BC FIRST NATIONS WATER GOVERNANCE ROUNDTABLE
2018/2019 STRATEGY

1. ABOUT THE ROUNDTABLE

The BC First Nations Water Governance Roundtable (Roundtable) was established in June 2017 to advance First Nations engagement in planning, management, and governance of fresh water.

Roundtable participants include 12-15 staff and leadership comprising 55 First Nations across BC that have identified freshwater as a priority and are actively developing and implementing strategies and plans to achieve their goals with respect to water. The Roundtable provides a unique structured space for collaboration, information sharing, strategy development, and capacity building at a province-wide scale. In the future the Roundtable may adopt a regional delegate structure and provide a process for Tier 2 engagement and cooperation.

The Roundtable is hosted by the First Nations Fisheries Council of BC (FNFC). The Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER) is a facilitation partner. Roundtable activities are currently funded by the Real Estate Foundation of BC, LUSH Cosmetics and the BC Freshwater Legacy Initiative.

This strategy was confirmed by Roundtable participants on November 20th & 21st, 2018.

2. PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Roundtable is to facilitate a collective First Nations voice related to freshwater management and governance in British Columbia.

Based on discussions with participants, 2018/2019 Roundtable strategic priority areas include but are not limited to:

1. Identify collective strategies to broadly advance First Nations engagement in management and planning of fresh water in British Columbia;
2. Support First Nations capacity and strategies for Indigenous-led water governance (e.g., development and application of Indigenous laws, Indigenous-led watershed planning and monitoring);
3. Support BC First Nations capacity, strategies, and processes for meaningful engagement in Crown polices, laws, and institutions on existing and future freshwater governance initiatives and opportunities, and;
4. Inform First Nations leadership and communities about freshwater management and governance initiatives and strategies.
3. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Recent federal and BC provincial government commitments to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, to building relationships based on respect, collaboration and partnership, and to adopting and implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, provide a new collaborative environment and an optimism that First Nations will be able to advance new, more collaborative water governance and management processes.

Indigenous laws, knowledge, and decision-making processes that have sustained fresh waters mean that First Nations have an essential role to play in addressing accelerating water challenges. While a small number of communities are leading a variety of planning and governance activities to protect fresh waters in their traditional territories, a number of long-standing institutional and legal barriers prevent meaningful progress on this issue and the full engagement of First Nations as critical players in managing and making decisions over fresh water in BC:

1) Unresolved jurisdictional and authority issues relating to recognition of Indigenous Rights, laws, and jurisdiction of fresh water;
2) A general financial capacity gap in First Nations communities and organizations to work on freshwater issues, which is exacerbated by the complexity of federal and provincial legislative and regulatory frameworks relating to water (quality, quantity, uses and access); and,
3) The fragmentation of Indigenous communities through ongoing Crown governance processes has resulted in a generally low level of collaboration on freshwater management and governance activities between communities, even within the same watershed.

Given these challenges there is a pressing need for First Nations to come together in order to proactively engage in and influence freshwater governance and management decisions in their traditional territories. The BC First Nations Water Governance Roundtable seeks to meet this need by facilitating a collective First Nations voice related to related to freshwater management and governance in BC at a province-wide scale through consistent and structured dialogue at the Tier 1 (First Nations) and in the future, potentially at a Tier 2 (First Nations and Crown governments) levels.
## 2018/2019 STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS

### Strategic Priority #1:
Identify collective strategies to broadly advance First Nations engagement in management and planning of fresh water in British Columbia.

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<th>Expected Outcomes</th>
<th>Staff support</th>
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<td>1.2</td>
<td>Inform the development and implementation of a First Nations engagement framework for Water Sustainability Act regulation and policy development.</td>
<td>Review draft WSA First Nations engagement framework Recommendations to BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Forests Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation as needed</td>
<td>WSA is implemented to its fullest potential with the general support of BC First Nations, with full recognition of Aboriginal Rights, Title and jurisdiction, and strong regulations and policies that reflect First Nations values and interests.</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
<td>Identify opportunities for scaled and/or networked strategic water data collection across territories.</td>
<td>Landscape scan of First Nations participation in freshwater quantity and knowledge creation; including</td>
<td>First Nations are supported to participate in science and knowledge creation; including</td>
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## Strategic Priority #2:
Support First Nations capacity and strategies for Indigenous-led water governance (e.g., development and application of Indigenous laws, Indigenous-led watershed planning and monitoring).

