First Nations Integrated Watershed Planning

5. Bringing the Plan to Life: Follow Through

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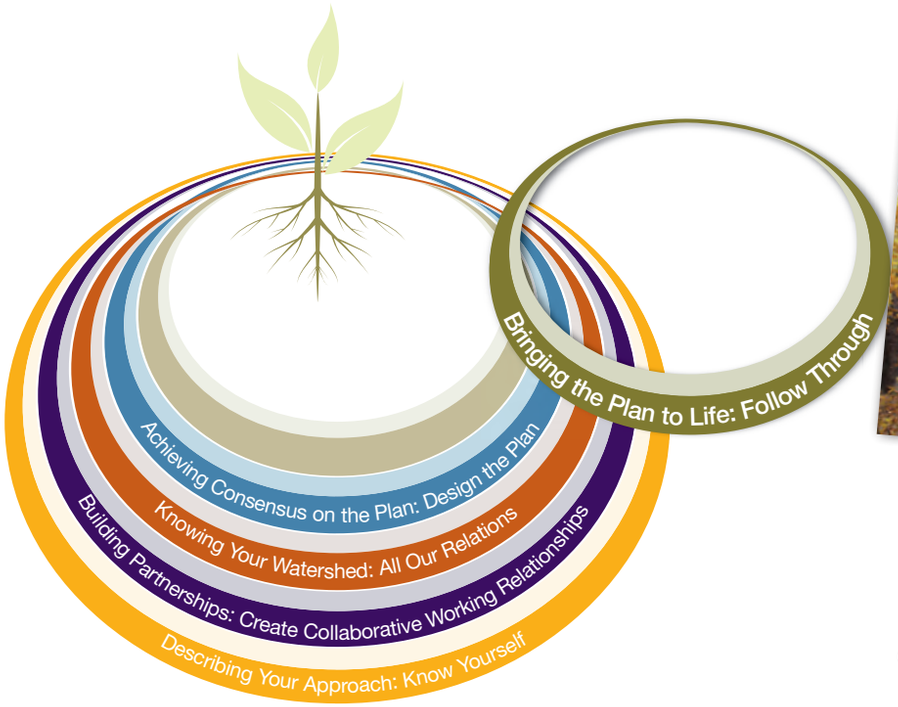
INTRODUCTION

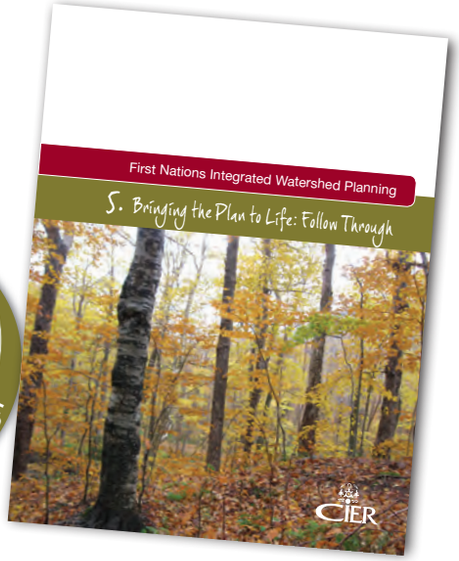
At the end of the last guidebook, *Achieving Consensus on the Plan*, you had completed a watershed plan. Congratulations on reaching this important milestone in the watershed planning process! Welcome to the next phase – putting the plan into action to bring it to life.

All too often, when a new plan is completed, it sits on someone's desk or shelf, instead of being used to guide decisions and actions on a daily basis. The Steering Committee has devoted significant time and resources to developing the watershed plan and while people may feel ready for a break from the planning process, planning for the transition to implementation is essential.

During this final stage of the watershed planning process, you will develop a new committee to implement and monitor the plan, as well as a workplan. You'll also develop an evaluation plan to monitor and revisit the watershed plan as it is implemented. This last guidebook, *Bringing the Plan to Life*, describes these steps as you move closer to achieving your vision for the watershed.

Approval and implementation at the local level is also critical. Once you have reviewed the plan with the leadership and members in your First Nation to ensure that it addresses your Nation's concerns, you will be ready to finalise, approve, and implement the plan in your community – and to work with the other partners to achieve the overall goals and vision.



