

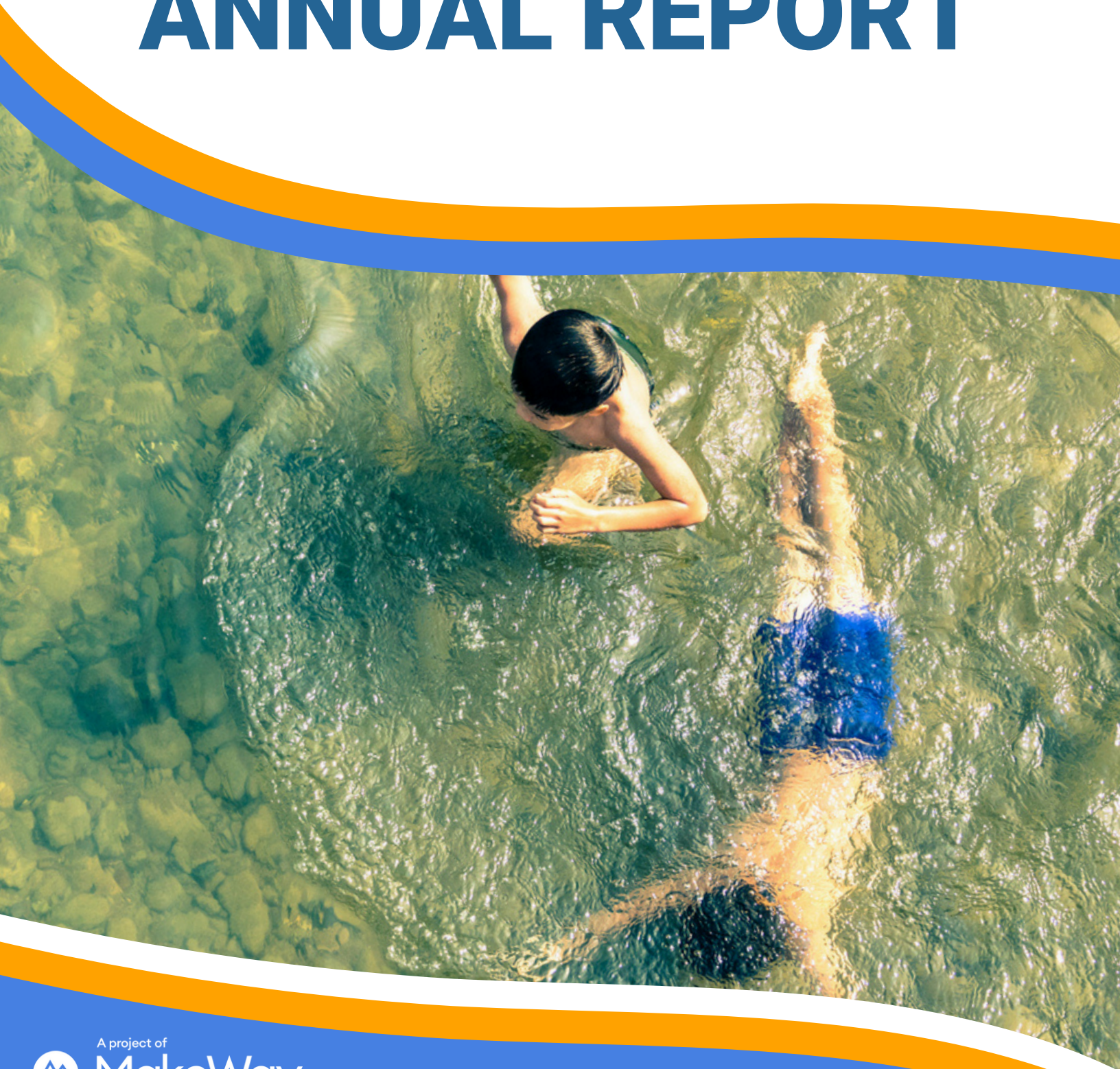


OUR LIVING WATERS

All waters in Canada in good health by 2030

2022-2023

ANNUAL REPORT



A project of

MakeWay

The Year At-A-Glance

Our Living Waters' 2022-23 year centered on **consolidation** in response to rapid **growth** and **change**. Our membership continued to expand, increasing demand for our services to support collaboration. Additionally, our collaborative Teams evolved, with significant shifts in financial capacity, leadership and momentum. In response, we began a consolidation process to truth-check our capacity to provide each of our services, which led to a reinvigorated vision and fundraising document, 'The Our Living Waters Difference'. And, all of this year's work culminated with a bang as the UN Water Conference took place and the Canadian federal government moved forward on commitments to invest in and protect water.

