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# COLLABORATIVE CONSERVATION IN THE SOUTH OKANAGAN- SIMILKAMEEN:

## Evaluation and Future Directions

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EVALUATION & STRATEGY

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## Territorial Acknowledgment

This project works to conserve and honour the traditional and unceded territory of the syilx/Okanagan people.

## Definitions and Acronyms

**DRIPA:** Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

**G2G:** Government-to-Government relationships, in reference to Indigenous and Canadian or provincial governments

**SEAR:** Species and Ecosystems at Risk

**SOCF:** South Okanagan Conservation Fund

**SOSCP:** South Okanagan-Similkameen Conservation Program

**TEKK:** Traditional Ecological Knowledge Keeper

**tmix<sup>w</sup>:** the nsyilxcən word that most closely translates as “ecology”. tmix<sup>w</sup> includes everything above the land, water, insects, people, animals, plants and medicines.

**Two-eyed Seeing:** a concept defined by Mi’kmaw Elder Albert Marshall as “learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing, and to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all” (Bartlett et al., 2012).

**UNDRIP:** United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

## Executive Summary

The South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP) was created in 2000 as a partnership of 20 government and non-government organisations collaborating to conserve the unique species and spaces found in one of the most ecologically rich, rare and at-risk landscapes in BC. By 2018, it had over 50 members, including government, NGOs, Indigenous groups and academics, working to achieve shared biodiversity conservation goals.

After 16 years of successfully leading and growing the SOSCP, Bryn White stepped down as Program Manager in early 2020. Shortly after, the program went on hiatus. This provided an opportunity for the SOSCP Executive Committee to reflect on the SOSCP experience and chart a path forward. They engaged the [Tapestry Evaluation & Strategy](#) consulting team (the “evaluation team”) in fall 2021 to review the need and rationale for collaborative conservation in the region and recommend the role, structure, membership and priorities for a renewed conservation collaborative partnership or similar umbrella organisation.

The evaluation team consulted with approximately 50 individuals from Indigenous, government and non-government organisations involved in conservation and natural resources management in the region. Methods included 27 interviews and 24 surveys with partners and stakeholders, focus group meetings to discuss preliminary findings, and review of background documents and reports, including research conducted for the Thompson-Nicola Conservation Initiative, which led to the establishment of the Thompson-Nicola Conservation Collaborative, which is also in the Dry Interior ecosystem and a potential partner for a renewed SOSCP. (Abs, 2021a; Abs 2021b; Dyer, 2021)

## Key findings and recommendations

SOSCP and its partners have played a central and influential role in conservation in the region in the past 20 years. There is strong and widespread interest in relaunching a conservation collaborative for the South Okanagan-Similkameen. There was also strong interest in renewing the focus of the collaborative. This included shifting towards a vision, membership and areas of work that will have the most impact in producing substantive conservation results.

***SOSCP is ESSENTIAL in identifying and addressing conservation concerns in this extremely important area. We can't rely only on government staff to fight for biodiversity because they all have particular mandates of their own and not always the right training and capacity to act. Keeping SOSCP functional is so important! - NGO partner***

**Figure 1. Suggested Approach, Outcomes and Impacts for Relaunching Collaborative Conservation in the South Okanagan-Similkameen**

Approach	Goals	Vision
<p><b>Relationship-focused</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase opportunities for those from different sectors to connect, including conservation NGOs, Indigenous organisations, and all levels of government</li> <li>- Focus on mutual respect and finding common ground</li> </ul>	<p><b>Deep shifts in attitude and mindset among decision makers, those doing conservation work and general public</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase acknowledgement of humans as part of the ecosystem, increased recognition of the natural laws of the <i>tmix</i><sup>w</sup></li> <li>- Reprioritise and rebalance the needs of humans within the current economic system in relation to the needs of the environment and ecosystem- <b><i>“the ecosystem drives decisions rather than humans making the call.”</i></b></li> <li>- Increase use of both Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Western science in public and private land use planning</li> <li>- Honour syilx / Okanagan people’s role and expertise as caretakers of the land and water in this territory - <b><i>“a deep connection and healing relationship with the land is the first part of reconciliation.”</i></b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Restoration and regeneration of healthy ecosystems in the South Okanagan-Similkameen</b></p>
<p><b>Centred on Indigenous Leadership and Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborate with Indigenous organisations and communities at all stages of planning and implementation</li> <li>- Support Reconciliation and decolonization, including Indigenous Rights and Title and priorities for conservation</li> <li>- Incorporate “Two-eyed Seeing” into new conservation initiatives and consider interrelatedness of health of air, water, land, soil, animal and human life (<i>tmix</i><sup>w</sup>)</li> <li>- Two-way capacity building: recognize and support Indigenous scientific, technical, planning and field expertise</li> <li>- Support Indigenous Priorities for conservation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strengthen implementation and accountability for existing laws, regulations, policies, plans and standards by working collaboratively with all levels of government</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage higher level decision makers at the provincial level to increase enforcement and standards for Crown land and licences for forestry, ranching and agriculture, road-building, and managing recreation activities</li> <li>- Work to catalyse better communication and coordination within and among agencies with conflicting mandates and helping to harmonise complementary program</li> <li>- Continue to provide technical support to local governments, and work to strengthen regulatory tools</li> </ul>	<p><b>Healing within the <i>tmix</i><sup>w</sup>, and between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples</b></p>
<p><b>Impact-focused:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Address root causes</li> <li>- Develop and carry out a plan for monitoring, evaluation and strategic learning</li> </ul>	<p><b>Increasing effectiveness of on the ground conservation and stewardship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Update previous science and research work and incorporating TEK (including updating Biodiversity Strategy)</li> <li>- Investigate how to work with the SO Conservation Fund to ensure it aligns with the updated vision and approach of this collaborative</li> <li>- Increase support for Indigenous management practices, especially on crown land</li> <li>- Increase harmonisation among private land stewardship programs and reduced gaps and redundancies in conservation work</li> <li>- Secure conservation lands, while considering Indigenous Rights</li> <li>- Increase capacity among those doing conservation work</li> </ul>	<p><b>Climate change mitigation and adaptation, including building resilience and addressing unequal impacts (i.e., climate justice)</b></p>

*The newsletter was fantastic. It had a broad reach, kept everyone linked at a broad level.-  
NGO partner*

## Governance

- **Strengthen role of coordination group (currently the SOSCP Executive):** Strengthen and clarify roles of what is now known as the SOSCP executive. In particular, ensure that a coordinating group takes a lead on fundraising and providing direction on programs. Refresh and rotate membership regularly and find other ways to sustain interest. Consider compensation for members of the coordinating group to acknowledge time and energy required. Ensure substantive Indigenous representation in this group, with payment as needed to ensure equity and inclusion.
- **Paid staff:** First, look to hire a part-time “coordinator” who will focus on communication, meeting and event organisation, supporting the leadership group, and organising funding proposals and reporting. Over time, this role can grow to take on more facilitation and leadership roles, ensuring clarity and transparency with roles of the coordination group. As the need for staff grows, it may be helpful to consider contracting more than one individual to increase collaboration and reduce burnout.
- **Seek stable, consistent core funding for the staff person** through various sources, including government, foundations, and private. We acknowledge that this is a big undertaking and many working in conservation and the non-profit sector more broadly struggle with securing long-term funding. However, there are currently enough funds to support staffing during a transition period to identify sources of longer-term funding.
- **Secure a reliable, long-term financial administrator.** As of May 2021, the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association is providing this function for the SOSCP. The program will need to determine whether this will continue to be a good fit for the collaborative moving forward.
- **Continue to provide technical support to local governments, but identify a new model.** Findings suggested that the technical support provided through the shared environmental planner/land use biologist role was highly valued by municipal planners. However, feedback suggested that the shared environmental planner/land use biologist (LU Bio) role was not well positioned to effectively develop relationships with key parties such as decision-makers, staff, and community groups. There is a need to ensure that the technical support provided is able to address and balance the needs of development and planning with the need for environmental protection; i.e, finding the appropriate level of "nuance" and "compromise" that doesn't undermine either environment or development. This may be best achieved by ensuring that the position is housed within the municipalities themselves. Moving towards this model may require collaboration with similar organizations in other regions who have in-house environmental planners.

*A lot of the areas have changed so much even in [my] lifetime, fenced off from the land and can't go collect. Cattle have more rights than Indigenous people. They eat their foods and medicines before they can spread. - xwestikin (Chris Armstrong), TEKK*

*[SOSCP] can provide a watchdog role as well as 'working with' governments. - NGO partner*

*[SOSCP] needs a board that understands governance and has transparency. - NGO partner*

## **Next Steps**

- Transition phase during 2022, with goals to: 1) Identify coordinating team and contractor, 2) hold several meetings with the goal of re-engaging existing members and engaging new members (in particular, getting commitment from senior management for a relaunched collaborative), 3) identify sources of funding, 4) identify (goals) and high-level strategic directions, based on gaps and priorities identified in this evaluation, and funding opportunities available. The SOSCP has funding available to support a part-time contractor, and are seeking funding for a consultant to support the transition process.
- Launch phase starting in early 2023, with goals to: 1) Adapt official terms of reference for coordinating group and membership (see suggestions in Appendix 1), 2) Review and update staffing: continue with existing part-time contractor and add staff based on secured funding, 3) Develop Collaborative agreement for members, 4) Create an internal and external communication plan, including an updated website, 5) Prioritise the following areas of collaborative work/key initiatives:
  - Identifying specific strategic priorities and initiatives, with direction provided on the findings from this report, as well as any updates to the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. Though some partners we talked to suggested a need for a detailed strategic plan as a next step, there is also a desire to keep any strategic planning process and updating of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy short and action focused.
  - Projects that focus on reconciliation through conservation (see [Centring Indigenous Leadership and Knowledge](#) section).
  - Monitoring, evaluation and strategic learning (see [Impact-focused](#) section).

*We all need to come together on the same page. We together might have a chance to protect what little bit is left. - calyx (Richard Armstrong), TEKK*

*There is a difference between old people and knowledge keepers – you need the language to understand the cultural history. - xwestikin (Chris Armstrong), TEKK*

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

The South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP) was created in 2000 as a partnership of 20 government and non-government organisations collaborating to conserve the unique species and spaces found in one of the most ecologically rich, rare and at-risk landscapes in BC. By 2018, it had over 50 members, including government, NGOs, Indigenous groups and academics, working to achieve shared biodiversity conservation goals. The work of SOSCP was overseen by an Executive Committee (“the Executive”) and coordinated by a Program Manager.

SOSCP worked to coordinate and facilitate the work of its partners, improve the effectiveness of conservation efforts, deliver on key conservation priorities, and raise the profile for conservation in the region. [Core strategies](#) of the partners/partnership as listed on the SOSCP website include:

1. Help landowners care for nature on their lands
2. Secure and restore important natural areas
3. Use science to inform decisions, management actions, and conservation priorities
4. Work with Traditional Ecological Knowledge Keepers
5. Provide sustainable land use information and resources to decision-makers
6. Engage the community in learning about and experiencing nature

At the annual Partners Forum in early 2018, members confirmed their desire to continue the partnership (see [Section 2.1, Strengths](#)). In early 2020, Bryn White stepped down from SOSCP after successfully leading and growing the organisation as Program Manager for 16 years. Shortly after, the program went on hiatus. Many who were closely involved noted that the SOSCP had fulfilled its original role, that momentum had slowed, and that it was a good time for the SOSCP Executive Committee to take time to reflect on the SOSCP experience and chart a path forward. They engaged the [Tapestry Evaluation & Strategy](#) consulting team in fall 2021 to review the need and rationale for collaborative conservation in the region and recommend the role, structure, membership and priorities for a renewed conservation collaborative partnership or similar umbrella organisation.

*We need to keep the tmix<sup>w</sup> clean. – skmxstia (Laverne Jack)*

### 1.2 Objectives of SOSCP Evaluation and Future Direction Project

The objectives of SOSCP Evaluation and Future Direction Project were to:

- **Review the SOSCP experience and derive lessons** learned for any future collaboration
- Assess the **rationale, needs and possible roles** for a renewed collaborative organisation/

umbrella group to coordinate conservation planning and actions

- Discuss how to **better support organisations** working in conservation in the region
- Identify possible **elements of a vision and goals for conservation** in the region, including desired conservation outcomes
- Describe how **Indigenous organisations and communities** can be meaningfully involved
- Provide guidance on **using Indigenous Knowledge and Western science** in this work
- Identify **areas of conservation** that would most benefit from collaboration
- Propose a renewed **governance structure and processes** for a regional organisation
- Identify possible **participants and champions** for the organisation
- **Assess the history, current needs and possible roles for technical support to local and regional governments** through a shared environmental planner or other model
- **Recommend next steps**

### 1.3 Approach and Methods

**Approach:** The evaluation team adopted the following strategies for this project:

- Ensure substantive engagement of Indigenous organisations in collecting and interpreting information.
- Engage past and potential new member groups in deciding if, when and how to relaunch a regional conservation collaborative, in order to build interest and momentum, should it go ahead.