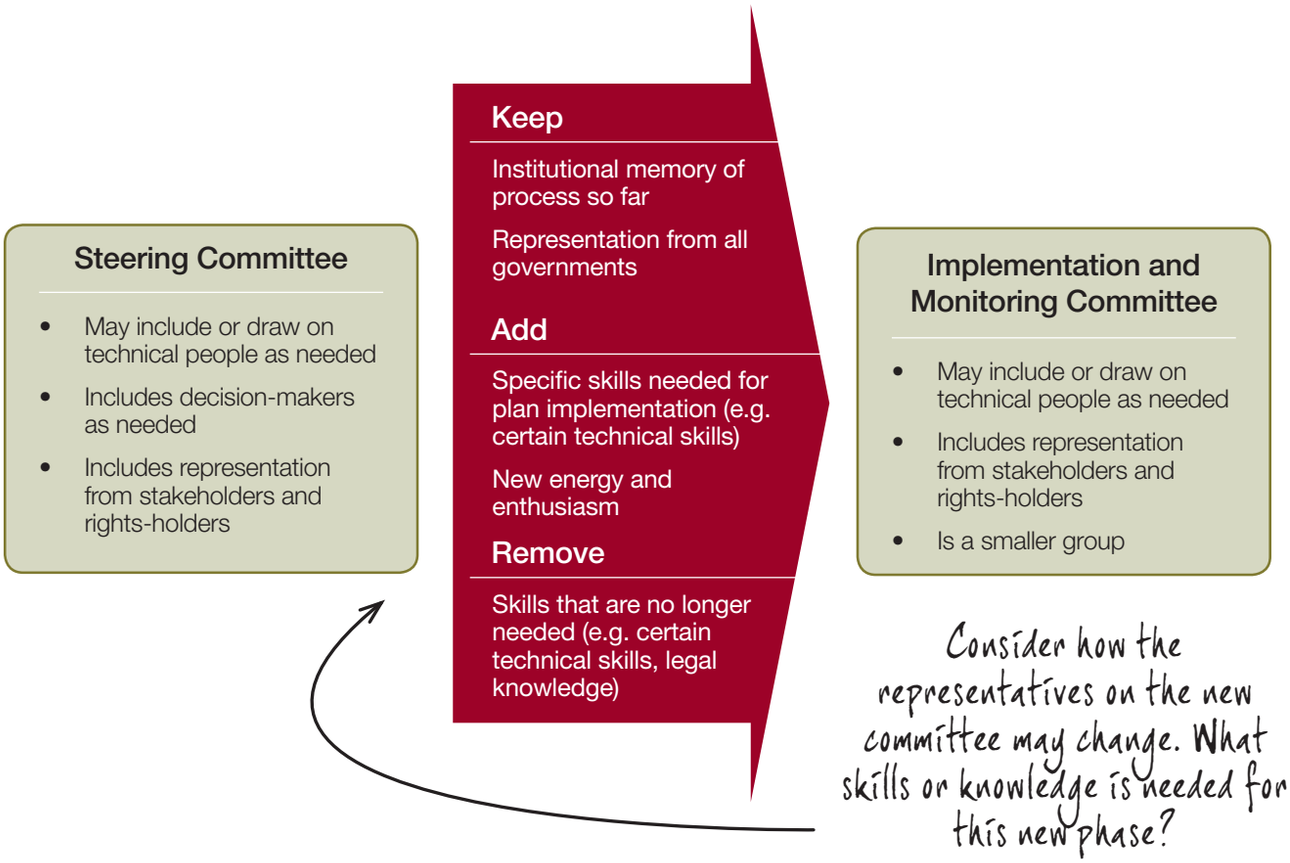


Guidebook #5

The Steering Committee in Transition

The development of the watershed plan likely took place through a certain committee structure (e.g. a Steering Committee) created when working through the second guidebook, *Building Partnerships*. This structure will likely need reconfiguring as you implement the plan. You will still need a group or committee to monitor the plan as it goes along, but rather than setting direction and developing the plan, this group will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the plan. This new group could be called the 'implementation and monitoring team' (I&M team).

Retaining some members from the Steering Committee to pass on information and memory of how the plan was completed to the I&M team is very helpful, and will be even more helpful years from now if questions arise regarding development of the watershed plan. However, some members of the Steering Committee may no longer have the time, energy or mandate to continue in this new phase. Decision makers have exercised their role as well, and will no longer be needed in the ongoing implementation of the plan, although they will come back to revisit the success of the plan at a later date as part of the evaluation cycle. New members may be added to fill in gaps, to address new needs, or to bring additional skills to the I&M team.



It is likely that the people who are the leads and are accountable for priority actions and implementing the detailed workplan are former members of the Steering Committee, or linked to these people in some way (e.g. as members of the same department). When these people come together to report on progress with the I&M team, provide an opportunity for them to connect with each other as well – both as part of the formal meeting to hear about the results of the various projects, and informally through a networking coffee break or meal in order to maintain the relationships built as part of the watershed planning process.

Tip

The skills that will be required on the I&M team will depend in part on the priority goals and objectives in the watershed plan. For example, if you have a number of objectives relating to fish, it would be useful to include a fish biologist in your I&M team. If you have a focus on educating residents about watershed issues, having an education specialist may be important. Not every action area needs to be represented on the I&M team, but if there are areas that are particularly important in the watershed plan, having someone knowledgeable on the team will help when it comes time to monitor and review the plan.

Establishing a Watershed Council

Many areas already have established watershed councils or other types of organisations that bring people together to address water issues at the watershed level. If a watershed council type organisation doesn't exist in your area, and depending on the size of the watershed and the complexity of your watershed plan, you may find that the Steering Committee should evolve into this type of more formal organisation.

This type of council is usually governed by a Board of Directors made up of government and regional representatives. The day-to-day work of implementing watershed projects is carried out by staff hired by the organisation.

Watershed councils can offer opportunities for the people in the watershed to participate more directly in the implementation of the plan. As a non-political body, a watershed council is impartial and can offer resources and educational materials to support community awareness about the watershed. As an ongoing, stable presence, watershed councils can implement and monitor plans and programs relating to the watershed, observe and address changes in the watershed, and are a forum for discussions about watershed issues.

You've already completed many of the steps needed to set up a watershed council: gathered stakeholders and rights-holders, begun the groundwork of developing relationships, and establishing the vision and values for the watershed work as part of the overall planning process. The next steps, if this is the direction you choose, will be to determine the structure for the organisation, including the Board of Directors, what the mandate and mission would be, and where the funding would come from. This will require discussions with stakeholders and rights-holders in the region, to discuss how they should be represented in the new organisation and what structure would be best for the region.

The Fraser Basin Council

The Fraser Basin Council was established in 1997 with the intent of promoting social, economic and environmental sustainability within the Fraser Basin, British Columbia. It is governed by a 37-member Board of Directors, which includes representatives from the federal and provincial governments, the regional districts, and the First Nation language groups. There are five regions within the Fraser Basin, each of which has its own office, staff, and programs. Funding for the Council comes from the four levels of government in the region, as well as donations from foundations, corporations, and individuals.

Because of the size of the Fraser Basin – it is one of the largest drainage basins in Canada, and is home to about two-thirds of British Columbia's population – the issues facing the watershed are complex. The Council is able to develop a comprehensive approach to addressing these issues, and brings together the many stakeholders and rights-holders in the region to protect and improve the health of the watershed.