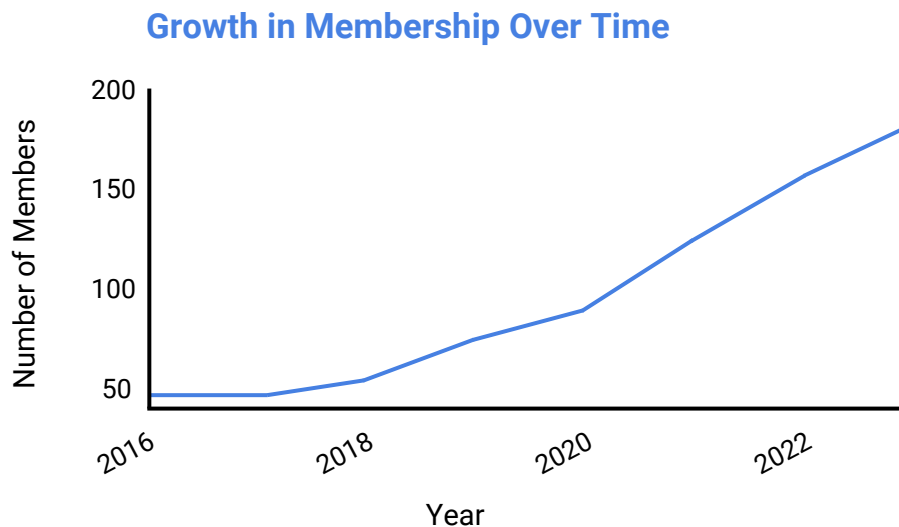
This report provides an update on the OLW Network's membership as well as highlights from each of the six key services OLW staff provide to amplify the Network's impact.

Snapshot of the Network

Our Living Waters turned 7 this year! A lot of networks don't last that long, which is testament to the wide, ongoing commitment of the freshwater community.

How are we growing?

Our Network is expanding rapidly, with 182 members (including organizations and individuals) at the end of the 2022-23 fiscal year. We've doubled in size in three years!

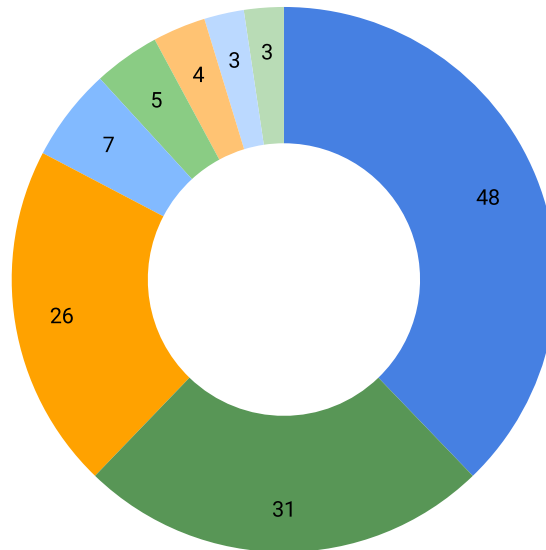


Who makes up the Network?

Most (but not all) member organizations are non-Indigenous led nonprofits working at different scales across the country. The chart below shows the number of different types of member organizations (totalling 127) in the Network.

