

Thames River Clear Water Revival – Thames River Water Management Plan  
**First Nations Engagement Committee Meeting #6 - Minutes**

Tuesday, December 16, 2014, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Caldwell First Nation  
14 Orange Street, Leamington

**Attendance:**

Larry French, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation  
Chief Louise Hillier, Caldwell First Nation  
Isabel Lewis, Caldwell First Nation  
Aimee Johnson, Walpole Island First Nation  
Eleanor Heagy, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority  
Tara Tchir, Project Manager, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority  
Rob Wallis, Ministry of Natural Resources

**Regrets:**

Murray Blackie, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority  
Pat Donnelly, City of London  
George Henry, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation  
Sharilyn Johnston, Aamjiwnaang First Nation  
Darryl van Oirschot, Caldwell First Nation

**Unconfirmed:**

Levi Antone, Oneida Nation of the Thames  
Dean Jacobs, Walpole Island First Nation  
James Jenkins, Walpole Island First Nation  
Justin Logan, Delaware Nation - Moravian of the Thames  
Lareina Rising, Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change First Nation Liaison

**1. Welcome**

Tara welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Chief Hillier and Isabel for hosting it.

**2. First Nation Community Monitoring Program**

Tara outlined a funding opportunity through the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. The first step, to be completed by March 31, 2015, is to develop a proposal for an individual(s) to conduct an inventory and feasibility study of First Nation educational or community programs (current and potential) that could incorporate mobile water quality and quantity measurements. An assessment of which data collection methods could benefit from the use of mobile water measurements and paperless field notes will need to be included. Where educational or community programs can or do exist, the proposal must also include the development of a budget for implementing the monitoring program, including the initial set-up and equipment costs, as well as yearly costs for maintaining the program(s).

The funding opportunity is very open ended; it is up to the communities to decide.

Larry – COTTFN would be interested in participating if the funding can be used to organize river bank clean ups, monitor water quality, and for awareness. Many people depend on the river for food, plants, etc. Also interested in floodplain mapping of drains, to show backflow up the drains and the areas with remaining water after flooding.

Aimee – Possible programs include water quality programs involving anglers, mentoring youth, environmental assessment training, wetland monitoring training, outreach and communications, mapping. Important to design something sustainable over the long term. Challenge is always capacity.

Rob – Jared McBeth is working with University of Toronto and MNR to develop a pre-settlement and vegetation mapping layer. Mapping can then tie into traditional knowledge and future planning. Can work with Western University and University of Toronto.

Louise – Water quality is very important. Siltation is more evident now than years ago and this must be having an impact on aquatic life. Outreach is needed everywhere for all ages. Bank erosion is an issue. Can we target areas to protect against erosion?

Aimee – Maybe a collaborative project to map erosion along the river.

Tara – May be an opportunity for COTTFN to get monitoring program in place to track impact of combined sewer overflows.

Aimee – Need to see what monitoring is already underway and where.

Tara – LTVCA is submitting a proposal to establish more monitoring stations. Dr. Gertrud Nurnberg will be helping to identify the best locations.

Aimee – One goal is to combine technical information and local traditional knowledge.

Louise – CFN could monitor marshes they own along Sturgeon Creek and along Hillman Creek.

Tara – These wetlands would be good locations; even if a site doesn't drain to the Thames watershed, it drains to Lake Erie and it is a priority area.

Aimee – WIFN has worked with DFO on a marsh restoration project. DFO had equipment that enabled them to map the bottom of the marshes, and identify the substrate material.

Louise – Monitoring invasive aquatic species would be worthwhile (non-native vegetation, zebra mussels, Asian carp, others). OMAF may have crews of students that remove these species.

Thirty years ago, people used to spear fish in the streams and ditches for pike, trout, etc. Why are these species disappearing?

Rob – The project could include GIS mapping of streams and drains where fish used to spawn, and look at what's changed to stop fish from using them.

Larry – COTTFN noticed a drop in the walleye population a couple decades ago when the OMNR transferred spawning females elsewhere.

Tara – We need to consider where the funds would be administered from.

Aimee - Each FN is different as far as having people who could manage the project and a facility. It would be good to have a project that all the First Nations can participate in, to tie the FN together as a whole group.

Larry – COTTFN have an active environmental group but they are busy with larger issues.

Rob – There have been programs in the past to get youth involved.

Louise – Programs need to be expanded to include people in their 20s and 30s, even in their 40s, as there is a chronic unemployment problem.

Aimee – FN don't have core funding for environmental programs. Any programs are proposal-based. Most are driven by specific projects such as pipelines or wind farms.

**ACTION:** Tara to ask Pat Donnelly and/or Tom Copeland to address committee regarding City of London's schedule to upgrade storm sewer system.

**ACTION:** Tara will compile the brainstorming notes and share them with everyone. She will investigate answers to some of the questions raised (e.g., availability of floodplain mapping, water quality monitoring programs and locations).

**ACTION:** Once committee members have had time to consider what projects should be pursued, Tara will arrange for appropriate technical staff to address the committee.

**ACTION:** Tara to bring copies of Thames River heritage guide and TRCWR jump drives to the next meeting.

### **3. First Nation Engagement**

There was a brief discussion on engaging additional FN communities. Suggestions included:

- Rob and Tara going out to communities
- Rotate meeting locations
- Louise will talk with the new chiefs about the committee
- Tara and Pat could talk with the LDCC
- Attend information centres

### **4. First Nation Engagement Strategy**

Tara referred to the draft Engagement Strategy that was last looked at in 2012. It needs to be refined and pared down.

**ACTION:** Rob will develop a shorter, more concise version and circulate it.

**NEXT MEETING:** late January 2015, location TBD