For more information on the Fraser Basin Council, see www.fraserbasin.bc.ca

More Details

When the Steering Committee began its work, it developed principles for working together (see the second guidebook, *Building Partnerships*, for more details). Similarly, as this new group comes together, it will need to figure out how to work together. You may want to develop a new terms of reference, or revisit the original terms of reference to make modifications.

Remember that the I&M team will meet much less frequently than the Steering Committee. Once the implementation is underway, this group's role will be to check in to see how the work is going, rather than developing new work. Consider the timelines you set out for monitoring and evaluation (discussed later); you may find that I&M team meetings twice a year will be sufficient. Fewer meetings will also simplify the process of including the watershed work into budgets and timelines, as most members will probably find it easier to schedule two meetings per year rather than twelve.

Tip

People react differently to change. change from developing a plan to actually implementing is exciting and can be challenging, as the scope, focus and process of work changes. Some people will be ready to move straight into implementation, while others may be less comfortable with the shifting priorities and need some transitional time and dialogue.

Funding for the Watershed Plan

As you develop actions to implement the watershed plan, you will find that most new actions have costs attached. These may be labour costs, or there may also be infrastructure construction and maintenance costs. You will need funding to cover these costs.

Story

The Cowichan Basin Water Advisory Committee

"The Cowichan Basin Water Management Plan establishes a clear process for transitioning from plan development to plan implementation. The Water Management Plan was developed by the Ad Hoc Cowichan River Committee, which included representation from the Cowichan Tribes, the provincial Ministry of Environment, Fisheries and Oceans Canada as well as local industry, in partnership with other stakeholders in the region. To implement the plan, the partners who developed and signed the plan will create a terms of reference for the Cowichan Basin Water Advisory Committee (CBWAC), which will replace the Ad Hoc Cowichan River Committee. The CBWAC will provide advice and guidance on the implementation of the Water Management Plan. The membership of the CBWAC will be broader than the Ad Hoc Committee, and will be led by the Cowichan Valley Regional District."

~ Westland Resource Group Inc. (2007)

When it comes to applying for funds, you may find that members of the Steering Committee have access to funds, or knowledge of funding opportunities. You also have a wide network of water-related contacts at this point – draw on this network to gather information about funding possibilities, as well as partnership opportunities to implement your goals and objectives for the watershed plan.

Depending on the kind of projects you have, you may be able to access funds through federal or provincial departments, foundations, or by pooling together funds from local governments and organisations in the watershed. (See *Guidebook Two: Building Partnerships*, for more information on finding funding.)

More Details

Some Cost Considerations

The amount and types of costs associated with implementing the plan will depend on the types of actions that are in the watershed plan. For example, educational programs, wetlands restoration, research studies, and infrastructure development/renovation will all have different kinds of costs which will require funding from potentially different sources. Depending on the project, some funding considerations could include:

- Design, engineering, scientific, or other consultant fees – specialised knowledge and expertise
- Construction – building materials and expertise
- Labour – staff time, whether occasional, short term or long term
- Operation and maintenance – the long term costs of managing the project, including repairs, upgrades, labour costs and so on
- Project management to ensure your projects under the Watershed Plan are well-managed.

In all cases, getting a cost estimate before beginning a project is a good idea. In some cases you may be able to develop your own estimates – for example, if you will be hiring local people, you may have a good idea of what the labour costs may be. In other cases, you will want to do some research before committing to a project, or to a particular service provider for a project. Checking in with other communities that have carried out similar projects is one way to learn about potential costs, and also to learn from their experiences of what went well and what didn't in carrying out their projects.

If you are going to hire consultants or companies to carry out some or all of the work (e.g. to do some of the actions required under your plan such as designing and building a wastewater treatment facility), ask for estimates as part of a 'Request for Proposals' from a few different companies. A company's response should provide information on the cost of the project, and on how the company would approach the project, which will help you to evaluate the different proposals. Include key questions in the RFP if you feel these will help you evaluate the proposals and choose a consultant who is a good fit for your First Nation. For example, ask the consultant how they will help build capacity with the community as part of the project through mentorship or job-shadowing.

Bring the Plan to Life

Moving from plan to action is not just a matter of organising people, developing workplans, writing proposals or finding funding. To really bring a plan to life, people need to want to get involved, and in many cases, commit to making changes because they see the value in doing something new or different. How do we get people excited about moving forward? In developing the plan itself you may have identified 'champions' for the planning process. To bring the plan to life, consider identifying or assigning local planning champions and/or spokespeople. There may be different people involved in different aspects of the plan itself, and for different audience groups. For example, there could be a champion for different goals or objectives within the plan who are passionate about each particular one. Champions and spokespeople need to be enthusiastic and able to articulate why an action or project is worthwhile by linking to local issues and needs, as well as to the broader plan. Actions that require the support and participation of the local leadership will need a particular spokesperson who is respected by this group. Actions that involve youth should have a youth champion and/or spokesperson. Think about how this type of strategic communication can encourage people to get involved and excited about being part of implementing the watershed plan.

Generating and Maintaining Enthusiasm for the Watershed Plan

It's not enough to tell people why they need to do something, or jump straight to solutions.

1. Get people's attention by touching their hearts; use negative stories that show why change is needed.
2. Motivate people by sharing positive stories that show why this plan and this path forward can work; demonstrate through other examples that change IS possible.
3. Convince them by giving reasons and showing them results. This connects back to their heart, and their mind.

Preparing for this type of communication may take some additional time and energy but using this approach has been successful at generating and maintaining enthusiasm for change.

~ Denning, S. (2007)

More Details

Tip

As you develop your actions for the plan, include the step of finding and accessing funding as part of the actions in the plan.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

In order to keep the energy and focus on water and the watershed strong, and the plan active, you need to identify the steps you will take to execute the plan. This stage can be both exciting and overwhelming for people, because you have completed the plan and it is full of ideas of what to do next. The transition from developing the plan to implementing it can be a big one. The people involved in the plan may change, the focus will change, and the day-to-day work of implementing the plan will be different from the work of envisioning and creating the plan. Taking some time to develop a workplan will help to make this transition smoother.