Types of Member Organizations

- Local nonprofits
- Regional nonprofits
- National nonprofits
- Environmental funders
- Businesses
- Indigenous groups
- Academia
- Municipalities



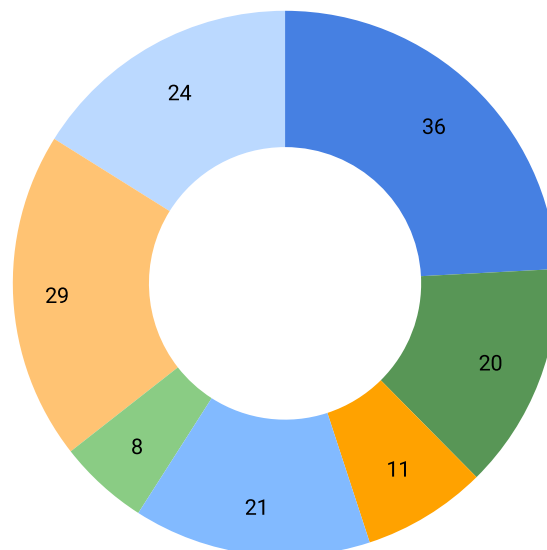
Which waters are Network members protecting?

Many organizations work in all watersheds across Canada, while others focus on local or regional scales. The chart below shows the distribution of OLW Network members across six major drainage basins in Canada, as defined by [Statistics Canada's map](#).

(The total exceeds 127 because some organizations work in multiple watersheds).

Drainage Regions Represented by Member Organizations

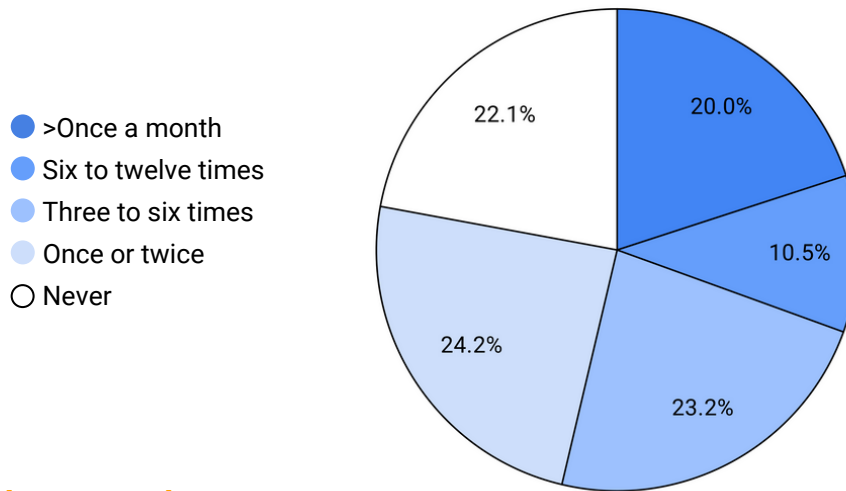
- All watersheds
- Pacific Ocean
- Arctic Ocean
- Hudson Bay southern watersheds
- Hudson Bay northern watersheds
- Atlantic Ocean western watersheds
- Atlantic Ocean eastern watersheds



How connected are Network members?

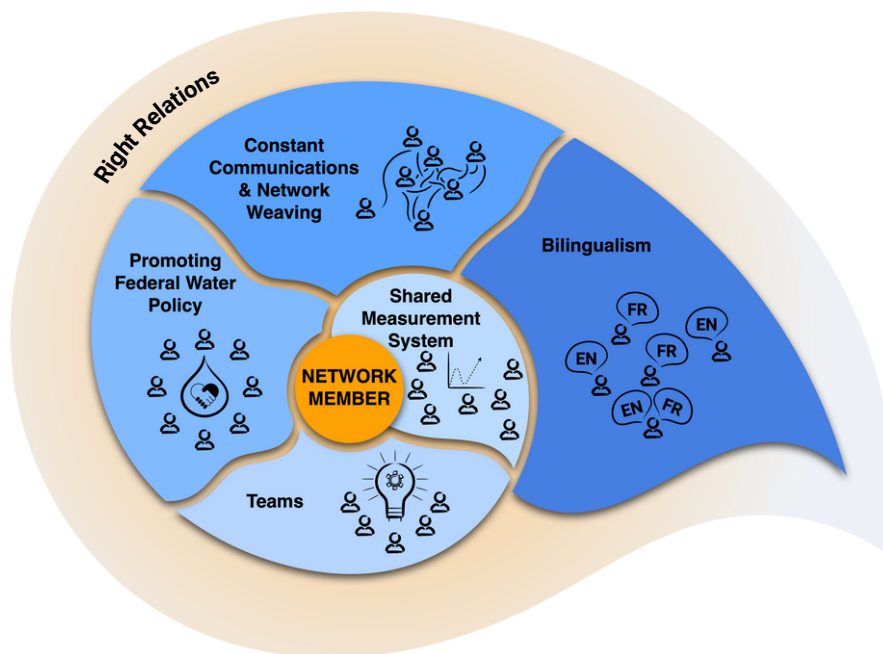
Results from the 2022-23 annual survey helped us measure how connected OLV Network members are with each other. In the chart below, you can see that about one third of the Network connects with each other on a regular basis (at least once every two months). Knowing this information helps us target our network weaving approaches for the coming year.

