that the Member confirms their support for the proposal both at the table and externally. Reasons for the accept, rather than endorse, are documented.
* **Oppose**: Indicates the Member is unable to support the proposal, for now.

Consensus is defined as occurring when all Members either Endorse or Accept a proposal.

**GUIDING TEACHINGS AND PRINCIPLES**

Cowichan Tribes’ *snuw’uy'ulh (*teachings) and *syuw’entst* (proper ways of being) guide *they’tal’* (relationship-building). Cowichan Elders share that it can take a lifetime to understand and live these teachings. The Watershed Plan process offers everyone involved opportunities to learn – through reflection, discussion, practice, and seeking guidance – about *snuw’uy’ulh* and *syuw’entst.*

**snuw’uy'ulh and syuw’entst**

**Nuts’amat kws yaay’us ‘utu qa’**

We come together as a whole to work together to be stronger as partners for the watershed.

**Hwialasmut tu Tumuhw**

Take care of the Earth (this includes the watershed).

**Mukw’ stem ‘i ‘utunu Tumuhw, ‘o’ huliitun tst, mukw’ stem ‘i ‘utunu Tumuhw ‘o’ slhiilhukw ‘tul’**

Everything on this Earth is what sustains us; everything on this Earth is connected together.

**Stl’atl’um stuhw tun kwunmun**

Take only what you need.

**Stsielhstuhw tu mukw stem (‘i ‘u tuna Tumuhw)**

Respect for all things; Respect for all beings; Respect for what is around you.

**‘Uw-wu ha’kwush ‘uhw, ‘i ‘o’ shtes ch ‘ul’**

Leave it the way we found it.

**Hulitun ts-t tu qa’**

Water is life.

**Stsielh stum tu Sqwutsun’a’lh sh-saay’ ‘i’ tu sniw’s kwa ‘e’ ‘luhwutss**

Cowichan rights and laws are respected.

**Yaay’usme’t kws mukwe’ stem ‘itunnu Tumuhw ‘o’ sul’iq’tul, ‘Uw-wute’kw’u suhiim**

Work to bring everything in our environment into balance.

**Hiiye’yutul tst’u to’ mukw’ stem ‘i ‘u tun’a Tumuhw ‘i’ tu qa’**

Everything in the natural world is connected as part of our family; we are all relatives.

**Ts’i’ts’uwatul’ eluhwut tu Xwulqw’selu qa’ Tumuhw, ‘i’ Mukw’stem ‘ukw’o’ yath**

Work together for the health and wellbeing of the Xwulqw’selu Watershed, generation to generation.

**MEMBERSHIP**

The Xwulqw’selu Community Guidance Group is compromised of 5-10 members. This group seeks to include generational diversity as well as Cowichan Tribes members or staff with connections to and knowledge of the Xwulqw’selu Watershed.

**Membership List**

Philomena Williams

Sam George

Jedson August

Joe Elliott

Jared Williams

**Application Process**

Interested applicants may submit a written application (1 page) or provide answers via a phone conversation to answer four questions:

1. Why are you interested in participating in the Guidance Group?
2. What knowledge, skills, perspectives would you offer?
3. What would you hope to get out of being part of the Group?
4. How would you resolve conflict and contribute to a positive collaborative dynamic?
5. Can you commit a minimum of 1 year and commit to attending most meetings in-person?
6. Are you willing to share what you have learned at the Group with your families & networks, and to bring information from your families and network back to the table?

**Selection process & criteria**

A small selection committee reviews applications. Responses to each question will be scored. Key criteria in evaluating applications and forming the Group:

* Diversity of knowledge and perspectives represented (including intergenerational)
* Relevant cultural, technical,[[3]](#footnote-4) and/or watershed-specific knowledge and ‘on the land’ familiarity of the Xwulqw’selu watershed **OR** a strong desire and optimistic attitude to learn about these topics and actively participate
  + Clear expression of interest and ability to commit to a minimum 1 year
  + A willing and collaborative approach

Recommendations for group membership will be made to the Tumuhw’ committee. Upon approval, the shortlist will then be sent to Chief and Council for final approval. If interest exceeds Group capacity, applicants will be offered other ways of being involved in the process.

