



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

## BCAFN Water Forum Draft Agenda

March 3 - 4, 2025  
Westin Wall Centre, Richmond

Chair: Keilani Rose

*Strengthening First Nations' Sovereignty: Advancing Sustainable Water  
Governance, Jurisdiction and Stewardship*

### MONDAY, MARCH 3, 2025

TIME	ACTIVITY
8:00 AM	Breakfast & Registration
9:00 AM Airport Ballroom	Cultural Welcome and Opening Prayer Opening Remarks - Regional Chief Terry Teegee Context Setting
9:30 AM Airport Ballroom	Minister Randene Neill, Water Land and Resource Stewardship (Virtual)
10:30 AM	Health Break
10:45 AM Airport Ballroom	<b>Concurrent Breakout Sessions</b>  <b>1. Strategic Pathways for Passing and Implementing the First Nations Clean Water Act with UN Declaration Alignment</b>  <i>Moderated by: Dr. Kerry Black w/ Regional Chief Terry Teegee, Chief Dan Manuel, TBA</i>  <i>Given the prorogued parliament, the First Nations Clean Water Act (C-61) will not have the opportunity to receive Royal Assent in the near future. Should a likely snap election take place, First Nations must be equipped to advocate for meaningful legislation that protects their water rights and ensures safe drinking water in our communities. This panel will examine the key opportunities to harness the potential of</i>

Steveston A	<p><i>Bill C-61 and unique position of BC First Nations to prepare for a political strategy to ensure bi-partisan support for the passing and implementation of the legislation.</i></p> <p><b>2. Data for Governance: Leveraging Support from the BC First Nations Regional Information Governance Centre</b> <i>The BC Regional Information Governance Centre (BCRIGC) launched as an initiative responsible for leading the First Nations Data Governance Strategy to advance First Nations' data sovereignty. The centre seeks to equip First Nations governments with the knowledge, skills, and infrastructure needed to serve their information needs. For Nations interested in advancing water/climate data collection and monitoring projects, this breakout will explore some of the projects undertaken by the BC RIGC including more information on micro grants offered to nations to repatriate data, build infrastructure and establish systems for long-term governance successes for nation rebuilding.</i></p> <p>Steveston B</p> <p><b>3. Collaborative Governance Models: Learnings from the Okanagan Similkameen Collaborative Leadership Table</b> Collaborative governance over First Nations' lands and waters is at the heart of implementing the UN Declaration through shared decision-making frameworks based on respect and free, prior, and informed consent. Water management, in particular, requires multilateral cooperation to effectively steward our shared waters. This breakout session will explore shared water governance models that are underway in BC as a blueprint for First Nations and other jurisdictions across the province.</p>
12:00 PM	Lunch
1:00 PM Airport Ballroom	<p><b>Keynote Panel: Holistically Decolonizing BC's Health and Water Policy</b></p> <p>Moderated by: Andrea Reimer, Tawâw Strategies</p> <p><i>w/ Dr. Daniele Behn-Smith, Dr. Shannon Waters, Lydia Hwitsum</i></p> <p><i>Panelists will delve into the critical interplay between Crown health and water policies and their impact on the First Nations' health. Featuring health experts Dr. Daniele Behn-Smith and Dr. Shannon Waters and Lydia Hwitsum, the discussion will explore the intersectional relationship between water policy and the social determinants of First Nations health. The panel will also assess the need for these policies to align with the UN Declaration to ensure that reforms support holistic wellness and sustainability for First Nations.</i></p>
2:15 PM	Health Break
2:30 PM Airport Ballroom	<p><b>Concurrent Breakout Sessions</b></p> <p><b>1. A Business Case for Watershed Protection, and Economic Reconciliation in Alignment with the UN Declaration</b></p>