**Methods:** The evaluation team consulted with approximately 50 individuals from Indigenous, government and non-government organisations involved in conservation and natural resources management in the region. Methods included the following:

- **27 Interviews:** 8 current and former members of SOSCP Executive; 1 former contractor; 3 local government planners; 8 representatives from Indigenous organisations and 4 Traditional Ecological Knowledge Keepers (TEKK); and 3 contacts in neighbouring regions.
- **Survey of partners and stakeholders:** 24 respondents from various groups, including existings SOSCP partners
- **Focus Group Facilitation:** three meetings with 11 - 17 participants each
- **Regular meetings with the client team and key contacts**
- **Review of background documents:** i.e. key research reports on SOSCP and other BC conservation collaboratives, including research conducted for the Thompson-Nicola Conservation Initiative (TNCI). This led to the creation of the [Thompson-Nicola Conservation Collaborative](#) (TNCC), which is also in the Dry Interior ecosystem and a potential collaborator for a renewed SOSCP. (*Lessons Learned from Ten B.C. Conservation Collaboratives* (Abs, 2021a), *Situation Analysis: Collaborative Conservation Opportunities*

*in the Thompson-Nicola* (Abs, 2021b) and support documents (Appendix 4).

Please note that all **text blocks in italics** are direct quotes from research participants.

## 2.0 Review of SOSCP

In 2000, founding partners of SOSCP set out conservation goals and targets in a Prospectus. The program was initiated shortly after with the identification of six strategic directions (“streams of effort”, with a team for each: Science and Research, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Habitat Securement, Stewardship, Sustainable Land Use, and Outreach. Additional groups were formed as needed to respond to specific issues, such as threats to grassland and riparian habitats, and the need for recovery teams under the Species at Risk Act.

Team activity ebbed and flowed over time, depending on the issues at hand and partner interest and turnover. SOSCP’s role and programs evolved, with a shift from a mostly communication and coordination function early-on to more of a program delivery role in the 2010s. From 2009-12, the science team worked with the Executive and Program Manager to produce a [regional conservation strategy](#) (see “Successes” below). In the late 2010s, the Executive Committee and Program Manager took the lead on several region-wide initiatives identified in the strategy. Over 20 years, SOSCP continued to facilitate partner communication and collaboration through a newsletter, website, workshops, forums and annual partner meetings.

### 2.1 Strengths

SOSCP and its partners played an incredibly central and influential role in conservation in the region over the past 20 years. The following key roles were identified:

- Raised the profile of conservation in the region
- Provided opportunities for information-sharing and networking on programs and projects: “knowing who was doing what”
- Worked towards common goals i.e., the environmental mapping that accompanied the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy
- Identified opportunities for cooperation and collaboration on programs and projects
- supported capacity-building through sharing approaches, skills and techniques, e.g., habitat restoration
- Shared information on funding and useful data, information and technical resources
- helped to avoid (unintended) competition for resources such as funding and staff
- Connected with groups outside the region (e.g., North and Central Okanagan) to take a landscape level approach to conservation planning and habitat connectivity

***One-stop place to go to find out about all the different conservation organisations in the South Okanagan Similkameen region. - NGO partner***

The following notable successes were identified:

- [South Okanagan Conservation Fund](#), established in 2016 in partnership with local and regional government partners, and dedicated to supporting environmental conservation projects through providing grants and attracting matching funds
- “Keeping Nature in our Future: [A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy](#) for the South Okanagan-Similkameen”: regional and local scale maps and local government primers showing areas with high biodiversity values and habitat sensitivities, with recommended vision, goals, strategic directions and actions - adopted by the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen under its *Regional Growth Strategy*
- Collaboration with [OCCP](#) to develop a [Biodiversity Strategy for the Okanagan Region](#)
- Cooperation with five local governments on a Shared Environmental Planner/Land Use Biologist (LU Bio) to advise on integrating biodiversity considerations into local planning and decision-making, e.g., tools such as Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Areas (ESDPAs) (see section 4.0)
- Dissemination of guidelines and tools for public and private stewardship most of which were created by partners (see “[Resources](#)” tab)
- Educational events and forums, e.g., day-long [Conservation Science Forum](#) in early 2019 for Qualified Environmental Professionals, conservation partners and land managers
- Stewardship programs, e.g., sustainable agriculture and land development
- Strong leadership: a skilled, committed, long-term Program Manager provided leadership, continuity and energy to keep SOSCP going and be incredibly successful for over 16 years

***We have benefited immensely from the SOCF [South Okanagan Conservation Fund] - larger grants of course are always welcome, but certainly this has been the main way that SOSCP has provided support for our research and outreach. -NGO partner***

***The Conservation Fund exists solely from the work of the dedicated Program Manager. SOSCP shared the message that the South Okanagan-Similkameen valleys are important parts of the world in terms of ecology and we need to be responsible with them. This message easily gets lost with local governments. -Government partner***

## **2.2 Challenges and Lessons Learned**

As with any umbrella organisation, SOSCP has faced challenges over time. The following main issues were identified:

## Communication and Collaboration

- Some uncertainty about governance; how organisations fit into the SOSCP, possibly due in part to use of the term “program” and the lack of clarity around funding for SOSCP vs. partner organisations, who needed to continue to fund their own programs
- Maintaining communication between the Executive, Program Manager and partners re: initiatives and programs
- Lack of communication and cooperation across teams: their work “became siloed”
- Inevitable differences, even tension, between partner perspectives and approaches, e.g., “protection” vs. “harvest for consumption” orientation; active vs. passive recreation; challenges in finding common goals
- Uncertainty about the roles, relationships and accountability of contractors
- Lack of substantive involvement of Indigenous organisations and communities in all SOSCP program areas, despite best intentions and ongoing efforts by all parties. TEK work was usually done separately from other teams. SOSCP was established in the time before the recognition of Indigenous Rights and Title and the commitments to Reconciliation and Indigenous partnerships that are now part of most conservation and environmental work in BC today. While outreach was on-going, Indigenous groups also faced, and continue to face, systemic capacity issues in terms of funding and staffing<sup>1</sup>

*It seemed like SOSCP was always so short staffed, and lacking capacity, we couldn't even get off the ground with potential collaborations. -NGO partner*

## Partner engagement

- Challenges maintaining engagement of the executive committee and partners over time:
  - Getting organisations to commit funds and in-kind staff time and resources to collaborative efforts (noting that many organisations find it difficult to find the staff and funds they need for their own work)
  - Turnover and lack of continuity among partner representatives
  - Sustaining partner interest and involvement in teams, working groups and activities.
  - Finding and retaining committed leadership/champions for the executive committee; “founders syndrome” - turnover/lack of continuity in latter years
  - Fewer executive committee meetings over time
- Fewer partner meetings over time; fewer opportunities to connect and learn about others; formats of meetings not well suited to collaboration or to ensuring that partners could attend

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<sup>1</sup> See also the issues related to the duty to consult, which results in hundreds of referrals to Indigenous natural resource departments for resource project development. This was an issue mentioned by the staff of natural resource departments that we spoke with during this project.

<https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/building-indigenous-community-capacity-and-the-duty-to-consult>

- Varying levels of interest/some tension around individual organisational vs. collaborative work, exacerbated by organisations being increasingly short of capacity, i.e., funding, time and resources to offer
- Sense of competition (perceived and real) among some groups for funding, niche and profile; some resistance to information-sharing and overlap among projects

#### **Coordination, administration and funding**

- Lack of clarity (at times) re: relative roles and responsibilities of executive committee, program manager, paid contractors and partners
- Securing reliable, sustained core funding for staff and administration; the latter was largely funded by administration fees from program grants, which took considerable time to get
- Defining and communicating staff responsibilities: what is the role of a “program manager” who is not an executive director: coordination? administration? fund-raising? program delivery? contract management? (roles can be/were problematic at times)
- Sharing fundraising responsibilities (preparing grant proposals and reporting) among the executive, program manager and partners; eventually most of this work was done by the program coordinator, which was unsustainable and inconsistent with the idea of a collaborative organisation
- Finding and maintaining a relationship with a financial administrator (as required to handle finances for a collaborative organisation that is *not* a registered non-profit)
- Responding to growing internal needs and funder requirements to demonstrate conservation results: how to monitor, measure and communicate program and project outcomes at SOSCP and individual partners levels

*It had evolved to a state where there were a few active partners and most others were silent.  
- NGO partner*

*What [isn't] happening is systematic evaluation of the impact of SOSCP strategies on biodiversity goals; this was a major role for the science strategy. What value did funding agencies get for their investments? - NGO partner*

### **2.3 Interest in Renewed Collaborative Conservation**

There is strong and widespread interest in relaunching a conservation collaborative for the South Okanagan-Similkameen. At the SOSCP Partners Forum in spring 2018, over 40 attendees considered the future of SOSCP. There was a strong consensus to continue the program - even to expand and enhance its role. With regard to SOSCP's future:

- Virtually all participants said that **collaboration on conservation in the region continues to be needed** due to continuing declines in biodiversity and on-going threats, including climate change as a multiplier.
- Most are interested in **participating in a renewed regional conservation organisation** with a **renewed vision, refocused goals and priorities, and revised governance and membership/participation.**
- There is **interest from both past/current partners and new organisations**, providing an effective mix of experience and continuity with new perspectives, energy and ideas.
- Participants emphasized **the importance of Indigenous leadership and participation**, and inclusion of Indigenous world views, perspectives and Traditional Ecological Knowledge in conservation efforts, including historic and current practices.
- Past/current and potential new **members** hope to **build on past experience and work towards more measurable conservation outcomes.**

*It would be tragic if SOSCP didn't continue. We don't have another common voice other than passionate local biologists that know about ecology and species at risk in the region. No central voice to communicate this information. -Government partner*

*[SOSCP] is a one-stop place to go to find out about all the different conservation organisations in the South Okanagan-Similkameen region. -NGO partner*

*RDOS is considering removing the requirement for Environmentally Sensitive Development Permits - SOSCP was one body watching and keeping those measures in place. -Government partner*

Participants identified the following **trends and opportunities** for continued collaboration:

- Respond to promising new federal government conservation policy, program and funding opportunities (2010s), e.g., Environment Canada SEAR (Species and Ecosystems at Risk) funding and climate change funding for various departments
- Work with BC Parks on their stronger conservation mandate (since 2017: e.g., parks as [Living Lab](#) for Climate Change and Conservation Program, including more long-term monitoring and community liaison, e.g., NGOs, Indigenous groups, schools, academics)
- Build on and expand the successful SO Conservation Fund
- Use new electronic communication and information-sharing tools, e.g., data-sharing/data banks; (social) marketing of conservation messages
- Respond to growing public interest in environment/climate change and the role of nature in improving health and well-being, e.g., Nature schools, "[Vitamin N](#)"
- Investigate access to U.S. funders and larger grants - "we're not well-known to them"

*We deliver - many successes! There's lots of work to do! We're stronger together: information-sharing works. Prevent "reinventing the wheel". There's no better organisational structure to move to; it's nimble, e.g., flexible action teams. It helps partners see where they fit. -Summary of SOSCP Partners Forum 2018*

### 3.0 Suggested Approach, Outcomes and Vision for a Relunched Conservation Collaborative in the South Okanagan-Similkameen

Based on the research, the following questions/criteria are proposed for choosing priority areas of work for a renewed collaborative:

- What are key gaps in conservation that could best be addressed through collaboration due to their urgency, importance, scale, geographic range or need for large-scale funding?
- What would have the most impact in producing substantive conservation results, given the ongoing decline in regional biodiversity and ecosystem health, especially Species and Ecosystems at Risk (SEAR) and culturally important species and habitats?
- What priority pressing and/or challenging issues require cooperation among diverse parties to address, e.g., harmonizing conservation practices across various land tenures?

Participants were asked which areas of conservation could most benefit from collaborative work. Their responses generally fit within SOSCP's six (past) core areas of work (Science and Research, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Habitat Securement, Stewardship, Sustainable Land Use, and Outreach). However, there is a desire for a significant shift in emphasis in two key areas:

- There is strong, widespread interest in enhancing "stick" vs. "carrot" approaches, especially *support for strengthening the jurisdictional framework for biodiversity conservation, including laws, regulations, policies, and plans at all levels of government*. This is in part a reaction to the discouraging results of "carrot" approaches, such as offering science and technical advice and promoting voluntary measures. Participants also see an urgent need to better control the negative impacts from poorly managed and regulated development, resulting in, for example, species declines, habitat loss/degradation, flooding and fires - all exacerbated by climate change. This includes better ways to assess and manage cumulative effects.
- There is now greater recognition of the legal, jurisdictional, ethical and practical imperatives to engage Indigenous communities and organisations in meaningful (maybe "substantive" rather than "meaningful"?) ways in conservation, and particularly to centre Indigenous knowledge and worldviews. There is growing support for "two-eyed

seeing”, i.e., the use of both Indigenous and western science approaches to environment and conservation (See [Definitions and Acronyms](#) section for more details).

These and other suggested priorities for a renewed conservation collaborative are summarised in Figure 1, Suggested Approach, Outcomes and Impacts for Relunched Collaborative Conservation in the South Okanagan-Similkameen, and described in the following sections.