Tip

When you are starting to develop the workplan, think about how the plan will come to life at an operational level. Who will be involved and what will they do in their work day to be a part of the overall implementation? When 'Joe' or 'Val' come to work on Monday, what will they do differently now that you have a watershed plan?

The workplan, sometimes referred to as an implementation plan or operational plan, is not a new plan. It provides guidance on the actions needed on more of a day to day basis to put the watershed plan into action. The workplan assigns roles and responsibilities, sets timelines, and outlines a path to complete the actions in the watershed plan. It also clearly links the goals to objectives to actions. This is an important step, because it helps to clarify expectations about what is reasonable to achieve, and who is responsible for what areas. You may also find, as you consider where funding might come from, and which staff will actually carry out the work, that an action or two are missing, or that the timelines need adjusting.

When you developed your vision, you considered a time far beyond the life of your watershed plan – 30, 50, or 100 years. Keep this long-term vision in mind throughout the process of creating a workplan, and then carrying it out to link the actions to the vision. This will ensure that the actions stay on track, and also help to keep everyone motivated as they implement the workplan on a daily basis.

What is in a workplan?

Although every workplan is different, there are some common features. Your workplan can be a short document and even use tables to keep it simple and show connections between the overall plan objectives and the workplan actions. Most workplans would have a section about:

- The purpose of the workplan
- The timeframe for the workplan
- The goals and objectives of the watershed plan to provide relevant context
- The actions that will be taken to achieve those objectives
  - » For example: Objective 1; Actions 1,2,3; Activities 1a, 1b; 2a, 2b, 2c; 3a, 3b
  - » Include start and end dates for each activity and roll these dates together for an overall timeframe for the relevant action
  - » Include bullet points for each activity (e.g. 1a, 1b) that elaborate on what needs to be done; get the people involved in carrying out that activity to help fill in these details so they are part of the workplan development – and because the people working 'on the ground' usually know what needs to get done to be successful!
- The methods for evaluating the success of the various actions, with linkages to the overall evaluation where relevant (see next section).

More Details

Evaluating Progress

Developing a method of monitoring and evaluating the watershed plan, as well as the timeframe for plan review, is part of the implementation process. You will already have discussed this in part, when you considered evaluation for the watershed plan (see *Guidebook Four: Achieving Consensus on the Plan*, page 62).

Planning for Evaluation

An evaluation plan lays out the evaluation process to determine how successful the watershed plan is in achieving its goals. It is extremely important to develop a way to evaluate your watershed plan. Developing the evaluation plan now means that you can make sure that the actions you include in the workplan are clear and can be measured. This will be the only way you can look back on your efforts to determine if they have been successful. Taking the time to do this as a group will allow everyone's perspectives on what is considered a 'success' to be incorporated, because these perspectives might not be the same. For example, for an objective relating to water quality, one person may consider nitrate levels to be a critical measurement to defining success while someone else might consider being able to catch fish as the main indicator of successfully achieving good water quality.

The first step is to consider an evaluation timetable. At what points in the life of your plan do you want to pause and consider how it is going? Evaluation is part of the overall planning cycle, meaning that as you conduct an evaluation and learn from it, you incorporate the learning into the next stage of your work and eventually the plan itself. This allows for ongoing learning and helps your planning work to continually improve the process and actions. Reviewing the timeline for the overall implementation of the elements (goals, objectives, actions) of the watershed plan will help to see where you could and should include evaluation of what has been accomplished at key points along the way. As part of the evaluation planning, think about the type of information and data (e.g. water sample, reports, meeting minutes, interviews, surveys, etc.) that will be needed to make the assessment you want to carry out.

More Details

Why Evaluate?

"What gets measured gets done.

If you don't measure results, you can't tell success from failure.

If you can't see success, you can't reward it.

If you can't see success, you can't learn from it.

If you don't recognise failure, you can't correct it.

If you can demonstrate results, you can win community support."

~ Osborne and Gaebler (1992)

You will find that there are different levels of evaluation required for different aspects of the plan. For example, you may want to check in on individual actions every few months as they progress or once they are completed, but only review the whole plan every three years. This schedule will depend in part on the complexity of the actions and objectives you have chosen, and if an understanding of their progress would help other actions or overall plan implementation. For example, an action item to create incentive programs to encourage a switch to water-efficient household appliances would require a different evaluation schedule from an action item to develop a watershed-wide water quality monitoring program.

Once you have a general idea of how and when you will evaluate the actions, goals and overall plan, make sure to add 'evaluation' as a project or action itself and to include the cost in your overall budget. It may be a matter of planning for a few days of staff time, arranging for some meetings, or if a really in-depth review is required, bringing in an evaluation consultant. Incorporating the cost of evaluation at this stage will help to ensure that when it comes time to review the project, the financial and human resources have been secured.

Starting small is better than nothing at all

Doing an evaluation can be challenging and requires both time and money. As a group, stay focused on the benefits of doing an evaluation and carry out what is realistic, even if it is small at this point. Take your evaluation in a step by step approach as you build your capacity to carry it out. At CIER, we did not have the resources to carry out a full evaluation for all of our projects, but we saw how valuable it was to focus on, at minimum, receiving feedback on our work from our partners. So, we have started small and, in this way, taken the first step towards evaluation. At the end of every project, we ask the First Nation(s) involved if they were satisfied with the project and if it met their needs. Although this is a small step it provides us with information about the effectiveness of our projects directly from the people we serve. As we build our own evaluation capacity and resources, we will add more steps to this process.

Tip

Logic Models

One way to design an evaluation is to use a 'logic model'. This is a way of explaining the relationship between the objectives or actions that you have set out in your plan and the eventual outcomes that should result, leading to the long-term goal. Logic models can be represented as a sequence of events building on each other – an 'If-Then' sequence (Taylor-Powell and Henert, 2008).