<p>Steveston A</p> <p>Steveston B</p>	<p><i>Moderated by: Zita Botelho, Director, Watersheds BC</i></p> <p><i>w/ Grace Martineau, Director of Housing and Infrastructure, AFN &amp; Deana Machin, Senior Indigenous Advisor, Watersheds BC</i></p> <p><i>Working for Watersheds released an Economic Impact Report in 2021, outlining the key economic impacts of BCs Watershed sector as a tool for climate change mitigation. Complimentary to this report, the AFN in partnership with the Conference Board of Canada released a report entitled “<a href="#"><u>Benefits for All Canadians: Economic Impact of Closing the Infrastructure Gap</u></a>,” which highlights the potential of an estimated \$350 billion federal investment, projecting a \$635 billion increase in economic output, creating and sustaining over 338,000 jobs per year and generating \$87 billion in government revenue over the next seven years. This panel will explore interconnectedness of closing the infrastructure gap, watershed protection and economic reconciliation in alignment with the UN Declaration. Panelists will discuss the importance of closing the infrastructure gap through sustainable economic practices that benefit both First Nations and the environment.</i></p> <p><b>2. Bill C-61 - Source Water Protection and Transboundary Agreements</b> <i>The First Nations Clean Water Act is no longer in consideration for Royal Assent given prorogued parliament and a potential snap election. This technical discussion will provide key considerations for non-partisan advocacy to ensure the bill's success regardless of federal leadership. This breakout will explore key aspects of the legislation including provisions for source water protection through transboundary agreement making and provide context for how these provisions can be implemented, should the Bill receive Royal Assent in the future.</i></p> <p><b>3. Canada Water Agency: Pathways Towards First Nations Regional Governance Mechanisms</b> <i>With the recent launching of the Canada Water Agency, First Nations input, participation and decision-making is vital for its implementation including determining regional priorities, funding, and Canada Water Act reforms. This breakout session will dive into the mandates of the Canada Water Agency and explore considerations for how BC First Nations seek inclusion and decision-making in the Canada Water Agency policy, legislative and program implementation.</i></p>
<p>3:30 PM</p>	<p>Health Break</p>
<p>3:45 PM</p> <p>Airport Ballroom</p>	<p><b>Concurrent Breakout Sessions</b></p> <p><b>1. Funding Panel: Designing and Implementing Funding Programs in Alignment with the UN Declaration</b></p> <p><i>Moderator: Kris Archie, CEO, Circle on Philanthropy</i></p> <p><i>w/ REFBC Representative (TBA), First Nations Water Table Representative (TBA) Melissa Grimes, Executive Director, NRS Strategic Partnerships, Policy &amp; Legislation</i></p>

<p>Steveston A</p> <p>Steveston B</p>	<p>Jen Psyllakis, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, WLRS, Ken Brock, ECCC</p> <p><i>This panel will discuss how traditional funding mechanisms are evolving to uphold the UN Declaration, highlighting innovative practices that uphold First Nations' self-determination over their lands, waters, and resources. This discussion will explore funding approaches that are not only supportive but are instrumental in revitalizing First Nations' water jurisdiction, governance and stewardship to achieve meaningful reconciliation through forward-thinking policy reform and new approaches to funding frameworks for First Nations-led land and water-based programs and initiatives.</i></p> <p><b>2. Cumulative Impacts and Watershed Protection Pre and Post-Yahey Decision (TENTATIVE)</b></p> <p><i>This session will delve into the transformative effects of the Yahey decision on watershed management within the Blueberry River First Nation territory. Presenters from the Blueberry River Restoration Society will explore the legal, environmental, and social implications of the decision and its role in shaping current and future watershed restoration and protection efforts.</i></p> <p><b>3. Enacting First Nations' Laws in the Wake of the Climate Crisis</b></p> <p><i>This session will focus on the critical roles that First Nations' water laws play in addressing and mitigating the impacts of the climate crisis on water resources. Participants will explore how implementing First Nations legal orders can be integrated into current water management frameworks to ensure sustainability and resilience.</i></p>
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4:45 PM	Wrap-Up/Closing
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**TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2024**

7:30 AM	Breakfast
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8:30 AM Airport Ballroom	<p>Opening Prayer Day 1 Recap &amp; Day 2 Overview Fireside Chat with Keilani Rose</p>
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9:30 AM Airport Ballroom	<p><b>Panel - Exploring Co-Development of Water Policy: Lessons Learned</b></p> <p><i>Moderated By:</i></p> <p>w/ BC-First Nations Water Table Representatives (TBA), Tyrone McNeil / BC Rep (TBA)</p> <p><i>This panel will discuss various tables that have embodied co-development and co-implementation in the water space including representatives from the BC-First Nations Water Table and the Sharing the Pen Process for the BC Flood Strategy to inform provincial and federal policy. This discussion will frame out lessons learned in these</i></p>
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	<i>collaborative spaces as a blueprint for other collaborative tables moving forward.</i>
10:30 AM	Health Break
10:45 AM Airport Ballroom	<p><b>Panel - Water in the Wake of the Trump Administration: Transboundary Decision-Making to Protect BC's Water Security in Foreign and Domestic Policy</b></p> <p><i>Moderated by: Keilani Rose w/ Chief Heidi Gravelle, Susan Chiblow, Daniel Wolfish, President, Canada Water Agency</i></p> <p><i>President Donald Trump has expressed interest in using economic force to destabilize Canada's economy and acquire Canada to become the 51st US State. President Trump has also made repeated claims that Canada's waters should be acquired to solve the US's water shortages. These claims present real threats to BC First Nations and all British Columbians, requiring strategic thinking on collaborative approaches to Canada's domestic and foreign policy. This discussion aims to draw upon collaborative transboundary agreements including the Columbia River Treaty, Elk-Kootenai/y watershed as a blueprint to set a path for how trilateral collaborative partnerships amongst First Nations, BC and Canada can accelerate watershed security for all British Columbians.</i></p>
12:00 PM	Closing Ceremony
12:15 PM	Lunch (Packed lunches available)