**Figure 1. Suggested Approach, Outcomes and Impacts for Relunched Collaborative Conservation in the South Okanagan-Similkameen**

Approach	Goals	Vision
<p><b>Relationship-focused</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase opportunities for those from different sectors to connect, including conservation NGOs, Indigenous organisations, and all levels of government</li> <li>- Focus on mutual respect and finding common ground</li> </ul>	<p><b>Deep shifts in attitude and mindset among decision makers, those doing conservation work and general public</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase acknowledgement of humans as part of the ecosystem, increased recognition of the natural laws of the <i>tmix</i><sup>w</sup></li> <li>- Reprioritise and rebalance the needs of humans within the current economic system in relation to the needs of the environment and ecosystem- <b><i>“the ecosystem drives decisions rather than humans making the call.”</i></b></li> <li>- Increase use of both Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Western science in public and private land use planning</li> <li>- Honour syilx / Okanagan people’s role and expertise as caretakers of the land and water in this territory - <b><i>“a deep connection and healing relationship with the land is the first part of reconciliation.”</i></b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Restoration and regeneration of healthy ecosystems in the South Okanagan-Similkameen</b></p>
<p><b>Centred on Indigenous Leadership and Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborate with Indigenous organisations and communities at all stages of planning and implementation</li> <li>- Support Reconciliation and decolonization, including Indigenous Rights and Title and priorities for conservation</li> <li>- Incorporate “Two-eyed Seeing” into new conservation initiatives and consider interrelatedness of health of air, water, land, soil, animal and human life (<i>tmix</i><sup>w</sup>)</li> <li>- Two-way capacity building: recognize and support Indigenous scientific, technical, planning and field expertise</li> <li>- Support Indigenous Priorities for conservation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strengthen implementation and accountability for existing laws, regulations, policies, plans and standards by working collaboratively with all levels of government</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage higher level decision makers at the provincial level to increase enforcement and standards for Crown land and licences for forestry, ranching and agriculture, road-building, and managing recreation activities</li> <li>- Work to catalyse better communication and coordination within and among agencies with conflicting mandates and helping to harmonise complementary program</li> <li>- Continue to provide technical support to local governments, and work to strengthen regulatory tools</li> </ul>	<p><b>Healing within the <i>tmix</i><sup>w</sup>, and between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples</b></p>
<p><b>Impact-focused:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Address root causes</li> <li>- Develop and carry out a plan for monitoring, evaluation and strategic learning</li> </ul>	<p><b>Increasing effectiveness of on the ground conservation and stewardship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Update previous science and research work and incorporating TEK (including updating Biodiversity Strategy)</li> <li>- Investigate how to work with the SO Conservation Fund to ensure it aligns with the updated vision and approach of this collaborative</li> <li>- Increase support for Indigenous management practices, especially on crown land</li> <li>- Increase harmonisation among private land stewardship programs and reduced gaps and redundancies in conservation work</li> <li>- Secure conservation lands, while considering Indigenous Rights</li> <li>- Increase capacity among those doing conservation work</li> </ul>	<p><b>Climate change mitigation and adaptation, including building resilience and addressing unequal impacts (i.e., climate justice)</b></p>

## 3.1 Approach

### Relationship-focused

Findings suggest that the SOSCP's successes were due largely to a focus on facilitating connections among groups doing conservation in the region. This should be expanded and deepened moving forward. Benefits include:

- ***Increasing opportunities for different sectors to connect, including conservation NGOs, Indigenous organisations, community groups, residents and all levels of government.*** As discussed in the [Review of SOSCP](#) section, those involved with SOSCP see a need for continued opportunities to connect with each other, understand what each other are doing and align their work. A key role for a renewed collaborative is to provide these opportunities. It is also recommended to expand SOSCP outreach and connection to groups beyond those doing conservation work but whose actions affect biodiversity. See [Appendix 6. Possible Member/Partner Organisations](#). It is also suggested that regular monitoring, evaluation and strategic learning will help those involved to understand what is working and what is not, as discussed in the [Impact-focused](#) section.
- ***Focus on mutual respect and finding common ground.*** It was suggested that a focus on sharing perspectives and working towards collective goals is the best path forward to achieve substantive conservation results. While there is widespread acknowledgment of the value of collaborative conservation, a renewed collaboration presents an opportunity to work towards a deeper level of collaboration than may be usual in professional environments. This may require relationships to be prioritised equally with “results”. This work can be satisfying in terms of emphasising personal relationships and social support but may also be challenging requires time and energy to engage with other perspectives and examine and shift our worldviews.

***True collaboration moves at the speed of trust. -Government partner***

***People are often finger pointing. You need to bring them all in a room and get them talking to each other. ... It's not advocacy – it's about strengthening the network and processes that are supposed to be working. - NGO partner***

***Work with others to create long-term goals for preservation of the landscape so we can all benefit, without conflict. This needs to come from an honest heartfelt place - to be willing to give and take, and understand. - NGO Partner***

### Centring Indigenous Leadership and Knowledge

A key message from this evaluation is that Indigenous leadership and involvement by Indigenous communities, including Traditional Ecological Knowledge Keepers, is essential to the success of future collaborative conservation. Conservation partners need to work closely with

the communities that know and steward those lands in a way that respects their needs and priorities. Approaches to centering Indigenous leadership and knowledge, as identified in Figure 1, include:

- ***Collaborate with Indigenous organisations and communities at all stages of planning and implementation.*** Indigenous peoples have stewarded this land for many millennia. Conservation can benefit from Traditional Ecological Knowledge as well as current Indigenous knowledge of land, water, ecosystems and species in their territories, including human-land connections. There is immense value in “bringing their lived experience to the table.” However, due to a legacy of trauma and disrespect from past relationships and decisions regarding the land, it **might take time to build trust and working relationships.**
- ***Support reconciliation and decolonization, including Indigenous Rights and Title and priorities for conservation.*** Meaningful engagement of Indigenous communities in conservation work can contribute to reconciliation since “a deep connection and healing relationship with the land is the first part of reconciliation.”<sup>2</sup> This requires acknowledging that the land has been fundamentally and irreversibly changed since colonisation.
  - Regional conservation initiatives should respect Indigenous Rights and Title, in accordance with the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP), BC Bill 41 – [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) (DRIPA) and pending federal [UNDRIP legislation](#). [This approach](#) includes strengthening Government-to-Government (G2G) relationships, based on recognition of rights and title, respect, cooperation and partnership.
  - Reconciliation can also be considered at other levels in addition to G2G relationships, including collaborative initiatives on water, fish and wildlife, land and natural resource management, and increasingly biodiversity conservation. This includes working with Natural Resources departments and other “technical” staff.

***Consider education on reconciliation and decolonization as a prerequisite for being on the executive. -Government partner***

- ***Incorporate “Two-eyed Seeing”<sup>3</sup> into new conservation initiatives and consider the interrelatedness of health of air, water, land, soil, animal and human life (tmix”).*** Collaboration can facilitate mutual capacity-building between Indigenous and

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<sup>2</sup> All quotes in this section are from members of Indigenous groups consulted during this research.

<sup>3</sup> a concept defined by Mi’kmaw Elder Albert Marshall as “learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing, and to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all” (Bartlett et al., 2012).

non-Indigenous groups doing conservation work through sharing worldviews, priorities, approaches and techniques. Combining Indigenous worldviews, knowledge and management practices with Western science can strengthen conservation outcomes. The holistic worldview of syilx people is expressed as “tmicw” or “tmixw” (and related terms) – the nsyilxcən words that most closely translates as “ecology”. tmixw includes everything above the land, water, insects, people, animals, plants and medicines. Indigenous knowledge, including TEKK, has been largely excluded from conservation and land management decisions in B.C. The following points should be considered in future collaborative work:

- There are concerns about knowledge being stolen or used for financial gain, based on past experience. **Learn about knowledge-sharing protocols**, ensure you have permission and check before using knowledge in documents. For some, the term “consent” might be more appropriate than “consult.”
- Recognize that the **Indigenous worldview is “not able to separate science from knowledge, story and law”**. Laws of Indigenous society are earth-based, holistic and integrated, with directives for how humans should live. In these teachings, “the ecosystem drives decisions rather than humans making the call.”
- **Work with people who know the land from experience**; many Elders still live off the land and understand what is happening on it.

*We are still here and we still live off the land. - xwestikin (Chris Armstrong), TEKK*

*The syilx people have seen the land for thousands of years, science is great but only a couple hundred years on the land - these need to come together to share knowledge - step in the right direction. - calyx (Richard Armstrong), TEKK*

*I want all of the organisations to remember that they are on unceded syilx territory and understand this. We [the syilx people] are part of the health of the land, and differences between syilx people being on the land and using the land is not well understood by many organisations. - calyx (Richard Armstrong), TEKK*

- **Two-way capacity building: recognize and support Indigenous scientific, technical, planning and field expertise.** Individual and organisational capacity-building is a priority for Indigenous communities, with a focus on transferable, job-oriented skills for community members (see [Appendix 2: Indigenous Participation in Collaborative Conservation](#) for more information). Collaborative work should recognize and incorporate the traditional and current Indigenous conservation expertise and practices; Indigenous partners can educate other groups on history, rights and title and practices.

*True collaboration is working together, not seeing each other as competition. Some overlap is a positive since it all contributes to collective conservation: different mandates but arriving at some goals/outcomes in the end. - NGO partner*

*Science and TEKK are saying the same thing about the state of the earth - the difference is in the weight each world view has. Across the landscape, [when] looking at ecosystem services and sustainable business, we in BC need to be more creative about sustainable innovation: we need to get creative, drawing on information from further afield. - Indigenous participant*

Some Indigenous groups are interested in participating only if the collaborative is positioned as technical collaboration – separate from Government to Government (G2G) Indigenous - federal - provincial discussions at the leadership level – and if potential community benefits can be identified. This may mean participation by Traditional Ecological Knowledge Keepers and technical staff rather than Indigenous leadership. (Abs, 2021b) Partners can also build on current Indigenous natural resource and environmental partnerships in the Dry Interior, e.g., [k̓łusxnitkʷ \(Okanagan Lake\) Responsibility Planning Initiative](#) (OKLRPI) and [Nicola Watershed Governance Project](#).

- **Support Indigenous priorities for conservation.** A key to successful collaboration is to address Indigenous-defined priorities for conservation, natural resource use and land management (Abs, 2021b). These include (but are not limited to):
  - **Finding ways to enhance Indigenous food security, food sovereignty and cultural resources**, with a focus on food, water and medicinal plants, especially culturally and spiritually important food species, e.g., fish, ungulates and other game.
  - **Better prevention and management of the negative impacts of land use and development** on Indigenous (reserve) land, water and natural resources from forestry, ranching, agriculture, road-building and urban development.
  - **Taking a holistic, landscape view that conserves habitat connectivity and wildlife corridors** through connecting small and large conservation initiatives across land tenures.
  - **Capacity-building on conservation:** Many communities would like to do more to manage and protect grasslands and SEAR on community lands and traditional territories, but are constrained by lack of funding and capacity. New federal government Indigenous partnership programs such as Environment and Climate Change Canada [Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk](#) and [Indigenous Guardians Pilot Program](#) and various Fisheries and Oceans Canada programs have strong potential to strengthen capacity.
  - **Issues related to fencing and/or limiting access** to traditional food and medicine gathering areas and corridors within private lands and some conservancies;

restoring habitat with native plants (not hybrids), and options for having monoculture food plants on some lands.

*Restore habitat with native plants not hybrids and include options for having monoculture food plants on some lands. - skmxstia (Laverne Jack), TEKK*

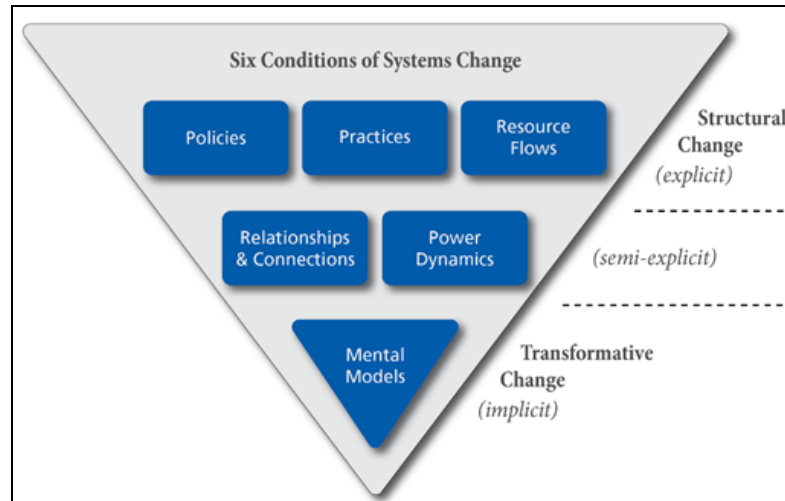
*Logging companies have to plant trees, but why not replant berries and bushes. They might say they don't know what was there, but the TEKK group knows. They could work with the logging companies and government to tell them what to restore. - skmxstia (Laverne Jack), TEKK*

## Impact-focused

Another strong message is that a renewed collaborative should focus on having an impact, through focusing on defined goals and achieving substantive results. We recommend two key strategies for keeping impact front and centre: addressing root causes of biodiversity loss in the region, aligning with evidence for the most effective conservation approaches, and using a monitoring, evaluation and strategic learning framework to assess and report on progress, and refine approaches.

- **Addressing root causes.** The Tapestry team talked with SOSCP members about doing work that is “simple but deep”, and suggested that focusing on root causes is a useful . Through our extensive experience working on effective, systems-level impact, we have identified a powerful analytical framework to plan for change [The Water of Systems Change](#). This is a relatively straightforward approach based on the idea that significant changes result from “shifting the conditions that are holding the problem in place.” Figure 2 proposes the six main conditions to consider. This report addressed several root causes of biodiversity loss identified by participants, including inadequate policies and practices, poor relationships and connections, and limited mental models or mindsets.

