

Thames River Clear Water Revival – Thames River Water Management Plan
First Nations Engagement Committee Meeting Minutes
Friday, January 24, 2014, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
Chippewas of the Thames First Nation
Enji Maajtaawaad Early Years Program Centre, 330 Chippewa Road, Muncey

Attendance:

Mary Alikakos, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation
Murray Blackie, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority
Pat Donnelly, City of London
Eleanor Heagy, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority
Dean Jacobs, Walpole Island First Nation
James Jenkins, Walpole Island First Nation
Lareina Rising, Ministry of the Environment
Tara Tchir, Project Manager, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority
April Varewyck, Oneida Nation of the Thames
Rob Wallis, Ministry of Natural Resources

Regrets:

Levi Antone, Oneida Nation of the Thames
Chief Louise Hillier, Caldwell First Nation
Tina Jacobs, Delaware Nation - Moravian of the Thames
Justin Logan, Delaware Nation - Moravian of the Thames

1. Welcome

Tara welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Mary for hosting it. Tara and Pat gave a brief overview of the Thames River Clearwater Revival and the Thames River Water Management Plan, and the draft First Nation Engagement Strategy.

2. Canadian Water Network Funding Opportunity

Tara reviewed the funding opportunity through the Canadian Water Network (CWN) - Knowledge Integration Project (“integrating traditional and western knowledge for First Nation, Inuit and Metis water management”). She noted that only university or college faculty can receive research funds from CWN, and lead the research, as part of this proposal. The proposal deadline is February 10th.

The following comments were made.

- Dean has been invited to be part of the Trent River watershed application for this grant. If our group submits a successful application he will participate on our project instead. Trent University and Western University are involved in the Trent project. Dean met last Friday with the Trent group. Should our group be reaching out to universities?
- James looked at the application and it is tailored to paying the cost of university students. It’s hard to use the funding for anything other than student costs, although meeting costs would be eligible. Maybe look into what applicants there are, but he hasn’t been able to find anyone yet who is applying. We could offer to share our resources. This could be a

- significant project for a lead researcher or grad students. We could be a case study, for a team that is looking at different methods of ecological knowledge.
- Dean is interested in tracking the success of applicants.

3. Updates & Sharing

- Dean is interested in how First Nations engage with Conservation Authorities. The **WIFN? London District Chiefs Council?** has a good relationship with the MOE Lands and Water Policy Branch, with monthly calls. It's mostly geared to the chiefs but also to technical units (First Nation water protection and consultation). Moving TEK from policy to seeing application and successes – and it “shall be considered” rather than “should be considered.” Want it to be recognized as important. MOE is funding a TEK workshop on February 19/20 by invitation only.
- Rob said the challenge is collecting and managing TEK; if it “must be considered” there needs to be a mechanism to make TEK available.
- Rob is meeting with University of Toronto researchers, to look at forestry historically through mapping. If you want to restore the landscape, what and when do you want to restore it to?
- Dean mentioned that Jared MacBeth from WIFN participated in a joint project with the Mississaugas of New Credit, Queens University and the University of Waterloo. The project investigated how First Nations are involved in informing, managing and mitigating development processes on First Nations' traditional territories. An article was published in the Fall 2013 issue of *Plan Canada* magazine. Pat had a copy with him so copies were provided to everyone.
- Dean outlined three TEK studies. One is being undertaken as part of a National Energy Board pipeline project review, to look at the impact of the proposed pipeline on traditional land use as well as current land use. Union Gas and Shell are funding two other TEK studies. We have the knowledge but need it used in practical decision making.
- Historical ecology studies are also being used to inform traditional knowledge holders. There is a historical ecology study for the Treaty 2 area, which stretches from Windsor to London to Lake Erie. A bit of that study will look at the Thames River.
- Most of these studies are a result of the duty to consult and accommodate. WIFN is working with other First Nations on some projects.
- Lareina pointed out how useful today's meeting is to help bring information together to share, as other First Nations don't know what studies are ongoing.
- Dean stressed that we need to know what was here before, before we undertake restoration.
- Tara asked what we would want to do if money came available, are we ready to turn around an application quickly?
- James said the proposal that was developed for the Ministry of Culture grant is a good template for future applications. It would divide the responsibility between the Oneida, Delaware and Chippewas groups, and empower staff to take on work as far as developing initiatives and creating networks.
- Mary said the COTTFN are also involved in the Line 9 pipeline proposal.
- Lareina said **her FN** is also.
- Tara and Pat wondered if some of this study information could be brought together for the Clearwater Revival.

- Dean said the Chiefs of Ontario need to consider how to work together to bring studies forward and share information. They need to reach out to CAs for GIS capacity.
- The Great Lakes Protection Act has language regarding TEK. There was discussion regarding TEK at the development stage of that legislation.

