

## Thames River Clear Water Revival – First Nations Engagement Committee

### Meeting # 13 - Minutes

Tuesday September 22, 2015, 10 am - 1:30 pm

Aamjiwnaang First Nation, Maawn Doosh Gumig Community and Youth Centre, 1972 Virgil Ave., Sarnia

#### In Attendance:

Aimee Johnson (Walpole Island First Nation)  
Christine Rogers (Aamjiwnaang First Nation)  
Courtney Jackson (Aamjiwnaang First Nation)  
Dave Depuydt (Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry)  
Eleanor Heagy (Upper Thames River Conservation Authority)  
George Henry (Councilor - Chippewa of the Thames First Nation)  
Larry French (Councilor - Chippewa of the Thames First Nation)  
Maryjo Tait (Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry First Nation Acting Liaison)  
Murray Blackie (Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Director)  
Sharilyn Johnston (Aamjiwnaang First Nation)  
Tara Tchir (Upper Thames River Conservation Authority) – Project Manager  
Danalynne Williams (Aamjiwnaang First Nation, co-op student in Environmental Technology program, Fanshawe College)

#### Regrets:

Chief Louise Hillier (Caldwell First Nation)  
Pat Donnelly (City of London)

#### Unconfirmed:

Bonnie Plain (Aamjiwnaang First Nation)  
Dean Jacobs (Walpole Island First Nation)

#### Purpose of Meeting

- Wrap-up of 2015 First Nation Youth Stewardship Program
- Discuss First Nation Water Declaration for the Thames River Water Management Plan

#### 1. Welcome

MaryJo Tait is the interim First Nation Liaison for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry – replacing Rob Wallis who is now employed with MTO as a First Nation Liaison

#### 2. Review of June 3 and August 24, 2015 Minutes

**ACTION:** Tara will send out an email asking for any comments on the minutes of the previous two meetings.

#### 3. Discussion of 2015 First Nation Youth Stewardship Program (final products and lessons learned)

##### Review of 2015 project:

Sharilyn showed the presentation that the youth team presented to the Aamjiwnaang Chief and council. When the team began, they developed goals and a mission for their project. They called their group Antler River Guardians from the 4 Directions (#ARGFT4D). We discussed whether this would be the name for the group in the future, and the consensus is this name should be used going forward. The team did social media and communications training and set up Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. Media

interest came from a radio station in Wallacenburg (live interview) and a cover story in the London Free Press.

The team was very busy! They underwent extensive training, both formal and informal. Their activities included:

- Training in Wilderness First Aid, ORCA, GPS, water quality monitoring, and more
- Species at Risk camp at Point Pelee
- Three wetlands projects funded by a Tides grant– They worked with LTVCA in a project to increase biodiversity in a wetland, using some purchased plants and some rescued plants from Aamjiwnaang. They worked with Return the Landscape in Sarnia at the Enbridge solar project. They created a wetland and did design work with Return the Landscape staff, so they learned about importance of wetlands, how to design a wetland, and the role of wetlands in nutrient management. The third wetland was in East Williams on the Ausable River where they helped design and install a wetland for a landowner.
- Ska-Nah-Doht (Longwoods Road CA) – did some training, helped with work, and slept in the new longhouse, which was very meaningful as they were the first people to sleep there
- Traditional medicinal plants – training with Ron Sands from Bkejwanong Territory
- Canoe trip down the Thames from Delaware to Chatham - they found a SAR mussel, recorded areas with different habitat, species found, points of soil erosion, and water quality. They used GPS to record locations. They participated in drumming at Chippewa of the Thames during the canoe trip.  
**ACTION:** GPS coordinate to be forwarded to OMNR or UTRCA if possible
- Cultural workshop hasn't been completed yet, may be able to have a reunion later in the year which could meet this commitment. Can also gather quotes from the youth about the program

