

Wise Practices for Advancing First Nations and Local Government Partnerships for Integrated Flood Management

Background

Feedback¹ from the [B.C. Flood Strategy](#) engagement and discussions with the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) reflect that First Nations and local governments need better guidance on how to collaborate in their shared watersheds to advance integrated flood management. This guidance is aimed at developing “wise practices” on relationship building, sharing examples of success, and understanding how First Nations and local governments can collaborate on flood resilience to help reduce flood risks across B.C.


What We Heard

Engagement participants noted that systemic racism often hinders relationship building, further harming and marginalizing First Nations in flood management. First Nations, holding a deep connection to the land and water, directly observe the effects of flooding, such as land loss, changes in water movement, and environmental changes. These impacts spread through both natural and human systems. Therefore, it is crucial to include First Nations' values in flood management and planning.

First Nations communities and local governments, including municipalities and regional districts, also noted that there are dedicated members that come together during emergencies, building relationships along the way.

During the 2022-2023 engagement sessions, many community members broke down barriers to be inclusive and worked with neighbouring jurisdictions in decision making and planning. However, in some areas, members did not collaborate because the trust and relationships needed were not yet established.

¹ Alderhill. What We Heard Report 2022: Summary of First Nations and Local Government Engagements on the B.C. Flood Strategy Intentions Paper (Fall 2022). Available at: [Alderhill WWHR FINAL Mar-2023.pdf \(gov.bc.ca\)](#).



A key takeaway from engagement sessions was that local governments need more guidance and support to meet new consultation and cooperation requirements. These requirements align with the *United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (the UN Declaration) and the *B.C. Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (the Declaration Act). This need is further emphasized by the new *Emergency and Disaster Mitigation Act* (EDMA), which replaced the *Emergency Program Act* in November 2023.

The new Emergency and Disaster Mitigation Act (EDMA)

EDMA provides First Nations and local governments with a comprehensive framework to better prepare for and respond to emergencies. It includes the authority to establish agreements between First Nations and other authorities, promoting shared decision making and coordination.

Aligned with the B.C. Flood Strategy, which follows the United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Declaration Act, EDMA includes provisions that require local governments to consult and cooperate with Indigenous governing bodies. These provisions also call for the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and cultural safety across emergency management practices.

Early feedback indicates that local governments need more information about the Province's framework for consulting and cooperating with Indigenous governing bodies. This may include timelines for engaging with Nations on funding applications, details on the intended use of funds, and information about the limited capacity and multiple roles First Nations have within their communities.

The scope of this work must also consider that local governments are facing financial and capacity issues due to their emergency management responsibilities, the housing crisis, new provincial requirements, and internal labor shortages. It aims to show how First Nations and local governments can benefit from working together through shared partnerships.



Purpose of Engagement

The purpose of this engagement is to develop a "Wise Practices" document for collaboration between First Nations and local government communities to improve flood resilience in their shared watersheds. This document will be informed by What We Heard reports, case studies, and engagement with Indigenous advisors to the B.C. Flood Strategy, First Nations Rights and Title holders, and local government representatives.

Target Audience

First Nations, local governments, and others in British Columbia involved in or interested in developing flood management plans to enhance community flood resilience.

Next Steps

This guidance is in the initiation and research phase. No drafting has currently taken place. A draft version of the guidance is expected to be ready for review and feedback in 2025.