4. Round Table – Where are we going?

Tara asked everyone to comment on where we see ourselves going over the next year.

- Tara's goal for the year is to communicate results to groups, particularly First Nations, agricultural community and municipalities. We need a strategy for how to disseminate the information.
- Pat said the City of London is interested in keeping and fostering the relationship with First Nations, as the City has always struggled with how to engage.
- James would like to ramp up the engagement and collaboration between First Nation representatives and everyone else at the table, to help coordinate studies. There will soon be small success stories that we can communicate. He is working with the SCRCA and UTRCA to take advantage of their GIS capabilities. These meetings are a good way to keep the process going and report back, and to make sure all the First Nations are taking advantages of linkages. Three to four meetings per year is a reasonable number; more frequently if needed for a large project.
- Dean said it's good to have the proposal template. Being able to share and communicate opportunities is important. We should encourage CAs and municipalities to have archaeological master plans. The Chatham-Kent Official Plan has signage language and incorporates an archaeological master plan and historic ecology wording.
- Murray said what he's hearing is very reinforcing to the importance of bringing information together. The broader base is very beneficial, it makes the plan much stronger. Discussing these initiatives is a good use of this committee.
- Rob said we need to consider the scope of TEK or traditional ecology studies – is taking on a study on the relatively narrow Thames River watershed too limiting? Should it tap into other traditional territories outside of the watershed? How do we go out to communities? Should we have a First Nation charette (or a few smaller gatherings), and ask participants what this landscape means to them? We could have smaller events with different focuses or larger events. It needs to be First Nations people to First Nations people; non-First Nations committee members could be available as resource people. Refine the draft strategy and define actions.
- James agreed it is important to link the watershed to the Great Lakes system, that fishing, hunting and trade connects to a much larger area than the watershed.
- Lareina agreed that we need to engage and reach out to the communities however we can. Piggyback onto established events, reach out to a wider audience. Outreach to youth and adults, can the CAs involve them in our work and the environmental sciences? We can plan another cultural awareness day/event.
- April agreed with need to get into community, let people know about the project and build relationships. Her community has spring events and a fall fair. There is an environment committee now that Tara could address. Targeting councils and environment committee is very useful. We need to be visible, so regular contact with council is important.
- Mary said her community has had information overload lately. Tara could perhaps address their environment committee in the summer or fall. There is an intense need from the community to develop and build relationships.

- Dean commented regarding the scope of the Thames watershed, that WIFN has been working with another First Nation in Goderich. The port expansion there is going to damage the fisheries. Compensation for this damage is required, and the First Nations proposed implementing compensation in WIFN because it is part of the same large corridor from Erie to Huron and north. This is an example of how to look past artificial boundaries.
- James said the WIFN have been very successful in moving Species at Risk plants in Windsor (because of the new bridge to the US). They also have a lot of experience in marsh restoration and are helping in Sault Ste. Marie. This kind of knowledge is invaluable.
- Tara will summarize the notes and come up with some key actions to move forward on. She is especially interested in the TEK studies. Dean said he can share with us a presentation he gave to the government review team on TEK from the Shell project.
- Meeting with communities and building relationships is key.

5. Draft Engagement Strategy

Tara will ask for comments on the draft Engagement Strategy before the next meeting and we can discuss it then. She will add the London District Chiefs Council profiles of the various First Nations for now. Pat asked whether the strategy should mention the LDCC and/or the Secretariat. The consensus was that this is not necessary; the focus is the communities and the First Nations are the rights holders and the knowledge holders.

6. Other Business

- Please give any travel expenses to Tara for reimbursement.
- Rob will have a 14 week position for a university aged summer student, to work with First Nations out of the Aylmer MNR office. He asked for help in finding the right person and activities. The core of the position is aboriginal liaison work. The applicant needs to be currently in post secondary studies or a maximum of two years out of post secondary.
- Tara referred to an email she sent to everyone from UTRCA water quality staff asking for water quality data from the First Nations on the Thames regarding wastewater treatment systems - type of system and locations, and any discharge monitoring data such as:
 - o data from 2000 to 2012 (or as much of that time period as available)
 - o Total Phosphorus
 - o DRP (soluble form of Phosphorus)
 - o Total Nitrogen, Nitrates, Ammonia, Total Kjeldahl
 - o Total Suspended Solids
 - o Flow data (m³ discharge data from the WWTP)

They are also interested in any river or creek data for any of the above parameters. The information request is for the Water Quality Assessment Project for the Thames River. The project is assessing nutrient sources and transport throughout the watershed to better understand the problem of excess river nutrients and target future work. The goal is to get a better understanding of the impacts of seasonal issues, extreme rain events, and impoundments/reservoirs on nutrients in the river and impacting Lakes St. Clair and Erie. They want to include nutrient data from across the Thames watershed from as many sources as possible.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, April 8, 2014 (location TBD)