**Meetings, time commitment and term**

* The Guidance Group will be convened bimonthly (6 times/year) for 3 hours (more or less time may be required depending on the topics being discussed and deliberated)
* Wherever possible the meetings will take place in-person, with a land-based component.
* The Group will be in place for the duration of the Planning Process (expected 2026) and may be extended to continue to advise on ongoing Guardians program and plan implementation. We are asking for an initial 1-year commitment.

**MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES**

* Stay informed of Xwuqlw’selu planning and Guardians program progress (review relevant materials/updates)
* Attend meetings and gatherings, recognizing the importance of continuity
* Share perspectives honestly and respectfully
* Provide constructive feedback on how the Planning Process and Guardians Programs can better serve community needs and interests
* Learn about and consider the perspectives of others in the Watershed
* Help spread the word with friends and family about Cowichan Tribes stewardship and decision-making in the Xwulqw’selu Watershed
* Advise on opportunities for community participation where possible.
* When desired, consider participating in work teams, training/mentorship opportunities, or applying for job postings
* Collaborate with Guardians Coordinator and Supervisor on the short-, mid-, and long-term strategic planning
* Where/if needed, review applications for research in the Xwulqw’selu Watershed; provide recommendations for applications

**Member Code of Conduct**

This code of conduct is intended to support respectful and productive dialogue. If any group member is acting in a way that is inconsistent with the code of conduct, the G2G partners may choose to remove that member from the Table.

* Work collaboratively toward shared understanding and consensus
* Engage in deliberations in a respectful, open and direct manner with a commitment to learning
* Share your intentions and reasons, listen to others, and let opposing views co-exist
* Focus on interests rather than positions, be open to a range of outcomes and be ready to change your mind
* Commit to consistent and meaningful participation in all meetings and communications; attend and come prepared to all meetings (read materials, etc.), and be available for email correspondence, Communicate with your respective family/ community/ relevant committees and groups/organization for input before and after meetings

**Lulumexun Responsibilities**

* Report out to the Planning Team/ G2G, and relevant CT committees, as advised by the Director of Lulumexun, and share information to the Guidance Group
* Validate and confirm input
* Use input received at the Group to shape the Watershed Plan and Riparian Guardians Program
* Share input with others in the Watershed at the Collaborative Community Advisory Table and vice versa
* Advise of opportunities for involvement in different aspects of watershed management and planning

**HONORARIA**

Following Cowichan Tribes policy, members will be compensated at $150/half-day meeting, and $300/ full day meeting.

**OBSERVERS AND GUESTS**

Observers may attend meetings but may not participate in guidance group discussions unless called upon. If an Observer wishes to attend an upcoming meeting, they must inform the facilitator in advance. Permission may be dependent on the nature of the discussion (e.g., sensitive information or issues on the agenda), and on meeting logistics (e.g., venue or transportation limitations).

Guests may be invited to attend meetings to provide presentations or respond to questions on a subject relevant to the guidance group. Any invitation to a guest must be coordinated through the facilitator in advance of the meeting.

**CULTURAL SAFETY AND BRIDGE-BUILDING**

Under the May 2023 Government-to-Government (G2G) Agreement (S-xats-thut tst), each Government partner (Cowichan Tribes and BC) is recognized as an equal authority with distinct laws, responsibilities, and contributions to the planning process. The partners are committed to working and learning collaboratively together to achieve the vision set out in S-xats-thut tst of a healthy Watershed for generations to come.

Alongside the Cowichan Tribes Xwulqw'selu Community Guidance Group, the Government-to-Government Table (Cowichan Tribes and the Province of British Columbia) has established a Collaborative Community Action Table (CCAT) comprised of diverse watershed interests and sectors. Coordination and information sharing will take place between the Community Guidance Group and CCAT.

Specific principles for data-sharing will be developed as needed.

