



Lessons Learned from Nine Conservation Partnerships

**Thompson-Nicola Conservation Initiative
Launch Workshops, April 2021**



Find the report at <https://www.totabc.org/tnci>

THOMPSON-NICOLA CONSERVATION INITIATIVE
Lessons Learned from Nine Conservation Partnerships

Eclipse Environmental Consulting | **MARCH 2021**

TNCI Phase 1 Goal: Explore options for greater support for, and collaboration among, groups doing conservation work in the Thompson-Nicola, including the possibility of a regional conservation partnership similar to others in BC.

Abs, Susan. 2021. *Lessons Learned from Nine Conservation Partnerships*, TNCI

► **Goals**

- Analyze experience, lessons learned and best practices from other conservation partnerships (CPs)
- Solicit advice for a possible new CP in Thompson-Nicola (& elsewhere)

► **Methods:** 10 interviews with nine BC/Alta. CPs (see websites)

1. Coastal Douglas-fir Conservation Partnership (CDFCP)
2. Comox Valley Conservation Partnership (CVCP)
3. Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team (GOERT)
4. Kootenay Conservation Program (KCP)
5. Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP)
6. South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP)
7. South Coast Conservation Program (SCCP)
8. Multisar: Multiple Species at Risk (BC and Alberta)
9. Partners in Flight (international)

→ **Resource for Launch Workshops & next steps**

- synthesis of interviewee responses; not views of the TNCI Working Group or author: *quotes are in italics*

Proven benefits of collaborative conservation

1. **Communication & networking:** dialogue & exchange
2. **Identify conservation gaps** that a partnership can address
3. **Increase effectiveness and efficiency:** harmonize efforts, avoid duplication. reduce competition
4. **Collaborate on strategies, programs and projects**
5. **Data & information-sharing + technical support to others**
6. **Take a regional perspective:** in between provincial and local
7. **Influence and be a strong voice** for changed policies and practices
8. **Share administrative resources:** offices, equipment, services
9. **Share human resources:** staff, volunteers and experts
10. **Combine fund-raising efforts & shared funding**
11. **Capacity-building:** conservation and collaboration skills
12. **Increase community awareness, education & involvement**



Great Basin Spadefoot: Ole Westby photo



Bighorn Sheep: Ole Westby photo

Governance Models

- Varied models but most are two-tiered: steering committee/leadership group + partners that meet annually/semi-annually
- Regional org. facilitates communication & coordination; members deliver projects
- May have thematic actions teams, e.g., science, stewardship, land use planning
- In some large regions, sub-regional groups collaborate in a specific watershed or valley



Sagebrush mariposa lily: Mandy Ross photo

TIPS on organizational structure



Douglas Lake area: Richard Doucette photo

- Informal collaboration model, not a registered non-profit = flexible structure & programs that can evolve; less paperwork
- Committed leaders and champions are key early on but rotate to keep partners engaged/sustain energy
- Offer options for various group sizes, types and interests
- Learn from other CPs, but tailor it to the region
- Build the partnership over time

TIPS on membership/partners

- ▶ Strength in diversity of groups, expertise & perspectives BUT keep a clear, strategic focus
- ▶ Include groups with conservation mandates AND those whose actions affect biodiversity
- ▶ Build trust and working relationships through collaborative programs and projects early on
- ▶ Ensure solid scientific & technical support: academics, researchers, traditional knowledge-holders



Cattle grazing, Lac du Bois: Richard Doucette photo

Define the roles of government organizations

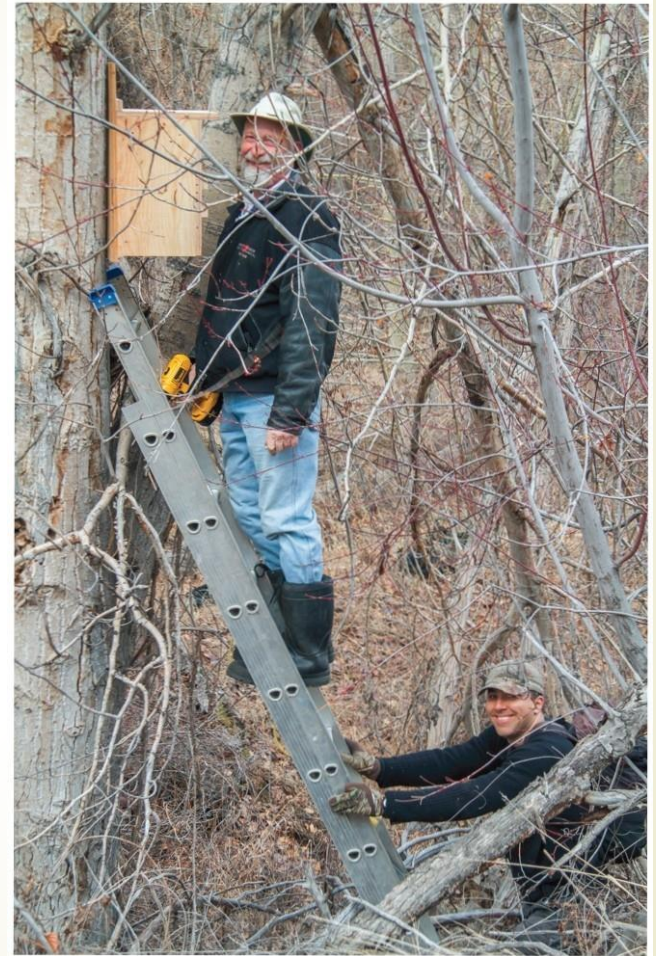
- All CPs member-driven and independent of government, yet work with the Indigenous, senior and local government bodies who have legal rights, mandates and powers
 - Most work closely with regional & local gov'ts: they fill a gap!
- Get support from leaders, elected officials and senior managers: define relative roles of technical staff and managers
- Mobilize complementary expertise & resources to strengthen government programs: Indigenous/NGO/community/academic
- All CPs are committed to respecting Indigenous Title and Rights & meaningful involvement: participation by Indigenous groups has been uneven due to competing priorities & capacity constraints
 - ▶ TIP: early involvement, capacity-building and support will be helpful