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<td>2.1</td>
<td>Provide a stable Tier 1 structure for First Nations to exchange information, learn from each other, and identify emerging First Nations priorities.</td>
<td>BC First Nations Water Governance Roundtable 2018/2019 Strategy Tier 1 Terms of Reference</td>
<td>Roundtable is supported to engage in dialogue with other First Nations, and with Crown and other government partner and other organizations on issues related to freshwater management and governance.</td>
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<td>2.2</td>
<td>Provide capacity building opportunities in priority areas identified by participants (see Annex 2).</td>
<td>Capacity-building session(s) as part of Roundtable meetings on topics such as facilitation, watershed planning and funding for water initiatives (see Annex 2 for list of priorities).</td>
<td>Capacity and skills development that contribute to a growing number of best practices in Indigenous-led water management and governance.</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
<td>Maintain clear channels of communications with other BC First Nations in order to share learnings, resources and strategic developments and opportunities.</td>
<td>See outputs in Strategic Priority #4</td>
<td>See outcomes in Strategic Priority #4</td>
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## Strategic Priority #3:
Support BC First Nations capacity, strategies, and processes for meaningful engagement in Crown polices, laws, and institutions on existing and future freshwater governance initiatives and opportunities.
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>Identify key freshwater-related provincial and federal government activities, processes and opportunities for the next two years (for example, WSA, Canada Navigable Waters Act, Canada Water Act, Crown commitments to reconciliation).</td>
<td>Shortlist of current and anticipated 2018-2020 Crown government activities and timelines related to freshwater governance and management</td>
<td>Proactive engagement and united voice and messaging on priority freshwater-related Crown laws, policies and processes.</td>
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<td>Identify specific priority opportunities for Roundtable to engage.</td>
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<td>Identify key provincial and federal government contacts and accountabilities for freshwater management processes in BC.</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
<td>Explore establishing a Tier 2 structure for the Roundtable.</td>
<td>Decision on Tier 2 for 2018/2019 Roundtable activities</td>
<td>Opportunities of a Tier 2 structure to coordinate and advise provincial (and federal, where necessary) governments on appropriate structures and resourcing for engagement with First Nations on legislation, regulatory and policy development and reform are explored.</td>
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<td>3.3</td>
<td>Improve Crown government and stakeholder awareness and understanding of Indigenous water rights, jurisdiction, UNDRIP, etc., by developing and distributing communications materials.</td>
<td>See Output 1.1</td>
<td>Crown and local governments are aware of First Nations priorities for a freshwater governance and management regime according to reconciliation commitments.</td>
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<td>4.1</td>
<td>Use existing FNFC communications platforms and capacity to distribute information and outcomes generated by this Roundtable, including briefing notes, letters, updates, recommendations, best practices, trends and new developments, and new tools/resources/strategies.</td>
<td>Meeting summary reports developed and distributed to BC First Nations, including through First Nations Water Network Roundtable outputs shared with BC First Nations</td>
<td>Capacity of First Nations to engage in freshwater management and governance across BC is strengthened. A stronger collective voice is supported.</td>
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<td>4.2</td>
<td>Provide regular briefings and presentations to First Nations Provincial-Treaty Organizations (UBCIC, FNS, BCAFN) on strategic recommendations and opportunities to advance freshwater governance and recommendations on freshwater-related Crown policies, laws, regulations and processes, as well as on short, mid and long-term objectives (up to 2 times/year).</td>
<td>Briefing notes on key Roundtable strategies and outputs developed and shared with PTO staff and leadership.</td>
<td>BC First Nations Leadership are aware of Roundtable priorities and able to advance issues related to First Nations freshwater management and governance where appropriate.</td>
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<td>4.3</td>
<td>Provide regular updates and written briefings to FNFC Council re: Roundtable priorities and recommendations.</td>
<td>Staff updates and memos on key Roundtable strategies and outputs developed and shared</td>
<td>FNFC staff, Council and Board are aware of and provided opportunities to guide Roundtable priorities, and are able to advance issues related to First Nations freshwater management and governance where appropriate.</td>
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5. **ROUNDTABLE STRUCTURE AND PROCESS**