In a logic model, this sequence of events would look like this:

For example:

- If we gather funding and staff, then we can create a program to test water quality.
- If we create a program to test water quality, then we will have data about water quality.
- If we have data about water quality, then we can make better decisions to manage drinking water.
- If we can make better decisions to manage drinking water, then the drinking water will be cleaner.
- If the drinking water is cleaner, then the health of people in the community will be better.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Goal
Funding and staff	Water quality testing program	Data about water quality	Better decisions to manage drinking water. Cleaner drinking water.	Improved health of community members.

As you work through a logic model, think about the assumptions you are making about how one action will lead to the next. For example, why do we think that data about water quality will help us to make better decisions about drinking water management? Are the assumptions that we are making valid (perhaps based on research and experience), or are there gaps? Maybe additional steps are needed, or maybe our action will lead us in other directions. Particularly when thinking about long-term outcomes, it can be hard to determine if the result is due to our actions, or if there are other factors that would affect the outcome.

Although logic models can be very useful, they don't work for everyone. Logic models have a very linear approach to problem solving, and this may make it difficult to 'think outside the box' and be creative. As well, because logic models are based on what you expect to happen, it can be difficult to see if there are other, unanticipated effects (Taylor-Powell and Henert 2008). If you share these or other concerns, adapt the logic model so that it meets your needs.

More Details

Working through an 'If…Then' exercise can help you identify a ssumptions you may not even realise you have. It helps make assumptions explicit and forces you to confirm the truth (or otherwise) of the If…Then statements. Examples of assumption include:

- Community meetings are an effective strategy for raising community concerns.
- The funding will be adequate and available when we need it.
- The participants/target audiences want to learn and change their behaviours.

The more you aware you are of your assumptions, the better able you will be to address these as you develop your workplan.

More Details

Making Your Own Logic Models

Logic models can be a helpful way of thinking what you want your actions to achieve, and how to measure the impact. Although logic models can be quite complex, you can use a simplified model to make sure each action has clear outcomes. You can also think about the logic model as a good project management tool, that helps everyone involved identify and agree on the purpose of the action (or project), what it will take to achieve, and what desired results.

Set up a chart like this:

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Goal

'Inputs' are the resources required to carry out the action. These may be human resources, financial resources, or something else entirely (e.g. a GPS unit; monitoring equipment). There may be policies or projects in place elsewhere that will enable an action to take place. These are investments in solving the problem.

'Activities' are the actions themselves – what you are going to do. These you have already figured out! You may want to break the action down into particular steps to help the people involved in delivery to see the details.

For more information about evaluation, check out the Manitoba *Health in Common* website – it has links to many resources about evaluation. They also provide assistance and support with evaluation planning and implementation. www.healthincommon.ca/tools-resources

Tip

Planning to Revisit the Watershed Plan

How often you will revisit the plan is something you can determine as part of the timeline for the overall watershed plan. Even if the plan has a ten- or twenty-year lifespan, you should check in regularly to determine progress. Revisiting the plan is part of the plan evaluation, but at a different scale because it focuses in the plan as a whole and the interconnection between the success of objectives, goals and the vision.

'Outputs' are the physical or tangible results of the action, and can also be called 'deliverables'. An output might be a report, or a workshop or meeting. It may be a program or a flyer for distribution. Usually outputs are short-term and have a concrete aspect.

'Outcomes' are the change we hope to see – the real results of the action. Outcomes could be changes in people's behaviour, changes in water quality parameters, increased understanding of an issue, or among a particular group of people, or improved health of a particular fish population. Outcomes are measurable, and may be short, medium or long term. Outcomes can be harder to measure than outputs because we are generally measuring a change (versus a completed deliverable). Longer-term outcomes, also called impacts, are challenging to measure because there are often other projects, programs, and factors also influencing the desired change.

The goal is the overarching goal that the action is intended to achieve. Although the action will probably not be able to achieve the goal by itself, and other actions will also be required, it is the long-term intended result of the action.

As you fill in the table, you may want to reframe your actions to make the intended output or outcome clearer or more measurable. You may also want to add more actions relating to evaluations – for example, if you want to know if people's understanding or knowledge about watershed issues has changed, you may need to conduct interviews or a survey both before any work is done (to understand the baseline or initial understanding) and afterwards (to identify any change). Make sure that actions related to all stages of this research are included in the overall watershed plan.

To learn more about logic models,
visit www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html.

This is also a time to reflect on the how well the plan is meeting your needs; if it is not, it is time to update it, or to develop a new plan. Build 'revisiting the plan' into the timeline you've developed with the actions, to make sure that it is included in the workplan.

For example, you may want to:

- Review the action plan (and associated workplans) every year to see what has been completed and to determine the next actions
- Check in at a deeper level every two to three years, to make sure that you are still on track to achieving objectives and goals
- Revisit the whole plan every five years to look over and update the priorities and goals to ensure that they are still appropriate.

The vision is long-term but can be revisited and reaffirmed as part of these reviews.

Writing the Workplan

To develop your workplan, start with the purpose of the plan and the context of the watershed plan. Then, you can list your goals. Under each goal, list the objectives, and list then the actions associated with each objective in a table. The headings for the columns of the table should include who is responsible for leading the action and when it should be carried out.

The table can also include a level of priority for each action, such as immediate, short term, long term. These can be colour coded (e.g. green for immediate/go yellow for short term, and red for long term). Be sure to discuss what each of these terms means – what is the timeframe each refers to? For example, for a five year plan, immediate may mean within the next year, short term may mean in the next two to three years, and long term may mean four to five years. A simple legend associate with the table can explain the timelines associated with the colour coding.

In the workplan, it might look like this:

Goal: To increase understanding of the issues facing the watershed among residents of, and visitors to, the watershed.

Objective 1: Develop and implement a two-year information campaign to educate residents and visitors about nutrient loading and actions they can take to reduce nutrient loading in the watershed.