Opuntia fragilis, brittle prickly-pear cactus: Shutterstock

Ensure a strong science foundation

- All did technical analysis to identify science-based critical conservation needs as a basis for programs
- Some did *regional conservation strategy/plan*: i.e., mapping/analysis of biodiversity values, conservation priorities and strategies
- Combine Western science, Indigenous Knowledge and local knowledge
- TIP: Focus on defined data gaps and identified user needs: use technical work to design practical conservation tools and guidance for government, community & private decision-makers



Western Screech Owl nesting box: Rick Howie photo

Collectively set a common direction



- All have ToR, charter, MOU, statement of cooperation used to define vision, goals, collaboration guidelines, etc.
- Some use a strategic plan or lists of strategic priorities to guide programs for 1, 3 or 5 years
- There is increasing use of accountability frameworks to define and report on measurable results:
 - Helps focus efforts & demonstrate success to funders

Good organizational management is key

- Need organizational capacity among staff/contactors, steering committee and team leaders
- Skills sets: program planning, administration, financial management, proposal-writing and reporting, teamwork and event planning
- Full-time coordinator/program manager crucial to provide secretariat, coordination, communication, accountability continuity BUT avoid over-reliance on one person



Effective communication systems are essential

► Tips on internal communication:

- define communication & collaboration processes early on and revisit
- face-to-face meetings are key to networking: e.g., annual general meetings, team meetings
- field visits, tours, and field projects are useful and motivational
- website and member updates are vital: newsletters, email and social media



Lewis' Woodpecker: Ole Westby photo

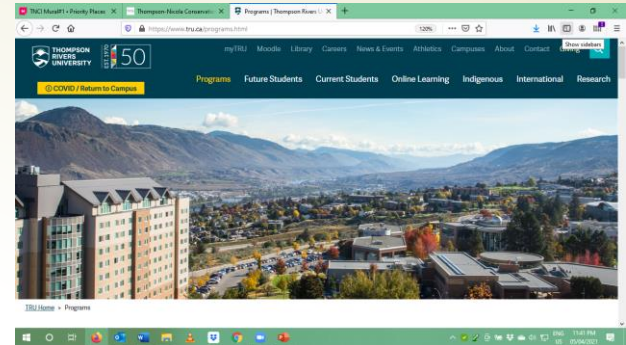
► Tips on external communication:

- Create a strong profile, presence and reputation: for funders, elected officials, public and media
- Position CP as a credible, neutral, multi-party body that produces results: a “go-to” hub
- Communication strategy: logo, brand, key messages, target groups
- Tools: external newsletter, social media, website with resources, e.g., technical guidance, fact sheets, tool kits

Funding is a challenge: needs work & creativity, but “funders like partnerships”

➤ Suggestions:

- innovative collaborations and projects to attract funding
- funding and/or in-kind contributions from conservancies, foundations, government, industry, sectoral organizations
- committed, connected champions on steering committee
- cost-sharing and fee-for-service models for products, services and events
- universities may have access to research funds
- have partners commit (even) small amounts of funding and/or in-kind support
- *Local Conservation Fund* for community projects, based on regional district or municipal levy (e.g., parcel fee) (guidance and BC case studies: [Conservation Fund Guide for BC](#))



Successful program areas: general tips

- ▶ Mix of regional and local scale programs & projects
 - e.g., regional: conservation plan or securement strategy
 - e.g. local: stewardship or restoration project
- ▶ Start slowly with “low-hanging fruit”/priority projects: to build relationships, show success and attract new partners and funders
- ▶ Increase scale and reach over time, review and recalibrate programming as needed, e.g., member survey



Robyn Reudink Photo

Program areas: examples (1)

► Securement

- coordinate strategies to identify, prioritize and secure conservation lands
- may have securement team or work informally
- may partner with stewardship and community groups to manage properties, including stewardship and education

► Working with local government

- strong niche for CPs: help regional and local governments integrate conservation into land use planning and regulation: great opportunities + strong interest by many communities, leaders & staff
- provide data, mapping and technical guidance on SEAR and local conservation tools, e.g., regional plans and growth strategies, Official Community Plans, zoning bylaws, parks and greenspace plans



Kamloops: Richard Doucette photo

Program areas: examples (2)

➤ Stewardship

- necessary as many species and ecosystems at risk (SEAR) are on private land that is too expensive to purchase and/or on “working landscapes”
- programs target ranchers, farmers, homeowners, families and schools
- CP reduces duplication and increases effectiveness
- CP can promote harmonized approaches across land tenures and management regimes, including Indigenous, provincial and private land, e.g., data collection, monitoring and best management practices



Swan counters Rick Howie photo

➤ Community awareness, education & participation

- data collection and field monitoring, citizen science, habitat restoration and enhancement
 - **TIP:** Rather than “stand-alone” public programs, attach to other projects & seek measurable results



Destination BC: Andrew Strain photo

Conclusions

- Regional collaborative partnerships have a proven record in facilitating strong programs and delivering significant benefits for biodiversity/
- T-N groups don't have to reinvent the wheel; they can draw on other CP experience, lessons learned and advice, and be inspired!
- Coordinators meet annually to share ideas; all are interested in the TNCI and open to networking/
- There are many collaborative partnerships and programs in the T-N to build on/link with (see *Situation Analysis*)/

Thanks to all interviewees for their time and valuable suggestions!