

Thames River Clear Water Revival –  
**First Nations Engagement Committee Meeting # 15**  
**Thursday, March 31, 10 am - 3 pm**  
**MINUTES**

**HOST:** Aamjiwnaang First Nation  
**LOCATION:** Maawn Doosh Gumig Community and Youth Centre, 1972 Virgil Avenue, Sarnia

**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)  
Dennis Plain (Aamjiwnaang First Nations)  
Eleanor Heagy (Upper Thames River Conservation Authority)  
Larry French (Councillor - Chippewas of the Thames First Nation)  
Mary Alikakos (Chippewas of the Thames First Nation)  
Lorraine Moir (Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry First Nation Liaison)  
Murray Blackie (Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Chair)  
Sharilyn Johnston (Aamjiwnaang First Nation)  
Tara Tchir (Upper Thames River Conservation Authority) – Project Manager

**Regrets:**

Chief Louise Hillier (Caldwell First Nation)  
Pat Donnelly (City of London)  
Bonnie Plain (Aamjiwnaang First Nation)  
Dean Jacobs (Walpole Island First Nation)  
George Henry (Chippewas of the Thames First Nation)

**Purpose of Meeting**

- Discuss Work plan for 2016 First Nation Youth Stewardship Program
- Discuss First Nation Water Declaration for the Thames River Water Management Plan

**MINUTES**

**1. Welcome**

**2. Minutes of November 10, 2015 Minutes**

Tara explained that the November 2015 minutes have not been circulated yet.

**3. Discussion of 2016 First Nation Youth Stewardship Program/Antler River Guardians for the 4 Directions**

**a) Funding Proposal (for program and administration of the program)**

- Tara submitted a funding proposal to Cheriene (MOECC). Cheriene is comfortable with funding \$110,000 towards program, but ideally would like one of the partners to cover \$12000-\$15000 of the budget.
- Chippewas of the Thames has funding for an Activator position to work on drinking water source protection. Funding is provided by the Canadian Environmental Law Association

(CELA). There is a potential to merge the responsibilities of this position with the Guardians program to help cover some of the costs of the youth program. To do this, we may need to add a component to the Guardians program to educate the participants about drinking water source protection.

***ACTION: Mary will contact CELA. Tara will inform Cheriene that this opportunity is being investigated.***

***b) Guardians Program - Scope***

- There was a discussion about the scope of the Guardians project this year, and the consensus is that we do not have the capacity yet to expand the project and add more teams.
- Instead, there will be the additional hiring of a liaison person to support the program year round.
- There may be opportunities for the Guardians to get involved in more rehabilitation project, such as manage a plantation, restore a wetland, creating a grassland prairie, etc., and get paid for it. These opportunities may also help with the program's long term sustainability.
- Promote the success stories: here are the activities that the Guardians have done; maybe they can do this for your project, too. Rather than buying an external professional service (e.g., managing woodlot), look at the Guardians as a work force.
- We need to remember the program's key goals: make connections with the river and with other cultures, and gather data for the Water Management Plan.
- We need to build in enough time for report writing, GPS data input, etc. There is a new program on Google that can help with reporting and mapping.

***c) Guardians Program - Tasks and Milestones***

- Sharilyn provided a briefing note about the program to her Council, and will share that with the committee.

***ACTION: The committee will send information to all the FN Councils by April regarding the Guardians program, including position descriptions, names of last year's students (if they agree), link to you tube video, and information (narrative) from Carlyn. Tara will help to compile the information as an FYI.***

***ACTION: Mary will ask COTTFN if they are willing to administer the program again.***

- There needs to be a commitment from someone in the community to take responsibility for the students in case there are any issues that need to be resolved.
- There needs to be an agreement as far which policies apply, for example which First Nation's personnel policies. It was decided that this could be the first task for the liaison position. Possible solutions are:
  - o Students are hired through a specific FN so would be governed by that community's personnel policy or
  - o Use one policy for all the participants. If COTTFN is administering, the COTTFN policies would apply.
- Leaders - need to be hired by May. Hiring leaders from two different FN may help with logistics of travelling.
- Coordinator – needs to be hired as soon as possible.

- Youth – hired in late June, for July and August.
- Tara can be a contact for the job postings. Hiring will be by Tara, Mary, and Larry.
- Job descriptions for youth leaders need to be reviewed, with designated tasks and responsibilities (e.g., organizing food and equipment, transportation logistics, setting up training).

***ACTION: Aimee will update job descriptions for youth and leaders, and will develop job description for coordinator.***

- Ideally inform students when they start of the dates when they will be camping out and that they may not be able to do other activities during that time.

***ACTION: Dave will get dates for leader training.***

***ACTION: Tara will resend the link to BaseCamp. Aimee will add new people to BaseCamp.***

***ACTION: Sharilyn will share the 2015 program report with the group.***

- It was suggested that we limit this year’s program to the four FN that are involved in this committee (Caldwell, Aamjiwnaang, Chippewas of the Thames and Walpole Island).
- Video of 2015 Guardians, including part of their presentation to UTRCA staff meeting, is on the UTRCA YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/UTRCA?feature=mhee#p/u>).
- Would like this committee to organize camping trip or day trip for Councils and also municipalities. Great Lakes Guardians Council is planning something like this. Have the students show people their river.