Figure 2. 6 conditions of systems change



#### SYSTEMS CHANGE CONDITIONS—DEFINITIONS

**Policies:** Government, institutional and organizational rules, regulations, and priorities that guide the entity's own and others' actions.

**Practices:** Espoused activities of institutions, coalitions, networks, and other entities targeted to improving social and environmental progress. Also, within the entity, the procedures, guidelines, or informal shared habits that comprise their work.

**Resource Flows:** How money, people, knowledge, information, and other assets such as infrastructure are allocated and distributed.

**Relationships & Connections:** Quality of connections and communication occurring among actors in the system, especially among those with differing histories and viewpoints.

**Power Dynamics:** The distribution of decision-making power, authority, and both formal and informal influence among individuals and organizations.

**Mental Models:** Habits of thought—deeply held beliefs and assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of operating that influence how we think, what we do, and how we talk.

- **Using a monitoring, evaluation and strategic learning framework to assess and report on progress, and refine approaches.** There is strong, widespread interest in improving monitoring and evaluation of conservation initiatives to assess progress, learn from results, and adjust strategies, as needed. This echoes the results of research for the Thompson-Nicola Conservation Collaborative (Abs, 2021b). Government and private funders increasingly ask that funding proposals include some form of results-based framework to design and report on program and project outcomes.

*What is needed and possible to achieve measurable results? Partners should advocate for monitoring – are the issues the same? Have we made progress? If not, what is the solution?*  
-NGO partner

*[SOSCP should] provide consistent programs and funding with measurable actions and demonstrated success, a collaborative approach - with open communication with other partners, and active involvement in the community.*  
-NGO partner

Based on work we have done with similar sector-level and partner-based organisations over the past decade, we suggest a broad approach that does not focus solely on indicators. This could include:

- **Using a strategic learning approach**, to “integrate data and evaluative thinking into [your] work, and then adapt their strategies in response to what [you] learn.”<sup>4</sup> The collaborative will likely grapple with complex questions and issues in this high-level, relationship-based work. Adopting a strategic learning framework can help to identify and track key questions, approaches tried, successes, challenges and responses.
- **Understanding how and why you expect change to happen**, for example, by defining a theory of change or logic model. Jumping to outcome measurement without understanding how and why you expect change to happen runs the risk of concentrating time and energy on gathering metrics, without putting attention on actual expected impacts. This report is meant to help describe why and how change will happen, and can be built on moving forward.
- **Using a mixed-methods approach**, which “weaves together multiple forms of qualitative and quantitative methods and data to get a more rounded picture of change”.<sup>5</sup> This includes assessing how the collaborative contributed to desired outcomes.<sup>6</sup> It also includes identifying the perceptions and reflections of diverse stakeholders, and assuming that this data is not less valid or meaningful than quantitative data.<sup>7</sup> This is in line with previous findings on the value of considering different ways of knowing, especially Indigenous knowledge, in conservation work.

A renewed collaborative could facilitate partner capacity-building for partners on monitoring, evaluation and strategic learning, including tools, training and peer learning,

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.evaluationinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Strategic-Learning-Coffman-and-Beer.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/evaluating-systems-change-results-inquiry-framework>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/C4D-Hub/Understand-causes/Investigate-Causal-Attribution-and-Contribution>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.equitableeval.org/framework>

possibly in cooperation with other BC collaboratives. There is an extensive literature on this topic, e.g., [this tool for assessing ecological recovery](#). It could also be useful to revisit the baseline ecosystem assessment, quantitative indicators and draft “Monitoring, Evaluation and Strategic Learning Framework” from the *Biodiversity Conservation Strategy*.

It may be helpful to identify quantitative indicators to measure changes resulting from the collaborative’s work. These could be useful in applying for and reporting to funders on program/project expected goals and actual outcomes. Sample indicators of long-term impact that could be further developed, possibly in cooperation with other Dry Interior conservation groups, include :

- reduced habitat loss on private and/or public land
- increased species and ecosystems at risk and species of cultural concern
- increased securement and management of conservation lands
- restoration and enhancement at four levels of biodiversity (ecosystem, habitat, species, genetic)
- healthier ecosystem functioning, as reported by Indigenous community members (e.g., hunting and fishing success, ability to harvest food and medicines, etc)

## 3.2 Goals

### Deep shifts in attitude and mindset among decision makers, those doing conservation work and general public

As discussed in the “impact-focused” section above (including [Figure 2](#)), research and frameworks on systems change suggest that identifying and working to shift attitudes and ways of thinking is a powerful way to contribute to deep and meaningful impact.

Indigenous participants several key attitude shifts they believe could contribute to better conservation results:

- Increased acknowledgement of humans as part of the ecosystem and recognition of the natural laws of the tmix<sup>w</sup> (the nsyilxcən word that most closely translates as “ecology”, and includes everything above the land, water, insects, people, animals, plants and medicines).
- Rebalancing the primacy of economic growth and autonomy of private landowners with ecosystem-centred ethics - **“the ecosystem drives decisions rather than humans making the call.”**
- Increased use of Two-eyed Seeing - Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Western science - in public and private land use planning.

- Honouring syilx / Okanagan people's role and expertise as caretakers of the land and water in this territory - ***“a deep connection and healing relationship with the land is the first part of reconciliation.”***

These participants also provided suggestions for how to shift attitudes and mindsets in conservation work:

- Present less information, focus on key messages. Use statistics and research sparingly, and send additional information as follow up if needed.
- Allow ample time for discussion, reflection time and integration. Discussion may be more important than information.
- Create space and work at your comfort level as a facilitator in working with complexity, nuance and grey areas, topics that are emotional and personal, and topics that address power dynamics. All of these are things that we have been taught do not always “belong” in a work setting. These are key aspects of collaboration. It is important to broach these topics in a way that meets people where they are and ensures they are in a zone that is outside of their comfort level, but not in a “panic zone”. If they are too far out of their comfort zone, it can decrease their ability to shift their thinking.
- Ensure meetings are participatory. Tapestry regularly draws from [Liberating Structures](#), which provides a menu of 33 participatory structures that offer alternative approaches to working together.
- Working towards illuminated and harmonizing areas of confusion or conflicting views. (For example, how to make sense of development or economic goals versus conservation and environmental goals or how best to work with both Indigenous knowledge and worldviews and with Western science and management.)
- Understanding that those we work with will be at different levels of readiness for understanding and making shifts.
- Being ready to repeat key messages often and to accommodate various levels of knowledge, understanding, communication and working styles.

### **Support stronger implementation and accountability for existing conservation-related laws, regulations, policies, plans and standards by working collaboratively with all levels of government**

Most earlier SOSCP work in this area focused on local government. While this is still very much seen as a priority, participants expressed strong interest in *strengthening the provincial and federal institutional framework* since they believe that many biodiversity threats arise from its limitations. The collaborative could become a forum for discussion and cooperation among Indigenous, government and non-government partners to identify gaps, weaknesses and

needed improvements, promote collective action to address key issues and provide technical assistance where needed.

- ***Engage higher level decision-makers at the provincial level to increase enforcement and standards for Crown land and licences for forestry, ranching and agriculture, road-building, and managing recreation activities.*** Key areas include protection and management of species at risk, fish, wildlife, watersheds and Crown land.
- ***Work to catalyse communication and coordination within and among agencies with conflicting mandates and help to harmonize complementary programs.*** For example, conflicting provincial agency mandates include encouraging and permitting extractive activities vs. conserving biodiversity vs. managing recreation on Crown land. A collaborative could bring representatives of provincial agencies into the same room to find the appropriate balance for meeting conservation priorities in balance with other priorities. It could also help coordinate and harmonize complementary programs, e.g., NGO, Indigenous, and federal and provincial government fish and wildlife protection initiatives.
- ***Continue to provide technical support to local governments, and work to strengthen regulatory tools such as Official Community Plans and Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Areas (ESDPAs) for sensitive habitats.*** Regional and local government staff and decision-makers are key partners due to their pivotal role in land use management and planning. Poorly managed development and urban growth continue to be seen as significant threats to important, sensitive species and ecosystems, especially in valley bottoms. Work includes providing data, science and technical guidance to help officials better integrate environmental considerations into local planning and decision-making (Abs, 2021; See Section 4). Feedback also suggested a need to strengthen the role of local governments in implementing provincial laws and regulations through including conservation priorities in Official Community Plans, and retain and strengthen key local regulatory tools such as Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Areas (ESDPAs) for sensitive habitats.

***SOSCP could be a more effective force for nature and species at risk by coordinating a watchdog role to influence local government boards and councils on land development policies and decisions. - NGO partner***

### **Increased effectiveness of on-the-ground conservation and stewardship**

Participants noted that there is much to be done in conservation and it can be at times feel difficult to determine priorities. In addition, change will require a comprehensive approach, combining different types of programming to to achieve desired results. A key aspect of this

evaluation is understanding what priorities *the collaborative* should focus on to ensure that conservation and environmental work is most effective (which is a different question than what work is needed in the conservation sector more generally). Findings suggested the following priorities to ensure that on-the-ground work is as effective as possible:

- ***Update previous science and research work and incorporate TEK (including revisiting and possibly updating the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy).*** A few participants emphasized a need to ensure that the collaborative pays attention to what work will be most effective, based on scientific evidence. This includes developing a plan for how scientific and technical knowledge is shared, collected, interpreted and used by partners. This could be developed as part of a broader strategic plan for the collaborative. This could involve building on the Biodiversity Strategy, ecosystem especially the mapping done by the SOSCP Science Committee around 2006. This should include engagement with Indigenous organisations and TEKK to ensure that the strategy incorporates Indigenous knowledge, broader ecosystem health topics, such as water, land and air quality,, and Indigenous land management practices.
- ***Investigate how to work with the SO Conservation Fund to ensure it aligns with the updated vision and approach of this collaborative (i.e. incorporating Indigenous worldview, focus on ecosystem health as well as biodiversity).*** The [South Okanagan Conservation Fund](#) was a particularly successful part of the SOSCP, which should be continued and expanded. That being said, the fund is now a separate entity from the SOSCP, so any changes would involve collaboration between the administrators of the fund and the SOSCP. Investigation of revisions to the fund should also be done with engagement of Indigenous organisations and TEKK, as above.
- ***Increased support for Indigenous management practices.*** There was a strong suggestion to focus on ensuring that more lands in the SO-S region are managed by Indigenous communities and organisations, using management practices based on with Indigenous knowledge and worldviews. Findings emphasized key differences between how land and water is currently managed versus Indigenous land management. Indigenous partners and TEKKs emphasized that 80% of the world's biodiversity remains on Indigenous managed lands, and that Indigenous peoples do not manage these lands in a way that focuses on the onerous metrics and monitoring that characterises the Western-science based approach to land management. In contrast, Indigenous land management focuses on "observation of the complex whole" and "ecosystem integrity". Findings suggested that considering how Crown lands are managed are a key aspect of increased support for Indigenous management practices. That being said, there is a need to investigate exactly what the role of a collaborative like SOSCP would be, given its historical on technical staff and initiatives rather than government-to-government.
- ***Increase harmonization among private land stewardship programs and reduce gaps***

**and redundancies in conservation work.** Findings pointed to the value of the collaborative in continuing to promote communication and cooperation among groups doing private land stewardship work to share and harmonize approaches and practices and reduce gaps and overlaps. Partners suggested that this happened in a less formal way in the past, so there may be an opportunity to do this harmonization in a more systematic or formal way moving forward.

- **Securement of conservation lands that considers Indigenous Rights.** Securement is seen as one of the most effective strategies employed by conservation collaboratives and one of SOSCP's greatest successes. Findings suggest the need for greater consideration of Indigenous rights in securement processes. The recent report [Respect and Responsibility: Integrating Indigenous Rights and Private Conservation in Canada](#) suggests that private land conservation has often occurred without a full appreciation and understanding of the impacts on Indigenous rights and title, and "examines key structures that can inform an approach to private land conservation practice that is respectful of Indigenous rights and title, including: Canadian constitutional law, international law and standards and best practices". Many organisations are working to address this issues; see, for example, the [Nature Conservancy of Canada framework](#).
- **Increased capacity among those doing conservation work.** Another approach to ensure increased effectiveness of conservation work is for the collaborative to support capacity-building for partners and members of the coordinating committee, including developing awareness, knowledge and skills and helping to secure resources and funding, staff and volunteers.

### 3.3 Vision

A key part of relaunching the collaborative will be to review, refine and agree on a common vision for the organisation. Appendix 1 includes the following suggested draft vision statement, which is based on the findings of this evaluation, for consideration by participants in the renewed organisation:

We are engaging in restoration and regeneration of South-Okanagan Similkameen ecosystems and healing relationships among tmix<sup>w</sup>, and between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples. We are working toward climate change mitigation and adaptation, including building resilience and addressing unequal impacts on species, ecosystems and human communities (i.e., climate justice).

## Restoration and regeneration of healthy ecosystems in the South Okanagan-Similkameen

One of the key questions that guided this evaluation was “How might the Indigenous world view, and Indigenous land management affect the foundational underpinnings, vision, and approach taken to conservation and the processes used?”.

Existing SOSCP documents reflect a Western conservation science-based worldview, focusing on biodiversity as a key outcome. Discussions with members of Indigenous organisations and those working with Indigenous knowledge systems and practices suggested that **although the concept of biodiversity is important, it could be seen as an indicator of a healthy environment or ecosystem rather than a goal in itself**.