**MEETING NOTES AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

**Objective and transparent meeting notes**. The facilitators are responsible for developing meeting notes. Meeting notes are an independent third-party interpretation and summary, intended for discussion purposes, towards the goal of advancing the planning process. The facilitators will take care to reflect perspectives in an objective, transparent manner, to avoid potential for misinterpretation or ambiguity.

**Review of meeting notes.** A 1-week review period will be provided for group meeting participants to review draft meeting notes and raise any concerns or questions to the facilitator.

**Non-confidential**. Group representatives are responsible for articulating during the meeting, or during document review, when the information or a perspective they have shared should be considered sensitive or confidential (not to be documented). Once finalized notes will be considered non-confidential and may be circulated or used to inform the content of public communications.

**Non-attribution.** Materials will generally be non-attributed (no direct quotes). However, given the small group size, and public listing of members, even with non-attribution, it is reasonable to expect that individuals could be identified, therefore this process does not guarantee anonymity. If a group member feels that they would like their input attributed, it is their responsibility to speak up. Simultaneously, facilitators will be mindful to check in about whether specific pieces of knowledge, information, language, or stories should be attributed. In this way, consent becomes an ongoing practice and dialogue in which all parties have roles and responsibilities.

**A LIVING DOCUMENT**

These Terms of Reference are a living document that can be iterated following approval from the G2G table.

**APPENDIX – DETAILS ON WHAT THE GUIDANCE GROUP WILL ADVISE ON**

The Group will be asked to advise on both broad and specific questions related to the Xwulqw’selu watershed and its stewardship and use by Cowichan members.

**Related to the Watershed Plan, for example, these questions may include:**

* What changes to land and water use should be explored to achieve the vision and outcomes of the Plan?
* What criteria from Cowichan Tribes perspectives should the Planning Team bring forward to evaluate different land and water use actions?
* When there are trade-offs or choices about whether/how to do something, what are key considerations from Cowichan Tribes’ perspective?
* How to best communicate progress and opportunities to Cowichan Tribes members?

**Related to the Guardians Program, these questions may include:**

* How to designate the area of focus for Xwulqw’selu Guardians, i.e. Riparian areas, or whole of watershed approach?
* What is the scope of the Xwulqw’selu Guardians, i.e. monitoring, recording, and reporting; conservation; restoration; or a mix?
* How to adhere to OCAP principles around data collection, management, and ownership, according to Cowichan Tribes wishes.
* How are the prospective Guardian projects prioritized?
* How are Guardians enshrining CT jurisdiction into their work?
* What are the most important aspects to consider when establishing the foundation of the Guardians program? i.e. snuw'uy'ulh?
* Who are Indigenous Guardians directly and indirectly accountable to?
* Who are the Indigenous Guardians acting on behalf of or representing as they conduct their activities?

1. The vision of the Xwulqw’selu Riparian Guardians Program is to increase Quw’utsun presence in the watershed, and to return to our caretaking duties as Quw’utsun Mustimuhw. This program will be Indigenous and Quw’utsun-led, with support and consultation from Cowichan Tribes Chief and Council, and Cowichan Tribes membership. General parameters of the overall program may include environmental monitoring and data collection; reporting observations; restoring and rehabilitating sections of the watershed for long term sustainability; and returning to traditional stewardship and management practices, drawing from our Snuw’uyulh. *At this time an enforcement aspect has NOT been scoped.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The Community Guidance Table described here is just one of the ways that Lulumexun staff/contractors will be connecting with Elders, knowledge holders, youth, and community members over the coming years for information sharing, learning, and direction. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. this knowledge could include a background in Hunting/ Fishing/ Harvesting, Quw’utsun snuw’uy’ulh and syuw’entst, First Nations Rights, UNDRIP and/ or DRIPA, Fisheries, Freshwater Ecology, Hydrology, Cowichan Tribes culture; knowledge of or understand how to interpret data on Xwulqw’selu Land Use such as Cultural Use and Harvesting Use [↑](#footnote-ref-4)