#### **4. Draft Water Management Plan**

- Tara would like a collective statement about the importance of the Thames River to the First Nations.
- There have been meetings of the subcommittees: Water Quantity (March 17) and Water Quality Meetings (January 19, April 21).
- How do we get at what the FN would like to see in the water quality part of the WMP?
- Identify concerns through the engagement strategy, how they tie into the identified goals from the water quality group.
- Community-based monitoring programs are important to implement.
- First Nations feel a loss of control of protection of the spiritual value of the water. Need to address how to regain control and influence. The community is dismissive of information, doesn’t believe that their opinions will be heard.
- A spiritual value assessment needs to be included in the WMP. Spiritual values can be acknowledged with seasonal ceremonies. We may be able to add something at children’s water festival and at launch of Guardians program
- The WMP needs to indicate that buffers are important for FN for water quality as well as for habitat, which will help fisheries. Habitat pods are ideal.
- One of the WMP goals should be no habitat loss within FN territories.
- Source out information from other jurisdictions (especially universities, academics, University of Michigan Water Center) – what are they doing to hit their targets for the Maumee River, is there anything we can implement here.

**ACTION: Tara to provide Sharilyn an outline of the structure of the TRCWR and the working groups, so she can keep Chief and Council informed.**

## 5. First Nations Community Involvement

### a) Revisit the Draft First Nations Engagement Strategy

- The draft strategy was written several years ago when this committee first began to meet. There has been discussion about rewriting it but that hasn't happened yet.
- We discussed the purpose and goals:

*The purpose of the engagement strategy is to:*

*Identify and implement efforts that engage First Nations throughout the development and implementation of the Thames River Clearwater Revival.*

*Five goals have been developed that consider the purpose of the engagement strategy:*

- o *Ensure that First Nations have the resources to engage members, sustain involvement and build capacity.*
- o *Develop an engagement process that shares knowledge and incorporates First Nation interests with respect to the Thames River and its watershed.*
- o *Determine when rights based consultation and accommodation are needed.*
- o *Develop long-term cooperative and collaborative relationships and processes where First Nations become active participants in planning and implementing watershed management initiatives and future resource activities.*
- o *Raise awareness and support for the strategy by encouraging representation on various committees, identifying additional First Nation members with an interest in the TRCWR, seeking opportunities for dialogue, and involving First Nations in project delivery wherever and whenever possible.*

### b) Comments on the Strategy

- Aimee - Need something shorter – summarizes what we're doing, goals, how to get involved – to pitch to communities
- Mary - Terms of reference useful and this is what it could be
- Lorraine - Update to incorporate what the committee has been doing
- Aimee – for tasks under CWR, especially the WMP – need to actively engage the community, provide the opportunity for people to be involved. It is important to identify concerns of the community to determine if we have captured the issues and to engage the community to show what we are doing to improve the river.
- Need to consider how to involve the communities that are not involved. Primarily it's due to capacity and priorities.
- Larry - Clear Water Revival seems to be working towards the same principles that many of the First Nations hold. Don't consult if there's no reason for it.
- Tara – a clear engagement strategy is useful when pursuing funding
- Can be thought of as a multi-faceted approach to having cleaner water
- Dave – the Guardians program has been successful because it touches on all five goals in the engagement plan. Making links, traditional knowledge experts talking to the science experts.
- Include examples of TEK and ATK. Varies with each FN how comfortable they are with sharing TEK and ATK.

- Need to include Elders. That aspect of TEK is included in one of the appendices but that should be given more importance, so move it or at least reference it in the main part of the strategy.
- WMP may identify need to work with FN to look at traditional uses of the river, etc.
- Larry – better way to communicate with FN to inform of spills or other triggers that would make it unsafe to use the river
- Show how we would like to be at the end of the process – what we’re working towards. A conceptual idea of what the Clearwater Revival will become
- Engage and involve. This is a cooperative process because of shared traditional territory.

**c) Changes To Goals:**

*GOAL 1* – keep this, it’s key

*NEW GOAL 2* – Develop an engagement process that shares knowledge and incorporates First Nation Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) with respect to the Thames River and its watershed.

*GOAL 3* – add reference to treaties, and list some of the treaties in the appendices. Will help with identifying what rights and interests may be impacted. Each FN has consultation protocol. Existing verses asserted rights: there is a list of treaties for each First nation community that requires consultation protocols. Also, the Great Lakes were never surrendered.

*GOAL 4* – important goal. Change “participants” to partners.

*GOAL 5* – “strategy” – change to TRCWR.

*NEW GOAL* - Need to speak to the connection to the Thames – bringing people back to the river and maintaining that connection. Water is lifeblood of the land; goal should be to use the river traditionally as it was used. Accommodation – traditional way of life (e.g., swimming in Thames) has been made impossible. What are impacts on communities?

*NEW GOAL* – need to increase cross-cultural awareness of activities and learnings (identified lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of agencies, etc.). Identify examples of activities and projects and programs that can help link people with river

**d) Steps To Achieve Goals (Proposed Strategy)**

- Identify cooperative opportunities such as:
  - o the Aamjiwnaang greenhouse “Return the Landscape,” which is rescuing and growing local native plants,
  - o mapping (GIS) expertise.
  - o Recreational fishing program
- Lorraine said that Daniella at MNRF has records of pre-settlement vegetation. The committee is very interested in obtaining this information.
- The Plains of Aamjiwnaang and The Ways of Our Grandfather
- Get the FN partners, especially the TEK and ATK knowledge holders, as well as the Guardians information, into the agency offices.
- Establish links with other Thames River initiatives
- Hold a Treaty Canoe day and invite agency partners.
- We also need to reach out to off reserve FN (e.g. Friendship Centre).

**ACTION:** Lorraine will redraft the strategy and bring it back to the committee

**6. Updates and sharing**

***ACTION: Tara will contact Carlyn for update on cost of extra work she has been doing***

***ACTION: Tara will contact Jason Wintermute regarding the dredging of the Thames***