A major part of the work of this collaborative moving forward would be to continue to work with these two worldviews, and identify a “two eyed seeing” approach to managing land and assessing success of conservation work. In the meantime, we suggest that a focus on “ecosystem health” may be an area of common ground that those from a variety of perspectives will resonate with.

*Always envision the future and children, and the health of the water, air and land.  
-Indigenous participant*

*We are talking about species going extinct, but what about the health of the land itself? -  
xwestikin (Chris Armstrong), TEKK*

## Healing relationships within the tmix<sup>w</sup>, and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples

The second part of the vision emphasizes the opportunity for a collaborative such as this to help heal relationships. These relationships include:

- **Relationships within the tmix<sup>w</sup>**. This is the nsyilxcən word that most closely translates as “ecology”. tmix<sup>w</sup> includes everything above the land, water, insects, people, animals, plants and medicines. Healing these relationships among the different aspects is one way to understand what it means for ecosystems to be healthy. This part of the vision also emphasizes the relationship between humans and the rest of the tmix<sup>w</sup>.

Indigenous worldviews and Indigenous knowledge are based on deep understanding, skills and practice that involve deep observation and stewardship of the tmix<sup>w</sup>. Some participants suggested that understanding and achieving this aspect of the vision will

require a shift in mindset, as discussed in the [Goals](#) section. They suggested that Western society and Western science based conservation are built on a perception that humans are separate from the rest of the natural world. They noted that this has played out in either dominating or controlling the natural world, or removing humans entirely, neither of which seems to result in healthy ecosystems.

*The way you make decisions based on Indigenous world view is quite different - in western law: humans get to dictate, but in Indigenous law: animals/land make the rules and humans follow. The biggest challenge in reconciliation is deeply understanding that the origin of the laws is almost reversed. People talk about the use of TEK, but we should talking about the use of data and information derived from the TEK, but not the TEK itself. For non-practitioners of the knowledge it is hard to make sense of it. -Indigenous participant*

*Without trust we are not going to be able to engage the people that we need in these projects. - Indigenous participant*

- ***Relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.*** Many aspects of this suggested approach, outcomes and vision speak to the need for and importance of reconciliation in conservation work. This approach is important in terms of:
  - A recognition of the mistreatment and inequity toward Indigenous peoples, which is currently being addressed within many conservation and environmental initiatives in B.C.
  - Meaningful engagement of Indigenous communities in conservation work in particular will contribute to reconciliation since “a deep connection and healing relationship with the land is the first part of reconciliation.”
  - Those carrying out conservation from a Western science worldview are being invited and encouraged to shift their perspective and worldview to acknowledge and work with Indigenous rights and title, world views and approaches.

*The relationship of Indigenous people with the land needs to heal. The job in reconciliation is to support indigenous people to do that [through] money, support, [and allowing] them to live life. - Indigenous participant*

**Climate change mitigation and adaptation, including building resilience and addressing unequal impacts on species, ecosystems and human communities, i.e., climate justice.**

Although participants did not frequently mention climate change, this topic is increasingly seen as a key factor to consider in biodiversity conservation and natural resource management (Abs, 2021a). It is likely to be a key element in the vision, and a topic for discussion among

collaborative members, both as a factor in species, habitat and ecosystem restoration and enhancement, and in current discussions and initiatives on the role of nature/natural capital in climate change mitigation and adaptation. See, for example, [new federal programs](#) in this area, such as the [Natural Climate Solutions Fund](#), which is being implemented through multiple federal departments (beyond Environment and Climate Change Canada). .

*Drastic changes are coming to the climate, we need to change what we are doing fundamentally. - NGO partner*

*What we are seeing on the land with climate change, development, pressures on water and wildlife, it is frightening to bear witness to this. ... [we] need to respect the wildlife and in turn respect ourselves and future generations. - Indigenous participant*

### 3.4 Governance: structure, members, collaborative processes and admin.

Relaunching a conservation umbrella group in the region provides an opportunity to rethink collaborative governance. There are several initial questions for partners to consider:

1. What should the organisation be called? SOSCP and other regions have used “program” while other BC umbrella groups, including the new Thompson-Nicola Conservation Collaborative, use “collaborative” or “partnership”. Respondents suggested moving away from “program.”
2. During SOSCP, members were called “partners/Partners”; should this continue? (There were no apparent objections to this term.)
3. In the past, organisations “signed on” and were listed on the website and SOSCP materials. How should partners “join” the group: a letter of intent, a charter, etc.? Another collaborative that Tapestry has worked with is now considering having partners fill out a yearly survey as a requirement for being considered a member. This would serve the dual purpose of clarifying the current content list while also ensuring regular feedback from members.

The following draft ideas on structure, membership, collaborative processes and administration are based on participant suggestions but need discussion and approval by the new organisation’s members. (Additional governance suggestions, based on the experience of nine BC collaboratives, are found in [Abs, 2021a](#).)

#### Possible Structure

Most participants suggested a leadership or coordinating group, similar to the current “Executive” (executive committee) and a general membership.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> One Indigenous participant also expressed concern about having more than one committee, and suggested a more “flat” structure. This may be good to keep in mind in terms of being intentional about which decisions should

**Leadership:** This group will take the lead on managing, coordinating and steering the organisation. Suggestions include:

- Consider new names such as *coordination team*, *coordinating committee* or *steering committee* (or other).
- Identify and strengthen roles, commitments and responsibilities: e.g., take the lead in defining organisational goals and governance (in collaboration with partners); expand fundraising role; secure in-kind donations for paid staff, office, equipment.
- Determine composition of the leadership team (ie. TEKK, land trust, stewardship/outreach org, naturalist club, user-group representatives, etc.)
- Ensure that members have time and energy to fulfil duties; involvement should be part of their work, not “off the side of the desk”, e.g., considering “signing on” to ToRs or similar. Consider offering payment for key tasks or tasks that are more time intensive, to make it more sustainable for members of the coordinating team to carry out important work and to reduce burnout of coordinating team members and hired contractors.
- Consider reintroducing a two-tiered structure with a senior-level group, e.g., steering committee that makes strategic decisions (meets less often), and a technical level group more involved in management and coordination.
- Ensure substantive Indigenous representation in this group, with payment/ honoraria as needed to ensure equity and inclusion.
- Aim for high-level representatives from member organisations, e.g., leaders and senior managers who have decision-making powers and/or are connected with decision-makers (e.g., senior staff). Aim to bring back senior level representatives from government agencies.
- Consider having elected officials play a role to better connect with Indigenous, federal, provincial and local government decision-making.
- Seek members with experience in managing organisations, including staffing, administration and financial matters.
- Seek champions with good connections and networks in key sectors, including but going beyond conservation NGOs, e.g., ranching, agriculture, industry, recreation and tourism, academia.
- Think big: conservation leadership and playing an active role in supporting change is not the same as advocacy.
- Consider defining a period of service (e.g., 2-4 years), with rolling turnover, and have a succession plan to help ensure continuity in leadership and organisational memory.
- Hold regularly scheduled meetings with strong agendas on substantive topics to maintain communication, interest and continuity.

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be made by the full group versus by the leadership committee. It is also good to consider that not everyone has the capacity to take part in every decision or every task.

*Get back to roots, more engagement with partners, more than one meeting every 2-3 years, need to meet two times a year and have meaningful dialogue between partners. -NGO partner*

*It is a partnership with government, we want them to be in the room working on policy together. -NGO partner*

**Membership/partners:** Suggestions regarding members include:

- Build on the engagement done during this evaluation project by reaching out to the contact list.
- Contact SOSCP partners with the aim of renewing past relationships among organisations and individuals and building on their experience.
- Contact new organisations, parties and sectors to attract new groups and individuals who can bring diverse capabilities, perspectives and resources, e.g., data, information, expertise, funds. Work through individual champions and sectoral leaders to engage new groups, e.g., sustainable wine-growers, conservation-minded ranchers.
- Expand beyond “a coalition of the willing”: Aim for a “big tent” umbrella group that includes parties that may have diverse, even conflicting conservation perspectives, for example, hunters and anglers who may be committed conservationists.
- Reach out to those most needed at the table to address challenging issues.
- Provide resources to support Indigenous participation, based on the type of participation and agreed compensation.
- Consider re-creating sustained or flexible actions teams and working groups for priority topics.
- Provide various ways to participate to accommodate differing capacities and levels of interest among members, e.g., full members, observers, technical advisors. Figure 3 shows types of participation favoured by survey respondents.
- Favour barrier-free venues and engagement methods, including providing for child care.

Participants identified various key groups who may/may not have been involved previously (see [membership](#) as of 2020 here): ranching and agricultural associations i.e. BC Grape Growers, [Sustainable Winegrowing BC](#) (program of BC Wine Growers Council, BC Cattlemen’s, BC Fruit Growers); universities and research groups (UBCO, TRU); fish and game associations and clubs: recreation groups (motorized, e.g., ATV & non-motorized, e.g., hikers, naturalists). See Appendix 5 for a list of possible participant organisations. Not all of these groups will be appropriate as partners in the relaunched collaborative, but it may be important to engage them in the collaborative’s education, outreach and field-based programs. This will help to ensure that they are on board with the idea that conservation is important, that resources are limited, and that

land must be used sustainably for all interests.

*It is good to have all the voices in the room. If people feel excluded, they take a reactionary position to all decisions. - NGO partner*

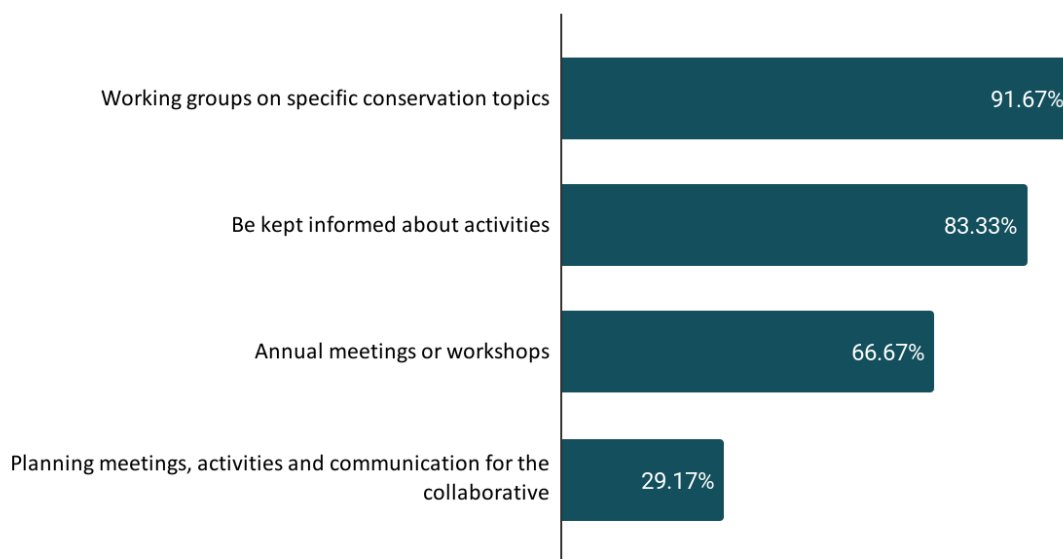
*The point is that we can't transcend the tension that exists in conservation without inclusive dialogue. - NGO partner*

*Need to get back to having teams (stewardship/outreach/TEK/land use) but ensure they don't become siloed again. - NGO partner*

*Need to look at the parts of the Venn diagram that overlap between the interest groups. Get everyone talking in the big tent. - NGO partner*

Figure 3. Future Involvement in Collaborative Conservation by Partners

#### Future Involvement in Collaborative Conservation by Partners



### Possible Communication and Collaboration Guidelines

Communication is the glue holding a collaborative together. Participants suggested ways to establish and maintain communication:

- **Invite participation by diverse groups, sectors and disciplines** with various values and perspectives to promote dialogue and cooperation towards common goals.
- **Reinvigorate communication processes and channels** between and among the leadership group, partners/members, advisors and observers.

- **Survey participants to identify preferred communication methods**, e.g., website, newsletter, social media, annual or more frequent in-person and on-line meetings? Other BC collaboratives note an up-to-date website, newsletter and at least one meeting a year are essential to maintaining momentum (Absa, 2021).
- **Convene regular opportunities for formal and informal contact**, e.g., meet-and-greet (face-to-face, when possible) meetings, events, workshops and forums. Motivation and enthusiasm is maintained by networking and sharing among the leadership group, partners and the public. For example, SOSCP partners often networked through the annual Meadowlark Festival and annual Nature Festival Expo events.
- **Develop communication methods to help avoid overlap among programs/projects**; reduce competition for the same funding and seek partnerships, e.g., inventory of current projects, regular meetings and newsletters listing current projects.
- **Create an external communication plan and strategies**, to understand the audiences and goals of any communication. This would focus on communication among partners (for example, including contact information for all partners, listing events and opportunities for connecting with partners). It may also include identifying common messaging and outreach to key target groups and the general public. A communication plan should be defined once the key strategies and purpose of the relaunched collaborative have been agreed on.