Actions	Lead /Accountable	Priority	Completed by
Create a leaflet to be distributed to area homes.	Water Manager, Conservation District	Green	October
Staff a booth on watershed health during the annual Treaty Days.	Lands and Resources manager, Your First Nation	Green	July 27-29.
Develop a 'welcome package' for new residents and visitors explaining nutrient loading.	Water Manager, Conservation District	Yellow	Two years

MONITORING THE PLAN

As you move into monitoring the plan, you will be looking at how the plan is progressing, and the impact on the watershed of the actions being implemented. This section provides an overview of monitoring. Depending on what you are monitoring you may need technical support to best understand what to look for and how to assess changes (e.g. scientific and/or Indigenous Knowledge about water parameters; community knowledge about what makes for a successful training event).

The I&M team should guide the process of monitoring the plan. At each meeting the team will check in with the timelines to see what actions have been completed and to what extent. In advance of these meetings, ask for progress reports from the leads of the various actions that are underway. To make this easy for people to report back, and for the I&M team to review, consider providing a template for this feedback. If problems or concerns arise (for example, if an action is taking longer to complete than expected, or if something unexpected comes up that affects the watershed), the I&M team can make adjustment to the timeline and adapt the plan.

Tip

The reporting template can be a few simple questions for the people leading the actions to answer as part of the overall monitoring of the plan. These questions could include:

- By activity, what is the progress to date?
  - » Use a simple list with bullet points to describe the progress.
- What are your next steps?
  - » Have people report on next steps using the same timelines and link it to your monitoring process and meeting (e.g. monthly; quarterly)
- Are there any current concerns?
- Additional items
  - » Have an open-ended final question for people to complete if necessary in order to capture any other issues.

Kinds of Monitoring

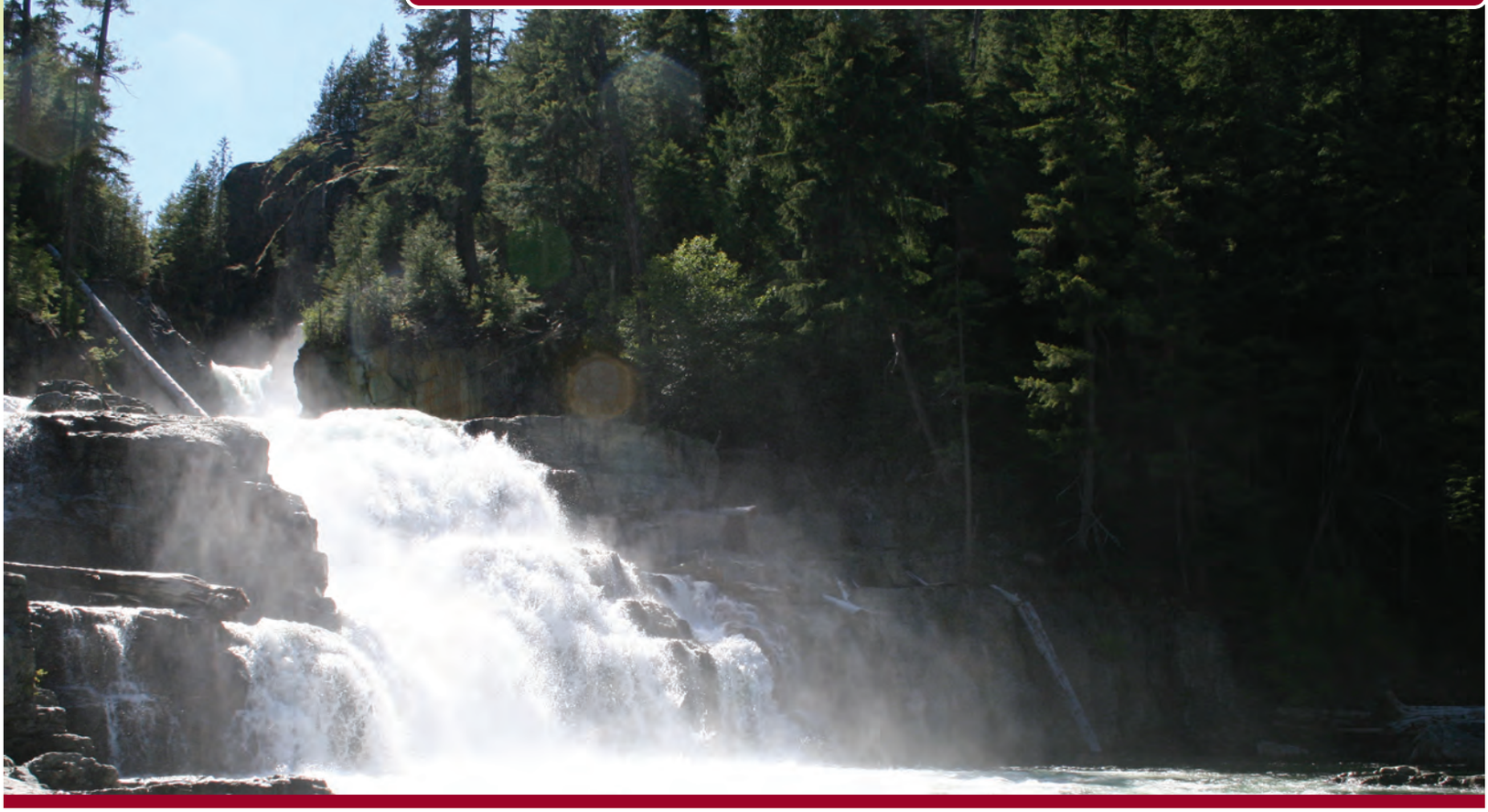
The members of the I&M team may have a number of different approaches to monitoring. Western science has its own specific methods of monitoring, based on the scientific method that focuses on specific things to be monitored (e.g. amounts of certain nutrients in a waterbody). First Nations have their own methods, based on each community's Indigenous Knowledge. For each action, and to assess the overall health of the watershed, you will need to determine what kind of monitoring will work best or, better yet, find ways to bring these ways of knowing together to design your monitoring approach.