Number of Times per Year Members Connect with Each Other



How do we serve the Network?

We are a small but mighty team of three who provide six integrated key services to Network members. Each service informs another, centered on Network members' needs, and enables us as a backbone organization to drive custom-designed collaborations. Each year, OLV Network members help evaluate our services through the annual survey. Last year, the [survey confirmed](#) that our services are valuable for achieving the Network's ambitious goal of [all waters in good health by 2030](#). In this year's survey, members identified which services were most valuable to their organizational goals, helping us to continue to improve our service delivery.



Our Year by the Numbers

19 of 24 impact measures in the Shared Measurement System populated with data, **1** updated this year

3 OLW Teams

1 Team facilitated by OLW, the [Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters](#)

Advocating the federal government for leadership and policy to support freshwater health since 2021

11 organizations on the Steering Committee, 66 members at large

>20 meetings with MPs and federal officials, 4 letters sent to top elected officials

5 actions by MPs or senators in support of Coalition asks

10 publications (4 op eds, 3 briefing notes, 2 policy positions and a case for economic investment in water)

1 self-sufficient Team, the **Green Infrastructure Community of Practice**, now [Living Cities Canada](#)

In existence since 2016, led by Green Communities Canada since 2021

11 core groups participating, poised to increase

\$1.5 million confirmed this year to support expansion

1 pivotal publication: [Pathways to Living Cities Framework](#)

1 member-led Team, the [Community-Based Water Monitoring Collaborative](#)

Working to strengthen and legitimize community-based water monitoring across the country

7 core member organizations

5 collaborative grants submitted, >\$10,000 awarded

30 participants at a virtual pre-conference

182 community & organizational members, up from 157 last year

15 e-blasts, including **12** monthly e-news or special topic emails with members featured **45** times

57% open rate for the 12 monthly e-blasts, up from 56% last year (industry average is 25%)

16% click rate, up from 14.5% last year (industry average <3%)

1411 engagements, up from 1308 last year

22 impact stories, nearly two per month; the most OLW has ever published in a year!

10 e-news that centered Indigenous voices or Right Relations, creating space to amplify Indigenous work and weave reflections on Right Relations into communications content

7 types of bilingual materials, promoting a **33%** increase in francophone member organizations from **15** to **20**, with our website, e-news, impact stories, annual survey, annual report, Shared Measurement System primer and some fundraising materials now all in both official languages!

136 participants at OLW convenings or events, including one Members' Meetup, two free government relations training sessions, and a webinar with Birds Canada

64.5% of member organizations responded to the annual survey (**82** of 127 organizations, **95** total responses), confirming significant member engagement even as the Network continues to grow

3 conferences attended by OLW staff, including Waterlution's Water Innovation Lab in P.E.I., a Participatory Water Science Forum in Quebec and the Assembly of First Nations Water Symposium in Alberta

The OLW Shared Measurement System

Our ambitious goal of [all waters in Canada in good health by 2030](#) unites the Our Living Waters Network towards a thriving future, while our 24 impact measures track our collective progress towards this ambitious goal. Overall, the Shared Measurement System (SMS) provides a common agenda to connect and align the Network so that each organization's work is reflected in the whole.

This year, we streamlined the SMS into four new categories and [updated it on our website](#). These new categories organize the impact measures more clearly and logically into themes (see table below). We also released a [new primer](#) for those who want to dig into the details.