#### Final report:

- The files and communications are stored in BaseCamp (Cloud based file sharing). Have evaluations of what they experienced.  
**ACTION:** Aimee will share the link.
- The final report is still outstanding, but hopefully will be completed by Thanksgiving weekend. The presentation will be part of it.
- Sharilyn – funding tasks and deliverables – we need to produce a program model, stewardship document, and plan on how to implement next year. Do we need someone funded to complete these deliverables?
- Aimee – we need to know what's in the budget and make sure administration costs have been covered before paying for someone to complete the deliverables
- Aimee - what products and information does Carlyn have for the stewardship document? They have completed a mapping product and communication. All that is needed is the final report. We can modify the MNRF final report template.
- Tara – asked that they ensure they have met the MOECC contract obligations  
**ACTION:** Sharilyn will get the files from Carlyn, and arrange a time with Aimee to meet and compile the report. Will build on the presentation and also include map of waypoints, significant features, budget, and student numbers. Theo will review final report and add his comments.

#### Equipment:

- Camping gear was mostly borrowed. There are laptops, cell phone, GPS units – question about where to store equipment for next year.  
**ACTION:** Consensus was that equipment will be stored at UTRCA.

#### Recommendations for the future:

- Logistics of transportation are very challenging, there was a lot of driving and it was expensive. Maybe one person organizes food and equipment for them; doing this work themselves made it a very long day.

- Original plan was they would camp at one location each week and do projects from there, but due to the short time frame it didn't work out that way.
- Youth leaders – should each have designated tasks and responsibilities outlined in a job description
- All of the youth really enjoyed it and were very thankful that they had such a great learning experience, in the certifications and also in the traditional teachings.

**Discussion:**

- George – This is an opportunity to educate not just First Nation youth but other communities along the Thames. Especially primary aged students. Maybe expanding the program into other watersheds such as the Grand, with the secondary goal of getting it into the curriculum. It provided a connection to communities and to water, as well as providing youth with skills in the future.
- Aimee – add the program into a youth workshop and ceremony at the launch. May tie into “right to play” programs and YMCA
- Aimee – can this be counted towards high school credits? Dave – the MNR Ranger program has a voluntary option, in which the participant can choose to do a more structured program and get accreditation.  
**ACTION:** Dave will bring information about credits given to college / university for participation in the MNR rangers.
- Eleanor – UTRCA organized a high school student conference in Dunnville, focusing on Lake Erie. Work is just beginning on two more conferences, one in the Kettle watershed (Port Stanley likely) and one in Leamington. Maybe there is an opportunity to present this project at the conference.
- George – going into high schools would be excellent, hearing from their peers. There is a high school student summit that gets funding. Perhaps the students can go to this to talk about the program.
- George – focus on wetlands, they are key to phosphorus management
- Aimee – September 24/25 is a career fair at WIFN for all the eight First Nations. Is anyone available to be there with a display? George - will see if anyone from the environment department can be there. Dave – their ranger leader may be available on Thursday. Brent may be available for part of the day (from the youth team).
- George – need to look upstream of London too.
- Dave – marketing perspective – once report is done then we can take presentation to potential funders. For example, target someone to fund transportation costs. Figure out what needs are.
- Aimee – there are different options for structuring the program next year. WIFN is willing to fund one or two leaders and four students (i.e., an entire crew). Wages would be covered by existing training programs. If we approach the other First Nations early enough, maybe we can get some of the training programs covered.
- George - COTTFN support the program. If each First Nation could have four or five students that would be an excellent program. Oneida FN would probably come on board with that.
- Courtney - Aamjiwnaang can typically get two students but funding is tight.
- Aimee – Aamjiwnaang and WIFN could work together; Oneida, Munsee and Chippewa could work together. Caldwell doesn't have a lot of youth in that age range, maybe focus on working with Point Pelee.
- Sharilyn – There was a lot of concern with overnight stays because students have sports commitments and second jobs, etc. Make it more flexible if possible.
- Dave – could have a couple crews that focus on water quality and habitat restoration, and do specific projects throughout the landscape, such as wetland restoration. The biodiversity piece is important and easy to sell.
- Tara - Cheriene Vieira (MOECC) is on the approval committee for the Great Lakes Guardian Fund (GLGF), and is interested in funding proposals from this group.
- Sharilyn – how to administer and fund in the future? Should it go to the Southern First Nations Secretariat? The secretariat is an administrative body that works with five of the First Nations as a flow through for funds from Indian and Northern Affairs. This arrangement works for smaller FN that may not have capacity or population to offer social programs, education, etc.