Collecting Data for Your First Nation

Every First Nation has its own particular data needs, which sometimes are not met by government or other monitoring programs. Mikisew Cree First Nation (MCFN) wants to ensure that both scientific information and community-held or Indigenous Knowledge (IK) about current and future changes to the lands and waters in their territory is incorporated into their environmental monitoring.

To do this, MCFN needed to find sources of information that the community would trust. MCFN asked CIER to assist them in developing an environmental monitoring program, that relied on both scientific and IK monitoring methods. The program would enable MCFN members to better understand the environmental changes they see at both local and regional scales. CIER's environmental monitoring program involves working with First Nation members and local scientists to develop methods for monitoring certain areas of the environment (e.g. wildlife, plants), developing customised monitoring sequences for these methods with a software program called CyberTracker and training local people (Environmental Guardians) to collect the information. MCFN had decided to focus on monitoring water and fish for the beginning phase of their monitoring program. MCFN members were trained in how to collect the information using the CyberTracker sequences and to store it in a monitoring database. Over time, Environmental Guardians will be able to analyse data between years to see if the ecosystem features they are watching are staying the same, improving or declining in quality.

Story



There are two kinds of monitoring that can be done to follow up on the watershed plan. The first is to look at the consequences of each action in the plan. In the watershed plan you set out indicators for each objective that would tell you about the intended outcome – the first kind of monitoring will look at these indicators to determine if these outcomes were achieved or not.

The second kind of monitoring is a broader look at the overall health of the watershed. This can also be understood as 'watching the land'. It looks at the changes or trends that take place over time, using certain key variables as indicators. These may be certain measurements carried out regularly, or observation of certain species of plants or animals whose level of health shows something about the level of health of the watershed as a whole.

Evaluation is an element of adaptive management. Adaptive management involves 'iterative decision-making', where you look at results from the current management approach and adjust your actions based on what was learned from these results. Therefore, revisiting the plan is tightly connected to the evaluation because these provide you with the 'results' of your actions. You need to have a way of evaluating your actions (e.g. monitoring and indicators) and the plan itself (e.g. revisiting the plan), and then learning from this new information to make better decisions in the future.

More Details

Monitoring Your Success

It is important to monitor the environment to see how the actions you are taking are resulting in positive change in the watershed - and to monitor the success of the actions and the plan itself. While this represents monitoring at two different levels, and using different methods, these tasks are connected because what you learn by watching and documenting changes on the land and water will relate to at least some of the actions you are implementing as part of the watershed plan.

If monitoring data is being used to inform decision making, it will have to be credible. People with specialized knowledge (e.g. biologists, Elders) will be involved in developing these types of monitoring programs, either through program design, training and/or interpretation of the information. The data collection could be carried out by a government or academic department who is represented on the I&M committee, a hired consultant, or trained community members.

If your community has a strong sense of its Indigenous Environmental Knowledge, this may be an opportunity to share this knowledge as part of the monitoring process. Indigenous Knowledge can be particularly useful for monitoring because hunters and fishers often have a holistic perspective and understanding of the interactions between different aspects of the watershed. People who are out on the land regularly can watch over things that community members are concerned about, and can provide information to community leaders about what is happening on the land. Building this kind of monitoring into a plan will also help to maintain the traditional ways of monitoring the land and waters.

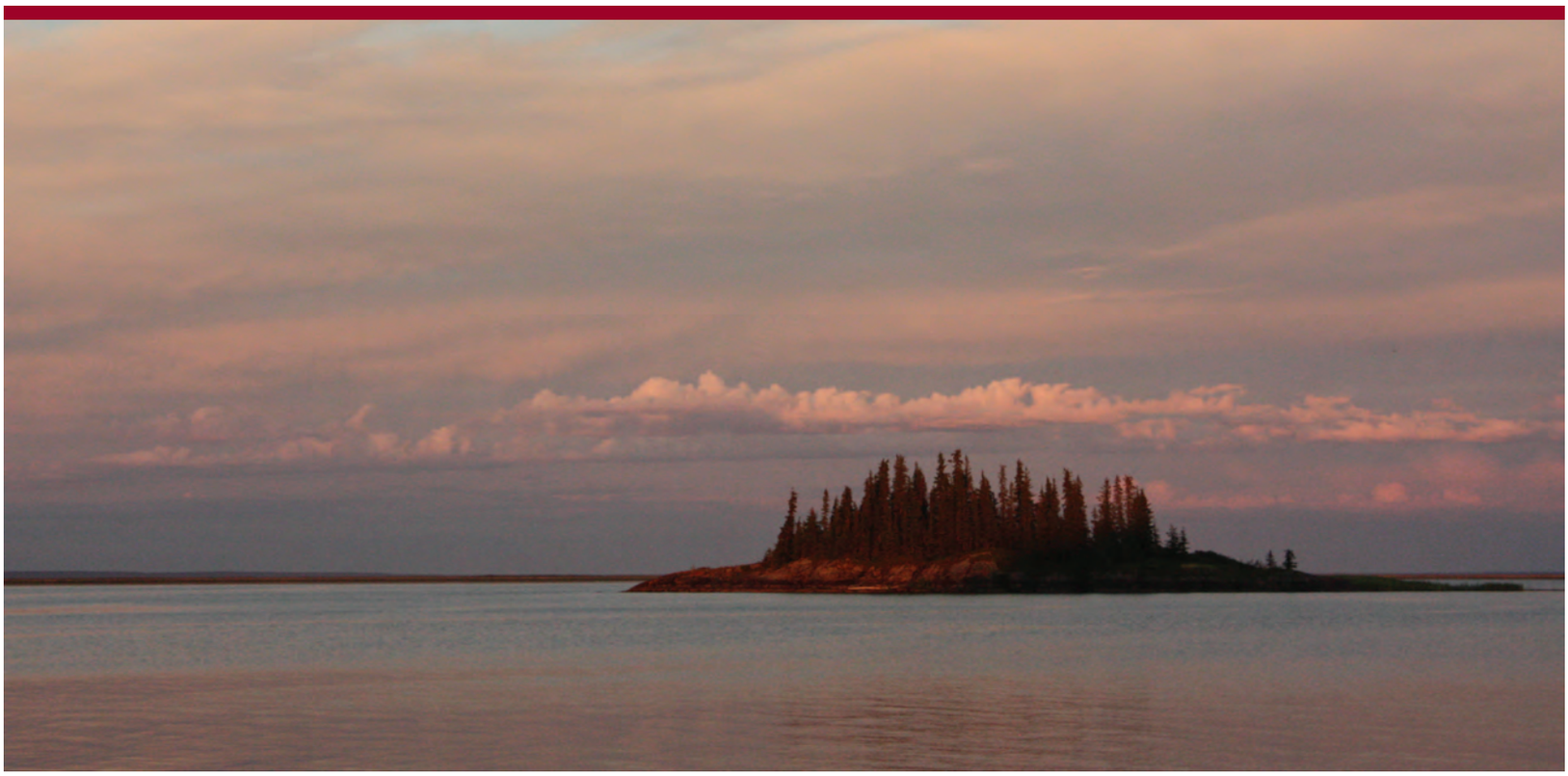
The monitoring process can also be an opportunity to learn about the data other organisations are collecting about the watershed. Your First Nation may already have collected some of this from its work in the third guidebook, *Knowing Your Watershed*, or you may find out some new information at this point. This is a good opportunity for the I&M team to review all the monitoring and research that is taking place in your watershed, to identify gaps or errors, as well as to ensure that work is not being duplicated.