The Roundtable is not a decision-making body for any First Nation or group of First Nations. Rather, participants share information and provide subject matter expertise, analyses and strategy that may be used by the Roundtable and/or individual Nations and Tribal Councils to advance shared priorities and inform decision-making of the First Nations (and potentially in the future, of the BC provincial and federal governments). FNFC provides both an enhanced secretariat support role for the Roundtable, as well as a role in advancing priorities beyond the Roundtable, including a link to PTOs when broader feedback and support from these political organizations is required.

At the November 20th & 21st, 2018 meeting in Vancouver, participants confirmed that the Roundtable structure should continue to support a First Nations water champion think-tank rather than moving toward a regional delegate structure as with other FNFC initiatives such as the Salmon Coordinating Committee, Aquaculture Coordinating Committee, and Economic Coordinating Committee. In the future, regional or other sub-committees may be formed as needed to enhance regional discussions and engagement or to further strategic issues as identified by the Roundtable. In-person meetings will occur at minimum twice per year (in the spring and fall), with potential for teleconference meetings and work in between.

A Terms of Reference will be finalized at the May 2019 Roundtable, and will detail additional terms including:

- Composition; process for selecting participants; rotating Chair; working sub-committees
- Decision making (process for establishing priorities and recommendations that can be supported by Roundtable participants)
- Strategic focus areas and activities (How will these be determined? How frequently?)
- Annual review/impact assessment (How will the impact of the Roundtable be reviewed? By who? According to what criteria?)
- Roles and Responsibilities (of Participants; of FNFC)
- Meetings (frequency)
- Time commitment (how many days/year are Roundtable participants expected to be available for RT activities?)
- Information sharing protocol
- Meeting costs and compensation
ANNEX 1: 2018-2019 MEETING SCHEDULE

November 2018 (Vancouver)

- Provide input into and finalize draft 2018/19 Roundtable Strategy
- Distill and translate UNDRIP and TRC Calls to Action articles, Tsilhqot'in decision and BC’s Draft Principles and create a Roundtable statement of expectations on freshwater governance and management in BC
- Provide input into Water Sustainability Act First Nations engagement framework

May 2019 (Nadleh Whut’en territories, TBC)

- Finalize Roundtable Terms of Reference
- Leveraging indigenous water laws and declarations
- Review First Nations Water Sustainability Act engagement framework implementation (ongoing FNFC work); potential WSA regulation area
- Sustainable funding and potential funder meet n’ greet (TBC)

November 2019 (Vancouver)

- WSA regulation and policy engagement
- Water monitoring
- 2020 Roundtable Strategy development
- Critical topics as they emerge

ANNEX 2: ROUNDTABLE CAPACITY BUILDING PRIORITIES

Based on discussions at the first set of Roundtable meetings, Participants identified the following priority areas for capacity support. Note these sessions may be offered to a broader group of First Nations as a lead-in to Roundtable meetings:

- Facilitation training to engage communities and stakeholders in water planning
- Articulating indigenous water laws
- Developing a water plan
- Working with local government and how to establish a local water board
- Identify and advance funding opportunities and relationships to support First Nations to engage in these freshwater activities, including “Opportunities for Philanthropic Sector” briefing note, meet and greet with BCWFC, and recommendations for leadership to pursue sustainable funding opportunities
- Water referral reform to align with UNDRIP and TRC Calls to Action articles, Tsilhqot’in decision and BC’s Draft Principles