- Aimee – how accessible are the Secretariat staff for day to day support of the crews? Dealing with HR issues was challenging because of staff availability. Recommends any HR issues come to this committee, then committee looks at liabilities, etc. and determines how to handle it, whether to handle as a committee or through the policies in place for the FN that is administering the program.
- Dave – we should look at the NEST program in Norfolk County, it is basically a crew for hire. You donate some money and the crew will spend time helping with your project.

**ACTION:** Tara will keep the issue of the youth program and administration on the agenda, as well as how to reach out to other First Nations that we want to be involved.

**ACTION:** The committee will write a letter of recommendation for Carlyn.

#### 4. First Nation Water Declaration for the Water Management Plan

- Aimee – WIFN is undertaking a traditional knowledge study. Does anyone else have any studies or activities in the communities?
- George –COTTFN wants to localize traditional knowledge, bringing elders together to gather information. Would be good to have a conference to bring people together to gather oral traditional knowledge. They’re discussing it now and moving ahead quickly. Time frame may not be there for the WMP, it would be an amendment to add later.
- Water Declaration can be included “as is” in the WMP.
- Sharilyn - Aamjiwnaang is developing a Spirit of the Water Treaty – may be ready for the WMP or may be added afterwards. WMP can refer to it as a document that we need to consider. The Spirit of the Water Treaty is similar to the Buffalo Treaty, but in this case everything relates back to the spirit of the water.
- Aimee – individually the communities are contributing something to the Plan. Can we contribute something as a collective statement?
- George – yes, we need to have a philosophical, spiritual statement.
- Aimee - yes, it should be first and foremost in the WMP.
- George – need to get natural law into the constitution.
- Aimee – some countries, such as New Zealand, have given personhood rights to the river.
- George – water testing and the human body – need to do this to track the impact of substances in water. Look at the role of toluene in the Walkerton water contamination. Perhaps a map of natural sources of heavy metals and minerals would be an item for the water management plan
- George – need water and environment restoration studies and then figure out how to implement them.
- Sharilyn – University of Michigan Water Center offers grants through the Erb Family Foundation. When considering proposals they look at how the end users are going to benefit, what they’ll get out of this. How are we engaging the end users of this water management plan? We need to look more at community involvement and figure out how to improve this aspect. If there’s any money left in budget then bring students back to do presentations to councils. Once we inform the councils we can go into the communities.

**ACTION:** determine council schedules and update them on the youth project, as well as the TRCWR.

We can target the messages around youth, restoration and Thames Water Management Plan

#### 5. Updates and Sharing

- Great Lakes Guardian Fund - WIFN is putting in a proposal for shoreline work. If each FN is submitting proposals, would this affect whether a collaborative proposal from the committee will be accepted? The Secretariat could submit the application.  
**ACTION** – Tara will email Cheriene regarding impact of an application by a single First Nation vs. a collective application. Is it only evaluated based on project – or are collaborations favored?
- Aimee – Everyone is welcome to come to the Walpole Island fall fair this weekend. There will be lots of food, prizes, parade on Sunday, music, displays.

- Aimee – Kennon Johnson from WIFN will be joining this committee as Aimee’s obligations are expanding and she may not be able to attend all future meetings.
- Larry – Mary Alikakos has been hired back on the COTTFN environment department.

**6. Next Meeting – youth program, community outreach, WMP contribution**

November 10<sup>th</sup> (morning preferable): Three objectives for the meeting i) to plan youth program for next year, ii) discuss community involvement in the initiative and iii) work on a collective statement for the Water Management Plan.