Robust & Accessible Information: There is accessible scientific, traditional and local knowledge to monitor, assess, and report on water health and to anticipate and understand emerging issues.



Informed & Engaged People: The public in Canada understands the value of healthy water, and that water in Canada is not unlimited, has threats to its health and needs protecting.



Our Blue Footprint: Human-made infrastructure and economic systems function in harmony with watershed ecosystems so that the integrity of the natural environment is maintained or restored when needed.



Water Policy & Governance: A public policy framework enables watershed governance and collaborative decision-making at different scales, and includes enforced legal standards to ensure human and aquatic ecosystem health.

Data Development for Impact Measures

Our resources are precious, so it's important for us to prioritize which impact measures to update each year. [Last year, OLW members helped us prioritize](#) which impact measures to consider for data development over the 2022-23 fiscal year. However, because we focused our resources this year on streamlining the SMS, we were only able to update our freshwater policy impact measure when there was a change in Manitoba. We haven't forgotten about the others though!



Freshwater Policy

No federal, provincial or territorial jurisdiction currently has a policy AND a law less than ten years old, while seven jurisdictions have either a policy or a law less than ten years old.

OLW Teams & their Evolving Nature

Teams are where the magic happens at Our Living Waters! They are collaborative forums where OLW Network members convene to drive action on a shared water goal.

Teams evolve. That was our major learning this year. One Team became self-sufficient, another started the process of becoming so, and the third built so much momentum it became a top OLW priority! All three shifted their needs for financial and facilitation capacity from OLW and we adapted our services in response to these changes.

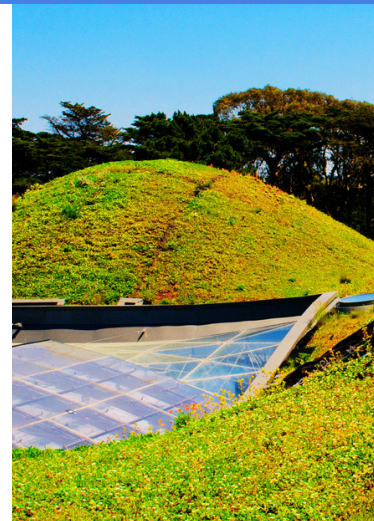
Green Infrastructure Community of Practice (GICoP)

This year's successful Living Cities Program signaled that the GICoP has become financially self-sufficient.

As the longest running recipient of OLW grants, we financially supported the GICoP for six years. Green Communities Canada has facilitated the Team since 2021, receiving a significant grant in 2022 to implement Canada-wide green infrastructure projects through a Living Cities Fund! This is a great example of how 'OLW Teams' can be member-led and outgrow OLW's support over time.

Check out the [GICoP Timeline!](#)

Read the [Living Cities Canada Impact Story](#).



Community-Based Water Monitoring Collaborative (CBWMC)

After three years of concerted facilitation and financial support from OLW, the CBWMC is self-organizing to continue its work without OLW's facilitation.

We accomplished a lot during our time together, but OLW's leadership came to its natural end for the Collaborative in late 2022. Our relationship continues, as community-based water monitoring (CBWM) remains a top priority for the OLW Network! However, the champions who originally set out to coordinate national CBWM efforts are still driving the momentum forward on the work. The Collaborative is a great example of how Teams can shift in composition and leadership over time.

Check out the [CBWMC timeline!](#)

Read the Impact Story on [the Team's future visioning](#)

Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters: In its second year, the Coalition really picked up steam! *Read on to the next section for details.*

OLW Promoting Federal Water Policy

The Influence of a Mature Network

As Our Living Waters has grown and matured, we have embraced our role in advocating for federal leadership and policy to support healthy waters. We primarily do this through chairing the [Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters \(CCHW\)](#), but we also partnered this year with Pivot Strategic to [host two free government relations training sessions](#), for which 80 people registered!

Relationship-Building

We also engaged in the actual work of government relations through the CCHW. This included a successful visit to Parliament Hill (for more details check out [our impact story here](#)). In addition to meeting elected officials, we've also been working to align our advocacy as much as possible with Indigenous Nations as Rights holders. To this end, we have been building relationships with staff at Indigenous-led organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the Métis National Council to understand where we can be allies and to ensure—at the least—that our advocacy doesn't work counter to any efforts to realize Indigenous inherent and Treaty Rights.