Tip

REVISITING THE PLAN

As you continue the work of implementing the watershed plan and monitoring and evaluating the actions and objectives, you will also want to revisit the plan itself every few years. All plans should be living documents that adjust and adapt over time to meet the changing needs of the watershed and its inhabitants. While monitoring looks more at the actions and objectives to determine to what degree they are achieving their desired results, revisiting the plan is a higher-level look at the goals and at movement towards achieving the vision. As the context of the watershed changes, there may be new priorities or new concerns, and this is also an opportunity to adapt the plan to reflect new realities. Revisiting the entire plan should take place every three to five years.

Bring the stakeholders and rights-holders together as part of revisiting the plan. This is an opportunity to share information on the current watershed planning work and on any changes to the state of the watershed – and to check-in with the general public on overall priorities and their impressions of the plan's success. Good communication with government representatives will help them to stay up-to-date on new initiatives and issues, and to make better decisions on future policies and project priorities. This also provides government leaders with the chance to recognise the work that has been done to date, to applaud the efforts of everyone involved – and can help you gather additional support through increased political will to review, re-energise, and implement the watershed plan.



As you prepare to revisit the plan, make a list of what has been achieved so far, and a list of what still needs to be done. Often people have trouble seeing the positive changes – they may see only the gaps, what still needs to be done. Having a list of the actions that have been taken and the associated results will make sure that people know about all the work that has taken place, and will also help the I&M team to better understand where you are on the road to achieving your vision. The I&M team could create a watershed planning 'report card' to assess the overall progress at the three or five year point as both an evaluation and communication tool. If an objective assessment is important, a third-party could also be engaged to develop or contribute to aspects of, the report card.

Check in with your First Nation to see if people are noticing changes in the watershed. If there are people in your First Nation who are part of the monitoring work, be sure to engage them in the process of reviewing the entire plan as well. If you set out particular indicators that are important to your First Nation, follow up to see if there have been changes in these indicators.

As you implement the plan, and prepare to review and revisit it regularly, take a moment to recognise how much work has been done. Working with your community to identify its concerns and priorities, building partnerships with other interest groups in the watershed, gathering information about the watershed itself – these are all the steps that set the foundation for long-term care and health of the watershed. From this point forward, as you have designed and continue to redesign the plan, the effects of its implementation will become tangible and increasingly effective as you respond to the changing context of the watershed.

Even if you don't have detailed monitoring information, you should still revisit the plan. Stopping to check in on the results of the actions and whether or not they are resulting in the desired changes (through making linkages and achievement to the respective objectives and goals) is a critical phase of the overall planning cycle. Using this time of reflection to strengthen and build new partnerships as you adapt the plan can help future implementation succeed. The context of the watershed may also have changed in the intervening years, and you may want to consider a different approach, new partnerships, or new priorities in addressing watershed health.

Tip

CONCLUSION

CONGRATULATIONS!
You have completed a watershed plan and moved from plans to actions!

This final guidebook focused on implementing the plan. It began by discussing how to transition to implementing the plan by creating an implementation and monitoring team and a workplan. It went on to discuss how to evaluate and monitor the watershed plan and actions to determine if the plan is having an impact. Finally, it looks at revisiting the plan to update it as needed.

At this point, if you've worked your way through this guidebook, you will have:

- An implementation and monitoring team
- A workplan
- An evaluation plan to monitor the implementation of the actions and then impacts on watershed and to revisit and adapt the entire plan on a regular basis.

The model of watershed planning proposed throughout these guidebooks is one that builds on First Nations leadership and skills. As First Nations continue to act to protect the lands and waters within their traditional territories, watershed planning offers a way to build partnerships with other First Nations and non-First Nation communities. As you have worked through the guidebooks, we hope that you have found inspiration and ideas from the stories, tips and activities presented here, and that your work with water is successful in building a world with healthy water for everyone.

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The First Nations Watershed Planning Guidebooks offer an approach to watershed planning that is led by and grounded in the voices, values and priorities of First Nations.

This Guidebook discusses:

Implementing the Plan

Monitoring the Plan

Revisiting the Plan