## Suggested Administration

The following are suggestions for organisational management:

- **Support a paid staff person**, likely a “coordinator” rather than “program manager”, given the initial focus, possibly a part-time position to start, focused on communication, meeting and event organisation, supporting the leadership group, and organising funding proposals and reporting. Moving forward, this position could grow into a full time position, but it may also be helpful to hire two part-time staff members so that they can support each other and offer complementary skills.
- **Seek stable, consistent core funding for the staff person** through various sources, including government, foundations, and private. We acknowledge that this is a big undertaking and many working in conservation and the non-profit sector more broadly struggle with securing long-term funding. However, there are currently enough funds to support staffing during a transition period to identify sources of longer-term funding. Commitment from senior agencies, particularly government, may be the best way to fund base level staffing and operations for the collaborative. It may not be possible for one single agency to fund this completely, but funding from several different agencies could be combined.

- **Secure a reliable, long-term financial administrator.** As of May 2021, the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association is providing this function for the SOSCP. The program will need to determine whether this will continue to be a good fit for the collaborative moving forward.

*Stewardship in the South Okanagan is fraught with challenges from buy-in from landowners and local government. The Okanagan is small and working together is key. A program manager needs to work collaboratively with agencies in the Okanagan to achieve goals, and to foster and maintain good working relationships. - Local government Partner*

**Funding:** A strong incentive for getting the new collaborative off the ground quickly is the availability of new and expanded opportunities for significant conservation funding. Many funders encourage joint funding applications for Indigenous-led, Indigenous-involved, larger-scale partnerships. Funders are also looking for the kind of strategic, outcome-focused programming that can often be effectively delivered by multi-faceted collaborations.

Suggestions include:

- Get a “quick start” on collaboration by pursuing federal funding for 1-2 key collaborative and/or Indigenous-led projects from Environment Canada and other federal natural resource-related departments. It may also be helpful to look at funding outside of conservation or environmental streams, such as community-based funding.

*The problem in the conservation world is not a lack of knowledge. We know but don't act. We know but don't do [because we are] limited by our financial capacity, social capacity and the market value for land. - Government partner*

*Some SOSCP activities seemed to compete with the delivery functions of the partners. [Adopting] a clear funding strategy that is not seen as competitive is important, e.g., take a portion directly from the SOCF to fund SOSCP operations. - NGO partner*

## **Suggestions for Meaningful Indigenous Engagement**

The following are suggested guidelines to support meaningful Indigenous leadership:

- **Engage early and throughout:** ensure that Indigenous organisations can contribute substantively to the collaborative vision, governance and activities. Engage with various individuals, as appropriate, including leadership, Elders, Traditional Ecological Knowledge Keepers (TEKK) and technical staff. Provide longer engagement cycles to allow for the busy schedules and capacity limitations.
- **Build on and expand existing Indigenous fish, wildlife, water and habitat conservation initiatives,** working with band/community natural resource management and fish and

wildlife staff. Many communities are already working with Indigenous, provincial and federal government organisations.

- **Support capacity-building through fair and equitable compensation** for Indigenous participants, via honoraria, per diem or hourly contractor consulting rates.
- **Have non-Indigenous people educate themselves and learn from Indigenous partners** about colonialism/shared history; Indigenous rights and title; and Indigenous worldviews, culture, TEK and conservation knowledge and practices. Consider the role of [trauma-informed approaches](#). See Appendix A. References, for helpful resources.

***Get the right people at the table: have meaningful and respectful conversations; don't engage in tokenism or just tick a box on Indigenous representation. -Indigenous participants***

See additional suggestions for meaningfully engaging Indigenous groups in Box 1 and in Abs, 2021b, *TNCI Situation Analysis*, pages 26, 33 and 39.

- Listen deeply.
- Take a holistic approach to conservation; consider everything from soil health to human health to cultural and spiritual aspects.
- Ask before using or sharing knowledge offered to you and identify knowledge-sharing protocols. Report back on how knowledge was used and protocols were followed.
- Have TEKK identify priorities using their own concepts and terms and in the context of living closely with the land. Consider that some biodiversity concepts and a focus on SEAR might not fit with some Indigenous worldviews.
- Remember that TEK may not be shared freely. In many cases, without understanding the worldview from which the knowledge grows, it might be difficult to apply it to the work.
- Work closely with TEKK, giving them time to consider if conservation approaches fit with their knowledge rather than trying to gather their knowledge into guidelines/frameworks.
- Be prepared for language/translation/cultural challenges; allow time and resources for translation from English to nsilxcən and back. Since TEK incorporates story and culture, translation from nsilxcən might need cultural context and interpretation.

**BOX 1. Guidelines for Building Trust with Traditional Ecological Knowledge Keepers (TEKK)**

*It is up to your organisations to find the right people, the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Keepers, to speak to. - caylx (Richard Armstrong), TEKK*

### **Technical support for local government (Shared Environmental Planner/Land Use Biologist)**

Technical support provided through the shared environmental planner/land use biologist role was highly valued by municipal planners. It provided expertise and advice to municipalities without the resources to hire a staff biologist or environmental planner, helping to ensure that habitat and ecosystem protection was considered in planning and development decisions, e.g., using tools such as biodiversity mapping and Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Areas. Most local government interviewees felt this position should be continued.

It was also suggested that over time that the shared environmental planner/LU Bio role was not well positioned to effectively develop relationships with key parties such as decision-makers, staff, and community groups. Local governments, especially elected officials and senior managers, face competing demands and pressures. It was challenging to identify and implement practical ways for local authorities to balance environmental protection and development.

*The model could be improved, but is still valuable. Need political will, need it built into an Official Community Plan, in order to follow through at planning level. Otherwise there will be loopholes developers can exploit, all that gets missed if we don't have a biologist input from an impartial source. A QEP hired by a developer will always have a bias. - Local government partner*

*The shared Land Use Biologist is a difficult, sometimes adversarial role. -NGO partner*

*There is always a trade off when we present things to local government. [As staff,] we can't just say don't develop here; we have to figure out a way to make it work ... but SOSCP can say that. - NGO partner*

*There need to be clearer lines of hierarchy for who is reporting to who and how is that being managed. - Government partner*

Detailed analysis of and suggestions for technical support for local government are included in Appendix 3. Many of these are framed in terms of shared position across municipalities. More collaboration will be required with local governments to find a structure for providing technical support that will meet the complex goals for this work.

## 5.0 Next Steps

*People need to be educated to think longer term; educational processes are needed through this kind of collaboration. Need a shift from rights of individuals to responsibilities to the whole. - calyx (Richard Armstrong), TEKK*

- Transition phase during 2022, with goals to: 1) Identify coordinating team and contractor, 2) hold several meetings with the goal of re-engaging existing members and engaging new members (in particular, getting commitment from senior management for a relaunched collaborative), 3) identify sources of funding, 4) identify (goals) and high-level strategic directions, based on gaps and priorities identified in this evaluation, and funding opportunities available. The SOSCP has funding available to support a part-time contractor, and are seeking funding for a consultant to support the transition process.
- Launch phase starting in early 2023, with goals to: 1) Adapt official terms of reference for coordinating group and membership (see suggestions in Appendix 1), 2) Review and update staffing: continue with existing part-time contractor and add staff based on secured funding, 3) Develop Collaborative agreement for members, 4) Create an internal and external communication plan, including an updated website, 5) Prioritise the following areas of collaborative work/key initiatives:
  - Identifying specific strategic priorities and initiatives, with direction provided on the findings from this report, as well as any updates to the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. Though some partners we talked to suggested a need for a detailed strategic plan as a next step, there is also a desire to keep any strategic planning process and updating of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy short and action focused.
  - Projects that focus on reconciliation through conservation (see [Centring Indigenous Leadership and Knowledge](#) section).
  - Monitoring, evaluation and strategic learning (see [Impact-focused](#) section).

*[SOSCP] should continue connecting with conservation initiatives within the region, keeping it local and small initially. Keeping a smaller focus can enable the organisation to continue. - NGO partner*

*[SOSCP] can help individuals and groups with how to be an advocate for nature. - NGO partner*

## Appendix 1. Draft Terms of Reference or Partnership Agreement for Conservation Collaborative for the South Okanagan-Similkameen

A key message emerging from these findings is that Indigenous worldviews and perspectives, knowledge, and natural resources and environmental management practices should be foundational to the vision, goals and approaches of the renewed collaborative. As noted in Section X, SOSCP, like most BC regional conservation collaboratives, was established in the early 2000s without substantive engagement of First Nations. In the interim, despite efforts to connect, capacity limitations often limited Indigenous participation. However, over the last decade, most BC conservation initiatives have initiated various types of collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations.

Participants emphasized the importance of **revisiting and redefining conservation and collaboration goals** early in the relaunch, including sharing priorities and expectations. Indigenous organisations should be fully involved. The following are draft elements to consider when setting new directions for the renewed collaborative. The leadership group can work with partners to review, regroup and refine these ideas into a vision, goals, objectives and principles when defining governance. These can be set out in a terms of reference or similar document which can be reviewed and revised at regular intervals, e.g., every two years.

### Draft Vision Statement

*The ecosystems of the South-Okanagan Similkameen are healthy and thriving, with healed and transformed relationships among tmix<sup>w</sup>, and between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples. We are also working meaningfully together toward climate change mitigation and adaptation in the region, including building resilience and addressing unequal impacts on species, ecosystems and human communities (i.e., climate justice).*

### Possible Goals

The functions performed by BC conservation collaboratives generally fall on a continuum between coordination and program delivery. As some rebuilding is needed for the relaunch after a two-year hiatus, it seems advisable to start with a focus on communication and coordination functions. This will allow a new constellation of groups to identify common goals and appropriate roles and niches for partners, seeking alignment and common purpose. Programming can grow from there.

The following are possible goals to be considered for adoption by the collaborative:

- **Improve conservation outcomes** through strategic, focused collaborative efforts.

- **Provide a strong, multi-party collective voice** for conservation in order to respond to continued threats and pressures on biodiversity.
- **Support Indigenous leadership and participation in conservation**, including addressing Indigenous conservation and natural resource management priorities.
- **Support the use of Two-eyed Seeing in science and knowledge:** Foster respect for and understanding of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Western science in collaborative conservation efforts.
- **Work to harmonize conservation and sustainable land management approaches and strategies** across diverse land tenures, with a focus on SEAR and culturally important species and landscapes.
- **Inform and promote stronger conservation-related laws, policies and plans**, including improved management and enforcement of activities on Crown and private lands.

### Possible Objectives

- **Think on a regional landscape scale but work on a local level** to support “whole-of-landscape” approaches and connectivity, including cross-regional and transborder work.
- **Identify and address conservation gaps:** Triage priorities, focus on key strategies and actions, and secure resources for implementation. Investigate whether there is a partner well-positioned to take on the work to fill it or a partner currently involved in some capacity? New projects should be run by the leadership team so that there is not duplication of efforts.
- **Support communication and networking:** Build trust and positive relationships among diverse parties to find common ground and identify collective goals: “learn what each other is doing”.
- **Foster cooperation and collaboration** among subsets of partners on specific programs and projects.
- **Increase efficiency and effectiveness for better conservation results:** Combine efforts, encourage “niche partitioning”, reduce overlap, use resources more efficiently and seek synergies.
- **Promote sharing of data, information, techniques and technical resources;** pool information, where useful (while respecting Indigenous and other confidentiality protocols.) **Have Indigenous organisations, Elders and TEKs share** Indigenous world views, values and land management approaches to strengthen conservation efforts.
- **Boost funding for conservation** through sharing funding information, combining fund-raising efforts, and creating innovative partnerships to attract large grants.
- **Support [capacity-building](#) for partners**, including developing awareness, knowledge and skills and helping to secure resources and funding, staff and volunteers.

- **Monitor and evaluate conservation results in order to assess progress, demonstrate success and promote strategic learning** for partners, funders and the community, using qualitative and quantitative methods.

## Possible Principles for Collaboration

- **Recognition of Indigenous Title and Rights** and federal and provincial government commitments to implementing the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP), including BC Bill 41 – [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) (DRIPA) and pending federal [UNDRIP legislation](#). [This approach](#) includes renewed Government-to-Government (G2G) initiatives at the leadership levels.
- **Ecosystem-based approaches:** Adopt a holistic approach to conservation and land management that recognizes the interrelatedness of air, water, land, soil, animal and human life, and protects biodiversity at ecosystem, habitat, species and genetic levels.
- **Climate change as an overarching theme:** Consider impacts on biodiversity and human communities, including issues related to shifting baselines, maintaining connectivity and wildlife corridors, adaptation, resilience and climate justice - addressing the inequitable impacts of climate change.
- **Impact-focused collaboration:** Address the root causes of biodiversity loss through actions that will have a significant impact on conservation in the region, including increased protection of species and ecosystems at risk and species of cultural concern.

## Possible Strategies

- **Start small-scale and relatively informal:** Focus on information-sharing, relationship-building, identifying goals and programming priorities and build “organically” from there, based on participants’ interests, commitments, emerging leadership and available resources.
- **Developing a strategic plan or list of strategic priorities** to set a direction for the next 2-3 years, in part through revisiting the *Biodiversity Conservation Strategy*.
- **Develop and regularly revisit the collective vision, goals and objectives** to help ensure that action teams/working groups aren’t “working in silos” but rather coordinating their actions to create synergies.
- **Maintain open and regular communication** from board/leadership group to partners, among partners and with program managers and contractors, e.g., website, newsletter, list serve, annual (or more frequent) meetings.
- **Design some bigger projects involving more partners**, aiming for greater impact; suggestions include wetlands conservation and land securement.

