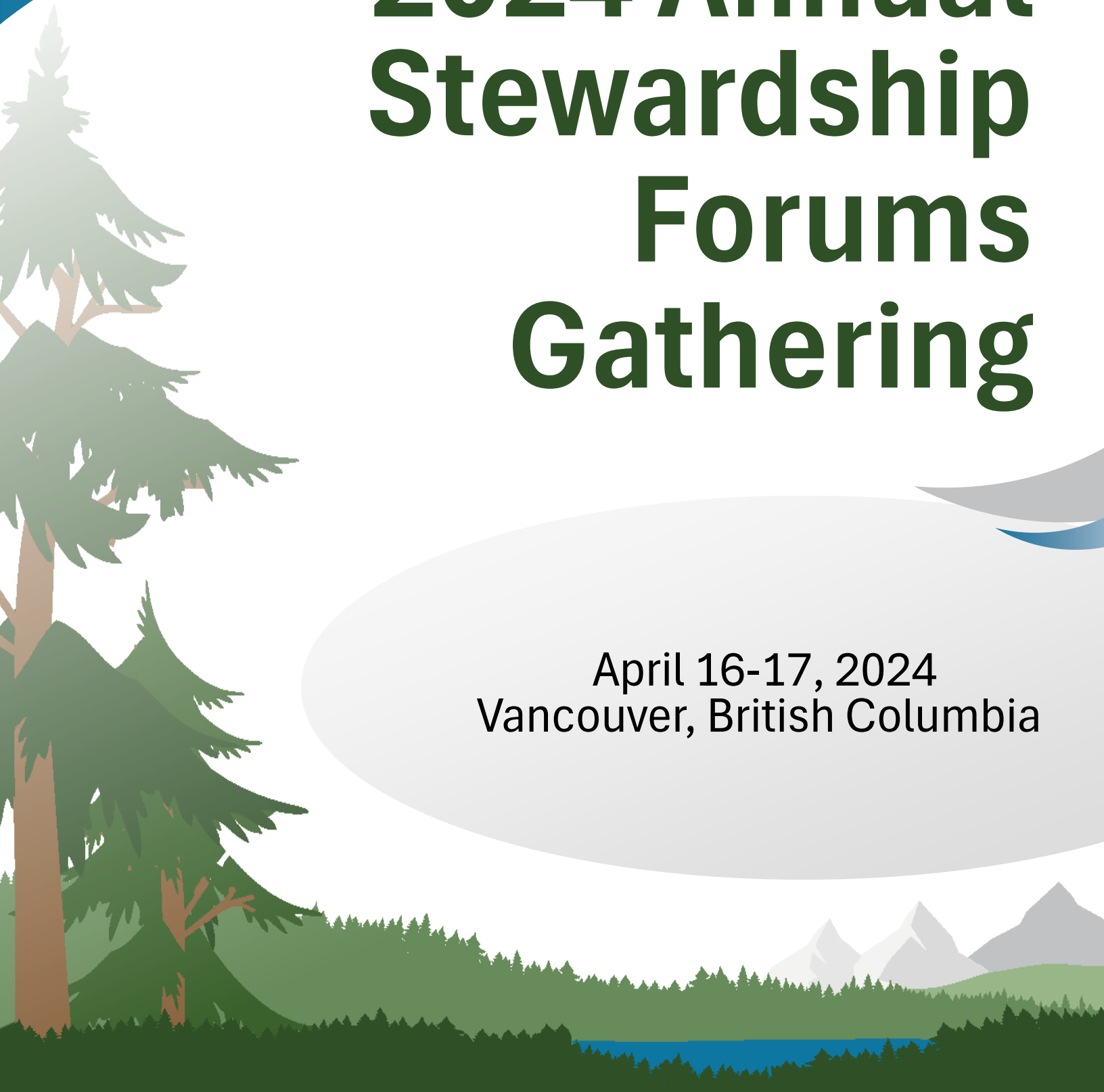


Conference Summary

2024 Annual Stewardship Forums Gathering

April 16-17, 2024
Vancouver, British Columbia



Introduction

The 2024 Annual Stewardship Forums Gathering was held April 16-17, 2024 on the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations at the Coast Coal Harbour Hotel in Vancouver, British Columbia (B.C.). It was attended by 110 individuals, including First Nations, provincial, federal, non-profit, and other representatives, who are participating in or supporting regional Forums within the Collaborative Indigenous Stewardship Framework (CISF). The CISF Forums, including those that developed through the Environmental Stewardship Initiative (est. 2015) and the Collaborative Stewardship Framework (est. 2018), are foundational to our shared path toward co-management. Through assessment and monitoring, outputs of Forums are informing objective-setting processes and decisions for land and resource use, as well as informing the Declaration Act Action Plan (specifically action 2.6). Building on the success of past regional stewardship Forums gatherings, which have been held since 2018, the objectives of this year's gathering were to enable networking, relationship-building, and information-sharing between CISF Forums, as well as guide and inform the future strategic vision of Forums.

Opening Welcome

The Gathering was opened with a welcome and song by a host from the Squamish Nation. Dan George of Four Directions Management Services then set the stage for the next two days, outlining the objectives and rules of engagement, and providing context for collaboration during the break-out sessions. He spoke to humanity, innovation, and collective intelligence. He also provided an overview of the necessary components for managing complex change, which is particularly salient in the complex and dynamic environment of CISF Forums. The implementation of complex change requires multiple elements to be in place to take hold, including an action plan, thus underscoring the importance of opportunities for Forums to provide input into the strategic path for Forums – the purpose of the break-out sessions. A graphic recording of the Gathering was captured by Sam Bradd of Drawing Change in a series of four images, which can be found throughout this document.



Opening Remarks from Leadership

Opening remarks from leadership began with a live address from Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. He underscored the effect of climate change on how we think and the way we live. He relayed a story about shaking hands with Guardians on the territory of the Kitasoo Xai'ais, remarking that witnessing that change and collaboration was profoundly moving, and that the work Forums are doing is part of changing the way we relate to each other and the land. This was followed by an address from Honourable Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, who provided congratulations on the work accomplished since the start of the Environmental Stewardship Initiative nearly ten years ago. He encouraged “constructive damage” to the status quo and “getting into good trouble” on the land, which has enabled the shift from pilot projects, to programs, to an entirely new approach to managing land and resources in B.C.