Federal Government Commitments

Fortunately, our messages—and the advocacy of so many other water leaders across the country—seem to have been heard. March 28, 2023, the day that the federal Budget was released, was a special day for water (read more [here](#)). In Budget 2023, the government committed to establish a standalone, 'whole-of-government' Canada Water Agency with the proper funding and mandate to do so. The government also made a \$650 million investment over ten years in the Freshwater Action Plan. While significant, it's not the truly historic \$1 billion investment over five years we'll continue advocating for.

There's certainly still work to be done. Announcements are only words until they are implemented. But 2022-23 was a good year of progress and has set us up well for continued advocacy in 2023-24!



Weaving Members' Voices into the Network - in Two Languages!



Our Living Waters exists to amplify the influence and impact of the many, diverse organizations that make up the water community in Canada.

Amplifying Members' Work

This year, we intentionally gave space to member organizations to lift up their voices. Through our impact stories, members amplified issues that were front and center for them to the rest of the Network, including:

- work to build a national water museum at the intersection of art, history and science – [read the story](#)
- advocacy for radioactive waste management – [learn more](#)
- strengthening a provincial water coalition – [get some coalition-building tips](#)
- participatory water science in Quebec – [find out more](#)
- local watershed successes and challenges – [dive in](#)
- boating impacts on water bodies – [check out this Canada-wide coalition](#)

Our Bilingual Network

What's more, we upheld our commitment to continue communicating and networking in French and English. Here are some milestones we can celebrate from the past year:

- Launch of our core French website [Nos eaux vitales](#)
- Translation of many Network Publications in [French](#) and [English](#)
- OLW's participation in a francophone event organized by members in the OLW Network: [Participatory Water Science Forum](#) in Quebec
- Welcoming [Sébastien Cottinet](#) from the Regroupement des organismes de bassins versants du Québec to represent francophone water leaders on our steering committee
- Strengthening relationships between French and English speaking water leaders



This last point is so important for the water community as a whole.

The more we can understand and trust each other, the more unified we can be in our efforts to protect water. As a case in point, the Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters has gained strength and momentum through including francophone and anglophone voices in its federal advocacy work.

Right Relations

We are relational people at Our Living Waters. Working on behalf of the waters—with all the relationships and connections that entails—is a core value for each of our staff.

So, this year we published our [Right Relations](#) webpage.

The purpose was to tell our story; to demonstrate how making space for individual introspection helps us make personal commitments to Right Relations that slowly translate into organizational changes. Publishing our story challenged us to be transparent about our [individual](#) & organizational positioning, as well as to center OLV's relationship with water in a '[water declaration](#)'.

As always, we continue to weave Right Relations into all that we do. Here are some of our additional efforts:

- We worked to minimize erasure in the Shared Measurement System by naming the absence of Indigenous voices and knowledge systems. The statement reads:

"It's important to be transparent that this Shared Measurement System was designed from a non-Indigenous worldview and we recognize that Indigenous ways of knowing are absent from it. For more information on this positioning, see our [Right Relations page](#)."

- The CBWM Collaborative committed to training on Indigenous information governance and then hosted [this intercultural conversation](#) about it.
- We rooted Network convenings in [relationships with water through art and ritual](#).
- We continued to support time for personal introspection in intimate sharing circles, where we challenged ourselves to be vulnerable in our learning and identify our responsibilities as settlers on treaty and unceded lands.