- **Design collaborative projects involving partners and (any future) Shared Environmental Planner**, with a focus on local government. (See Section 4.0).
- Revisit the proposed “Strategic Directions” and “Opportunities for Action” in the ***Biodiversity Conservation Strategy***, many of which are still valid.
- **Increase the emphasis on monitoring progress** towards defined goals and measurable conservation outcomes for programs and projects, and at the regional collaborative level. (See section 3.3.)

## Appendix 2. Indigenous Participation in Collaborative Conservation

### Findings from the [Thompson-Nicola Conservation Initiative](#) (Abs, 2021b) (adapted to the SO-S)

Background research for a new conservation collaborative in the Thompson-Nicola region concluded that early and full participation by Indigenous organisations and communities in governance and programs will be fundamental to success.

#### Conservation Priorities for Indigenous Communities (based on 15 interviews)

The conservation priorities of the Indigenous groups interviewed focus largely on the role of ecosystem and species health in supporting Indigenous food security; restoring watersheds; improving land and water management practices; protecting archeological and cultural resources; and contributing to community safety and economic development.

The most common areas of current Indigenous conservation work are fisheries, forestry, water/watershed and wildlife management, including several SEAR projects. Indigenous managers, technical staff, Elders, TEKK and community members have significant scientific, technical, planning and field expertise in areas such as:

- forestry, including woodlot management, reforestation/tree planting and road rehabilitation
- fisheries and fish habitat enhancement
- conservation of SAR and threatened habitats on reserve
- partnerships with federal and provincial government agencies, universities and other researchers and consultants, including First Nations-owned consultancies
- ecological restoration and stewardship programs, including with youth
- combining Western science, Traditional Ecological Knowledge and local knowledge in conservation

Much Indigenous conservation work is driven by Crown tenure referrals and environmental review of large-scale developments, both of which are relevant to the work of a conservation partnership. First Nations receive referrals for federal and provincial tenure, licensing and permitting based on the “duty to consult” under Indigenous Rights and Title. They are also heavily involved in environmental assessments and related compensation and monitoring programs for major development projects, including co-design of innovative cumulative effects frameworks, for example, cumulative effects studies for [moose](#) in the Thompson-Okanagan.

The 2021 TNCI [report](#) offered the following guidance to help ensure Indigenous engagement in collaborative conservation, which could also be useful in the South Okanagan-Similkameen context.

**Many Indigenous groups are interested in collaborating on conservation as long as Indigenous Title and Rights and agreements related to [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#) are respected.** First Nations should be recognized and treated as an order of government, not “stakeholders”. Collaborative governance should recognize federal and provincial government commitments to implementing UNDRIP, including BC Bill 41 – [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) (DRIPA) and pending federal [UNDRIP legislation](#). [This approach](#) includes Government-to-Government (G2G) relationships based on recognizing Indigenous Rights and Title, respect, cooperation and partnership. Collaborative conservation provides a rich opportunity to show how DRIPA can be implemented in a practical way “on the ground”.

**The relative roles of Indigenous leaders and participants and federal and provincial government representatives should be carefully defined in Terms of Reference** (or similar), given ongoing G2G discussions on DRIPA implementation and decision-making under the *Wildlife Act* and *Forest Act*, including concerns about specific federal and provincial government policies and programs.

**Indigenous participation is more likely if the initiative is positioned as a technical collaboration among groups – separate from G2G discussions being held at the leadership level – and if potential community benefits are highlighted.** Technical topics should be separated from statutory topics being addressed elsewhere. Participation by technical, rather than leadership staff could be encouraged. These approaches could also help:

- Incorporate TEK/Indigenous knowledge and practices from the beginning and during all collaborative work, including work with Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers.
- Position the collaborative as a practical, action-oriented group that will address Indigenous resource management and conservation priorities and help to deliver

tangible benefits to communities in areas such as community health and well-being, food security, cultural heritage and capacity-building.

- Offer support for participation as Indigenous groups/communities are generally overcommitted and under-resourced, e.g., funding and information/data to help them address multiple requests from outside entities.

**Indigenous groups could educate and build the capacity of collaborative partners on Indigenous title and rights, world views, culture, Traditional Ecological Knowledge and conservation practices.** This could be done through programs that build on cross-cultural training already offered to managers and staff of companies working in Indigenous territories.

**Individual and organisational capacity-building is a priority for Indigenous communities, with a focus on transferable, job-oriented skills for community members.** Lack of capacity has often limited Indigenous participation in conservation. Sometimes, groups don't apply for funding, are challenged to deliver on projects, or see work go to consultants when they lack expertise. Even when community members build technical skills through training and work in natural resources sectors (e.g., archeological assessment, environmental monitoring), employment is often temporary or seasonal.

Programs could incorporate training for First Nations crews to do year-round conservation work in areas such as species and habitat inventory and monitoring, invasive species, and habitat restoration and enhancement. Work with Territorial Stewardship Offices/Departments to expand existing Indigenous monitoring programs involving Guardians and Rangers. For example, the [Skul'galt](#) Watchman crew monitors non-forestry activity on the roads and lands of their territory, as well as provincial park and campground activities.

***A goal should be to build capacity at a local First Nations level – to include learning and not just deliverables. Every project should leave capacity that can be used again.***

**Capacity-building on conservation within Indigenous communities is a possible program area.** First Nations in the region collectively manage lands ("reserves") that offer rich opportunities for increased biodiversity and biological productivity. Building conservation capacity could benefit food security (fishing, hunting, foraging) and economic development (more sustainable forestry, ranching and agriculture). Community stewardship programs focused on sound land and water management practices could help protect SEAR, other species and sensitive habitats. Current Indigenous youth stewardship programs could be adapted to new topics and audiences.

## Appendix 3. Technical Support for Local Government

### Overview of SOSCP Shared Environmental Planner/land Use Biologist

SOSCP worked with five local governments to contract a Shared Environmental Planner position, later called a Shared Land Use Biologist (LU Bio). This name change helped to better reflect the nature of the role as a consulting biologist assisting municipal planners in land use decisions. The Shared LU Bio liaised with Qualified Environmental Professionals (QEPs) to review planning decisions and ensure compliance with local environmental protection provisions in plans, policies and zoning and bylaw regulations.

The core role of the Shared LU Bio was to review development applications and provide recommendations for how they did or did not meet environmental bylaws for member governments (Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS), City of Penticton, District of Summerland, Town of Oliver, Town of Osoyoos). The LU Biologist provided technical support - maps, research and guidance - to encourage municipalities to adopt and implement plans and policies to manage urban development and sprawl so as to protect environmental values, including areas with high biodiversity values, including sensitive habitats. Another aim was to build awareness and skills as part of transforming the mindsets of municipal staff and elected officials, going beyond specific projects or development reviews.

The LU Bio worked closely with senior municipal and regional planning staff, and also reported directly to the SOSCP Program Manager. Roles and responsibilities included:

- Taking direction from local government planning directors on what files to review and provide recommendations for
- strengthening conservation and environmental tools and practices
  - By providing scientific and technical expertise and advice for environmental and land use policy and development review processes
- helping ensure that local governments' plans, policies and decisions reflect an integrated approach to biodiversity conservation
- providing expertise on vegetation plantings and shoreline development decisions
- Outreach and education for the public
  - E.g. Attending public hearings and community meetings to provide information on environmental considerations, especially with regard to OCP creation or updates
  - educate the public about Official Community Plans
- Reviewing development permit applications and associated Environmental Impact Assessment reports to:
  - Provide recommendations to planning staff on the appropriate levels of mitigation/avoidance of habitat loss

- providing advice and recommendations to QEPs working on development proposals

## **Benefits and Successes**

The Shared LU Bio role was highly valued by municipal planners because it provided a resource their respective organisations did not have. It helped ensure that habitat and ecosystem protection was considered in planning and development decisions, e.g., using tools such as biodiversity mapping and Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Areas. Most interviewees on this topic (representatives of local government) felt strongly that the Shared Bio position should be continued. Some of the reasons included:

### **Local ecological expertise**

- Planners valued the connections to provincial and federal government, understanding of local ecology, and good value for funds contributed.
- Without this position, local government staff might contract QEPs from outside the region (to avoid sensitivities re: reviewing a local colleague's work), and who may not know local ecosystems. Having a local biologist familiar with the local environment and the valued and sensitive ecosystem and species at risk is an asset.

### **Assist municipalities to understand regulations/reports**

- Having the Shared LU Bio review reports to ensure they followed accepted environmental assessment methods. The municipality reviewed reports if they were straight forward, but for some they weren't even sure if a QEP even visited the site, so it was beneficial just to get a second set of eyes (LU Biologist).
- Helpful when municipalities are questioning recommendations in an environmental assessment.
- Consulted with parks departments, good to have a resource to consult with regarding sensitive habitats rather than hiring a QEP: helped highlight key parameters and how far can the planners could go before they had to hire a QEP.
- Can assist in development and implementation of Official Community Plans, advising on topics like ecosystem connectivity.

### **Cost-effective**

- Cost-effective for municipal governments: received thousands of dollars and a full-time person to help them on topics on which they have no expertise.
- Shared aspect was valued by planners, a small budget item but with big value.
- Budgets are constrained so having someone else who can deliver on key environmental metrics, conservation targets, etc is valuable.
- SOSCP and the shared LU Biologist can undertake research and projects that municipalities can't fund.

### **Regional perspective**

- Ensure consistency in reports and recommendations across the region since they work with various municipalities and know how they are doing things in the whole region. Shared LU Biologist can bring perspective from what other regions were doing; helpful to write reports that are similar to what they have to write in other places – environmental design permit guidelines

### **Broad scope**

- Can coordinate with research bodies like universities
- Provide science-based, non-controversial insights; have a degree of separation
- Can create/translate/communicate educational material for public and politicians
- Conservation Programs are doing work that municipalities can't take on, but municipalities really value

## **Challenges**

It was suggested that over time that the Shared LUB was not well positioned to effectively develop relationships with key parties, e.g., decision-makers, staff, community groups. It was challenging to identify and implement practical ways for local authorities to balance environmental protection and development; local governments, especially elected officials and senior managers, face competing demands and pressures.

### **Interpersonal skills**

- This position requires a highly collaborative, open-minded individual.
- Challenges arose when there were high expectations from LUB; staff needed solid, practical feedback to take back to developers.
- Understanding development is a big part of the work.
- Some municipalities received critical feedback from a QEP on a development report or proposal, but were unsure about the scientific/ technical basis vs. personal opinion.
- Need someone who understands how local government and development processes work and help find a realistic balance between development and environmental protection through providing practical advice.

### **Differing expectations for the role**

- Challenges in understanding land use law, policies and regulations – what is what, what takes precedence – e.g. Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Areas (ESDPAs)
- The shared LUB should respect planners' professional expertise and take a collaborative approach to the work. Planner perceived the shared LU biologist didn't have a balanced perspective and was not able to compromise.
- Planners have to deal with private property rights and law so need a practical approach.

- There were challenges in finding user-friendly, practical ways to help local government staff use technical information and tools, such as mapping and green planning and regulatory tools.

### **More support needed**

- Elected officials did not prioritize the role as much as staff did in some cases. Senior managers are accountable to elected officials and must support staff in their work. Their responsibility to an external technical specialist consultant is less clear.
- That position sometimes had a planner without much biology experience and the resource was used less at that time, since they already had planners on staff.
- It was unclear where the accountability was for who is reporting to who and how is that being managed.
- Many interviewees shared concerns about how challenging this position is, and some questioned whether there is adequate support for the position.

*The role and value of this position will likely become much evident when the RDOS deals with its problems with ESDPA Planning Process. -NGO Partner*

### **Current Needs and Priorities**

There is strong support among local government respondents for reinstating this position, albeit with some refinements. Some municipalities are willing to pay into the program since they do not have the budget for a full-time staff position.

### **Ensure support provided to local government:**

- Has sufficient authority and is invited to all relevant meetings and review processes - (i.e., has authority and scope of work that will make a meaningful difference - not always at the whim of municipalities)
- Has the supervision and guidance needed to feel supported and successful in the position
- Addresses the "awkwardness" or potential conflict of interest of reviewing the work of QEP in the region
- Is able to address and balance the needs of development and planning with the need for environmental protection - finding the appropriate level of "nuance" and "compromise" that doesn't undermine either environment or development.
- Familiarity with the regional species and appropriate plantings different local ecosystems

### **Networking and training:**

- opportunities for more sharing of professional perspectives might help

- Have some training/planning meetings at outset about shared goals, limitations and professional requirements
- Strategic planning done by program manager and planner, working together to decide how to move forward

#### **Planners could help with hiring:**

- Include willing Planners in the hiring process, since they will be working closely with the Biologist
- Some planners acknowledged that there could have been more support from them.

#### **Needs support from the collaborative/program manager/coordinator:**

- The collaborative/staff person needs to provide support; this is not a position SOSCP can just provide and leave – not a municipal position, they are not the supervisor, so they are not doing performance management as with other staff. Needs a lot of dialogue.
- Municipal staff could feed performance-based feedback to the program manager who also needs to provide guidance on working with them.
- Important to have a Program Manager guide the LU Bio - too much work for the biologist without managerial support

#### **Deeper connection and funding from municipalities**

- Some municipalities said they could potentially contribute more funds but if it went much higher they wouldn't see the value in sharing the position
- tried to get the LU Bio sitting at RDOS team meetings, status of different applications and how it intertwined with their work.
- Municipal gov need LU Biologist to advocate from SOSCP position, but need them to understand their perspective. Most areas are set aside for development, but if there are opportunities to create wildlife corridors, etc. they need someone that can see the gov. objectives as well.
- Municipalities suggest they need a LU Biologist who can also identify wins – things that the developer can market, even if they are giving up protection or number of lots. How can they create parks, nature trails, wildlife corridors – need a LU Biologist who can think along those lines would be really beneficial

### **Recommendations based on Discussions with Local Planners**

#### **Ensure that any technical support provided to local governments:**

- Has authority and scope of work that will make a meaningful difference - not just “at the whim” of municipalities--- meaningful role in building partnerships, not just “saying no” - not set up in an adversarial way.