Our Living Waters Network Members

AbbaTek • ACAP Saint John • Adopt A Lake • Alberta WaterPortal Society • Alberta Wilderness Association • Aqua Action • Athabasca Watershed Council • Atlantic Water Network • Battle River Watershed Alliance • BC Freshwater Legacy Initiative • Bighill Creek Preservation Society • Birds Canada • Blood Tribe • Blue Lion Labs • British Columbia Conservation Foundation • Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - Southern Alberta Chapter • Canadian Wildlife Federation • Carrot River Valley Watershed Association • CentrEau • Centre d'interprétation de l'eau de Laval • Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources • City of Calgary • City of Charlottetown • Coalition for Responsible and Sustainable Navigation • Conservation Council of New Brunswick • Coquitlam River Watershed Roundtable • Corporation du bassin de la Jacques-Cartier • COVABAR (Organisme de bassin versant Richelieu et zone Saint-Laurent) • DataStream Initiative • Delta N-90 Trappers • de Gaspé Beaubien Foundation • Dragonfly Ventures • Ecology Action Centre • Ecorana Environmental Ltd. • EcoSuperior • Elbow River Watershed Partnership • Environmental Defence • Environment Funders Canada • EOS Eco Energy • Evergreen Theatre • False Creek Friends Society • First Nations Fisheries Council of BC • Forum for Leadership on Water (FLOW) • Fraser Basin Council • Freshwater Future • G3E - Groupe d'éducation et d'écovigilance de l'eau • Gault Nature Reserve • GPI Atlantic • Green Communities Canada • Green Roofs For Healthy Cities • International Institute for Sustainable Development • Jijuku'kwejk Watershed Alliance • Junction Creek Stewardship Committee • KAIROS Canada • Kennebecasis Watershed Restoration Committee • Lake Ontario Waterkeeper • Lake Windermere Ambassadors • Lake Winnipeg Foundation • Land Based Learning • Lesser Slave Watershed Council • Living Lakes Canada • Lower Qu'Appelle Watershed Stewards Inc. • Lush Cosmetics • MakeWay • Manitoba Eco-Network • Montreal Urban Ecology Centre • Muskoka Watershed Council • Nashwaak Watershed Association • Niagara Coastal Community Collaborative • Northern Confluence • Nova Scotia Nature Trust • Obabika Consultant Society • Ocean Wise • Okanagan Basin Water Board • Oldman Watershed Council • Olds College • One Cowichan • Ontario Headwaters Institute • Organisme de bassins versants des rivières Rouge, Petite Nation et Saumon • Organisme de bassins versants de la zone du Chêne • Organisme de bassin versant de la Yamaska • Organisme de bassin versant du Saguenay • Organisme de bassin versant Matapédia-Restigouche • Organisme des bassins versants de la Capitale • Organisme des bassins versants de la Haute-Côte Nord • Organisme des bassins versants du Nord-Est du Bas Saint-Laurent • Ottawa Riverkeeper • Petitcodiac Watershed Alliance • Pigeon Lake Watershed Association • POLIS Water Sustainability Project • Real Estate Foundation of BC • Red Deer River Watershed Alliance • Re-imagining Atlantic Harbours • Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition • Restigouche River Watershed Management Council • Resilient Waters • Riparia • Rivershed Society of BC • Rivers Without Borders Canada • ROBVQ - Regroupement des organismes de bassins versants du Québec • Save the River / Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper • Sitka Foundation • Souris and Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation • South East Alberta Watershed Alliance • Stewardship Centre for BC • Sunshine Coast Streamkeepers Society • Swim Drink Fish • T Buck Suzuki Foundation • Tesera Systems Inc. • The Council of Canadians • The District Municipality of Muskoka • The Gordon Foundation • The WaterWealth Project • Toronto Green Community • Toronto Region Conservation Authority • U-Links Centre for Community Based Research • Waterlution • Water Rangers • Watersheds Canada • Watershed Watch Salmon Society • Wellington Water Watchers • WWF-Canada • plus five members not publicly listed



2022-23 Staff Team

From left to right:

Andrew Stegemann, Director

Rebekah Kipp, Communications Lead and Network Weaver

Taylor Wilkes, Facilitator

2022-23 Steering Committee

Thea Belanger: Director of Philanthropy, Dragonfly Ventures (up to end of year 2022)

Sébastien Cottinet: Mobilization & Public Policy Coordinator, Regroupement des organismes de bassins versants du Québec (joined end of year 2022)

Elizabeth Hendriks: Vice-President, Restoration and Regeneration, World Wildlife Fund Canada

Ross Jameson: Grants Manager, The Sitka Foundation

Tim Morris: Project Director, BC Freshwater Legacy Initiative

Lindsay Telfer: Manager, Capacity Development, Green Municipal Fund, Federation of Canadian Municipalities

With thanks to our funders