- Addresses the "awkwardness" or potential conflict of interest of reviewing the work of QEP in the region.
- Has appropriate supervision and guidance needed to feel supported and successful in the position, involved early in the planning and review process.
- Is able to address and balance the needs of development and planning with the need for environmental protection - finding the appropriate level of "nuance" and "compromise" that doesn't undermine either environment or development.
- Has familiarity with the regional species and appropriate plantings for various local ecosystems.
- Is based on clear terms of reference for the position requiring an appropriate technical background; experience with local government; and interpersonal skills, including communication and collaboration.

### **Collaboration is essential**

- Number one recommendation: Hire someone collaborative with an interdisciplinary background and experience integrating different perspectives
- Define and agree to the roles and responsibilities of the position, and to accountability and reporting relationships; review the effectiveness position at intervals, and adjust as needed
- Consider educational time for the biologist to get up to speed on planning issues, encourage them to join in on planner training and meetings
- Consider the feasibility of continuing the position
- Regularly review administration and reporting structures (perhaps we mean to say that they should carefully consider these relationships and structures, and revisit them regularly to make sure they are working well.)
- Opportunities for more sharing of professional perspectives might help
- Have some training/planning meetings at outset about shared goals, limitations and professional requirements
- *This one was already partly implemented:* Consider clarifying this role in relation to the municipal/regional planners. For example, use a term like "land use biologist" rather than "environmental planner" and ensure that the scope of practice is clear to the individual and local government colleagues through a clear job description that delineates the role, responsibilities, accountability and professional qualifications.
- Some were concerned that this could mean "watering down" conservation work or needing to engage in trade offs that do not protect habitat. Others felt that it was possible to balance the roles and worldviews.
- Local Governments have widely differing environmental guidelines and requirements within community plans, policies and development review processes. A key role for the LU Biologist is to provide technical expertise to implement what they have in place and develop new approaches.

- Another regional district mentioned that when working on planning (source water protection and non-structural flood mitigation) one thing that often comes up is that they need a regional approach for long range planning. There are some things they do similarly, but anything new that comes would be nice to have the regional approach, different rules. (RDOS does convene a region wide meeting of planners, planning labs, but perhaps this should happen more.)
- Need someone who could focus on relationships with the Ministry of Environment.

### **Examples from other regions can help inform the future direction in the South Okanagan - Similkameen**

- Some local governments have environmental technicians and long range planners on staff, directly.
- It was suggestion by some that a regional approach is best

### **Characteristic for shared LU Biologist Success**

When considering reinstating this contract it is important to think deeply about the characteristics needed for success in the role. This position can be viewed as adversarial, a situation that can be exacerbated by the personality of the contractor. For this role to be a success, the person selected must be deeply collaborative by nature and able to understand differing perspectives. It will be important, of course, to consider technical skills for this contract but collaborative skills should be weighed equally. Recommended Key Characteristics for a Shared Land Use Biologist (or similar term):

1. Be collaborative and able to take into account many perspectives.
2. Understand how to bridge the different perspectives of conservation and biology versus planning and development.
3. Having an interdisciplinary background would be helpful.
4. Demonstrate flexibility and interest in learning and adapting.

## Appendix 4. References and Resources

### Resources on Indigenous Issues and Roles in Conservation

Focus on raising awareness and building capacity on Indigenous issues and worldviews among non-Indigenous individuals:

- [Together for Wildlife Strategy](#), First Nations-B.C. Wildlife and Conservation Management Forum, 2020
- Cultivating Abundance: First Nations Perspectives from the BC-First Nations Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Forum  
<https://www.firstnationsbcwildlifeforum.ca/app/uploads/sites/688/2021/07/Cultivating-Abundance-FINAL-Nov-15.pdf>
- [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) and a commitment to its implementation by the BC government through [DRIPA](#) (2020)
- Consultant Gwen Bridge's [work](#) on bringing together Indigenous and Western Science worldviews for conservation
- [Reconciliation Through Conservation Partnership](#) educational resources
- Ecological Society of America [TEK](#) section
- [UBC MOOC](#) Reconciliation Through Indigenous Education Course
- [Indigenez Truth and ReconciliACTION workshop](#)

*A Tool for Assessing Ecosystem Recovery: The 5-Star Recovery System in Action*

<https://www.ser.org/page/SERNews3113>

Abs, Susan. 2021a. Lessons Learned from Nine B.C. Conservation Collaboratives.

[https://tnccollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/TNCI\\_LessonsLearned.pdf](https://tnccollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/TNCI_LessonsLearned.pdf)

Abs, Susan. 2021b. Thompson-Nicola Conservation Initiative Situation Analysis: Collaborative Conservation Opportunities.

<https://tnccollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/TNCISituationAnalysis.pdf>

Bartlett, C., Marshall, M., & Marshall, A. (2012). Two-eyed seeing and other lessons learned within a co-learning journey of bringing together Indigenous and mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, 2(4), 331–340.

Dwyer, Orville. 2020. Conservation Status Of Species And Ecosystems In The Thompson–Nicola Region.

[https://tnccollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Dyer2020TNConservationSummLong\\_finalv2.pdf](https://tnccollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Dyer2020TNConservationSummLong_finalv2.pdf)

## Appendix 5. South Okanagan - Similkameen Conservation Contact List

SEE SEPARATE DOCUMENT

## Appendix 6. Possible Member/Partner Organisations

### A. NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS (e.g., non-profits, associations, conservancies)

NGOs involved in conservation in the region include national, provincial, regional and locally-based organisations.

#### (a) Local and Regionally-based NGOs

These groups can bring the following assets to a regional partnership:

- established identities, profiles and credibility
- local ecological, historical, social and sectoral knowledge
- expertise of active and retired scientists, resource managers and other experts in NGOs
- in-kind support, including GIS capacity, offices, facilities, equipment and staff time
- contacts and networks for dissemination of information and programs
- experienced, interested and willing volunteers
- knowledge, expertise, commitment, passion and dedication to achieving results
- experience conducting stewardship programs with ranchers and other landowners
- multi-generational ranchers and landowners with deep knowledge of the landscape

**(b) National and Provincial Conservation organisations:** Many national and provincial conservation trusts, foundations and NGOs are active in the region due to the many SAR and threatened ecosystems in the Dry Interior. Current programs include securing conservation lands; species at risk, and other species and habitat conservation; research and monitoring; ecosystem stewardship and restoration; policy work; and education and outreach.

Several trusts have already acquired and manage conservation lands in the region and have identified the Dry Interior as a priority for future securement of high value biodiversity areas. All see collaboration as valuable for finding partners to help manage, restore and steward conservation lands, once secured. These organisations are partners in SOSCP and have a solid record of success in the region. They see themselves, and are viewed by others, as key partners who can bring the following assets:

- funding for acquisition, management and monitoring of conservation lands (either directly or through funds such as the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund)

- scientific information, including extensive GIS databases and mapping of the region
- non-profit status to help partners qualify for grants, contracting (consultants, suppliers), fundraising and financial management, e.g., *the practical side of getting people on the ground*
- organisational, financial, logistical and administrative expertise
- knowledge and expertise, including local knowledge, for those with offices in the region
- relationships and networks, including history and partnerships with Indigenous and other governments, NGOs and landowners

## B. GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

Government organisations are important partners in other BC conservation partnerships, bringing in-kind staff, scientific and technical support; funding; and data and mapping.

### Federal Government:

***Environment and Climate Change Canada:*** The Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) Pacific Region has worked in the Thompson-Nicola region for decades, and in 2020 expanded to an office in Kelowna with nine staff covering BC Interior issues. CWS provides major funding support to conservation land trusts like Ducks Unlimited Canada, Nature Conservancy of Canada and Nature Trust of BC. They fund habitat inventory and restoration work being done by NGOs working on grassland and wetland conservation, such as the Grasslands Conservation Council and BC Cattlemen’s Association. CWS staff in Delta and university collaborators (UBC-O, UBC, SFU and TRU – see below) conduct research and monitoring of migratory birds and species at risk in the region. Key CWS programs include [Habitat Stewardship Program](#), [Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk](#), [Indigenous Guardians Pilot Program](#).

### ***Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)***

DFO protects and manages fish and fish habitat in the Thompson-Nicola region. It fulfills this mandate through activities such as Salmon enumeration, scientific research, fisheries management, regulating development activities under the *Fisheries Act* and *Species at Risk Act*, Salmon enhancement, habitat restoration, community engagement, and monitoring and enforcement. It supports partnerships and stewardship activities for fish and fish habitat, including aquatic species at risk, with local First Nations and stewardship organisations. Funding initiatives include the Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy (AFS), Pacific Salmon Treaty Grants and Contributions, BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund (BCSRIF), Indigenous Habitat Protection Program (IHPP), Coastal Restoration Fund (CRF), [Canada Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk](#), and the [Habitat Stewardship Program for Aquatic Species at Risk](#).

## **Provincial Government:**

### ***Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD):***

and local conservation groups proposed the idea exploring a regional partnership, staff from the FLNRORD Regional Ecosystems Section are the lead provincial partner and sit on the SOSCP Executive Committee. The Province participates in various BC conservation partnerships through in-kind support such as office space and equipment; membership on executive/steering committees; and liaison and support for projects such as shared environmental planning and Regional Conservation Funds. The Ecosystems and Fish and Wildlife Section in Penticton conducts the day-to-day management of species and ecosystems at risk (SEAR) and regionally important game species. Conservation activities include:

- inventory and monitoring of species and ecosystems at risk
- habitat restoration on Crown land
- establishing and managing conservation lands, such as Wildlife Habitat Areas and Wildlife Management Areas
- developing collaborative land use strategies with Indigenous communities
- developing best management practices and stewardship agreements with local governments and private landowners
- environmental review of proposed development, such as residential, wind farms, mines, and oil and gas infrastructure

Aquatic specialists focus on maintaining water quality and quantity, fisheries specialists engage in stream restoration projects, and wildlife biologists study and manage game species. Increasingly, many of these activities are implemented collaboratively with Indigenous communities. Examples include restorative controlled burns, fencing projects and collective land management strategies.

FLNRORD has responsibilities for Crown land management, including conservation-related functions such as forest, range and agriculture management and recreation sites and trails.

**[Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy \(ENV\)](#)**: See an overview of ENV responsibilities in relation to conservation at the link in the ministry title and especially at [BC Parks](#) under the tab “About BC Parks” and [Species and Ecosystems at Risk](#).

**Local Government** - Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen and member municipalities and (unincorporated) Electoral Areas.

## **C. INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANISATIONS**

See Appendix 2 above.

## **D. UNIVERSITIES & CONSULTANCIES: Thompson Rivers University, UBCO, UBC, SFU, private consultancies**

BC conservation partnerships often work with universities within or outside their regions. Thompson Rivers University (TRU) faculty and students could be key partners due to their conservation expertise, research and strong record of regional partnerships. There is interest in from faculty in Natural Resource Science, Biological Science, Environmental Science and Tourism departments. Other BC universities also work in the region (contact should be made with UBC-O). Universities can bring the following assets to a regional collaborative:

- a growing body of scientific studies and applied research on regional conservation topics, biodiversity (e.g., grasslands), and sustainable/responsible tourism
- applied research, funded by companies and focused on deliverables and results e.g., sound reclamation and restoration approaches
- the capacity and interest in partnering with other groups to address knowledge gaps
- past and current collaborative projects with Indigenous, government and non-government groups, e.g., Grasslands Council of BC, CWS, FLNRORD and Indigenous communities
- linkages to the global research community and specialised networks, e.g., TRU is home to the Herbaceous Diversity Network, involving 80 scientists in 20 countries
- access to government and industry research funding, e.g., NRCan, NSERC, Tri-Council agencies, mitigation funds from resource projects
- graduate and undergraduate student research, including field work and surveys: e.g., TRU \$5000-\$6000 undergrad scholarships for 4 – 6 month research projects; results must be disseminated (this has been underutilised); someone from the collaborative could sit on a MSc Environmental Science supervision committee

Academic research can also benefit from partnerships through data-sharing; working with Indigenous and local knowledge; identifying useful research applications; and sharing research with the community. Research expertise is also available through numerous regionally-based consultants, including several Indigenous-owned consultancies that focus on natural resources management.

Case example: TRU's Fraser Lab: Centre for Ecosystem Reclamation works closely with the GCC. Some of the Lab's funding and research is designed to support GCC strategic priorities, while the GCC does education and outreach for the Lab's work. Current research includes ecosystem reclamation, climate change, invasive species, mitigation, agroforestry, trophic level dynamics, and drivers of biodiversity within the context of climate change. The Lab also works with industry and landowners on private and leased Crown land, including mining reclamation on private sites and controlling non-native plants, and is open to new topics and partnerships.