Dan George relayed regrets that Grand Chief Stewart Philip of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs was unable to attend due to illness, and opened the floor to First Nations Leadership to speak, which was accepted by Chief Angie Bailey of Aitchelitz First Nation and member of the S'ólh Téméxw Stewardship Alliance-British Columbia Collaborative Stewardship Forum (STSA-BC) Forum. She provided an address which included expressing her support for Forums and provided acknowledgements and a thank you to Dan and the Ministers. This was followed by an address from Lisa Helmer, Executive Director of CISF with the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS). She highlighted the endurance of CISF through setbacks such as environmental disasters and a pandemic, and the heart of the success of Forums being the communities who have created the approach and the deep trust. *[Continued on page 3]*

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Leadership addresses were closed by a virtual address from WLRS Minister Honourable Nathan Cullen , calling in from Haida Gwaii following the celebration of the Haida title agreement. He expressed that he would like to hear about how to deepen the relationship with CISF and relayed the ability to have new conversations like on Haida Gwaii in the face of challenges and pressures on the land, with the goal to help heal. He thanked attendees for the work being done through CISF Forums.

Presentations and Breakout Sessions

Following addresses from leadership, the work planning portion of the Gathering commenced. Spanning over two days, a series of six presentations and workshops were designed to elicit feedback from Forum members about strategic topics Forums are facing at the governance level. The Governance Working Group Executive (GWGE), which is the collaborative governance table for CISF, comprised of First Nations and provincial representatives from the CISF Forums, was instrumental in building out the agenda and topics. The sessions were structured such that each topic had a presentation, followed by two prompt questions. Attendees split into five groups to workshop collective responses to the questions, with an additional option to weigh in on the questions anonymously and individually by way of an online survey. The outputs from the break-out sessions and survey will inform a strategic report developed by Four Directions Management Services Ltd., intended to help guide the GWGE. There was a brief report-out in the general session following each of the break-out sessions, and some key points are reflected and captured in the graphic recordings corresponding to the topic. The full analysis of the break-out sessions, including the anonymous survey, will be captured in the strategic report.



Topic 1: Communications

Presenter: Kelly Mortimer, Vice President of Four Directions Management Services

Context: The presentation made a distinction between external and internal CISF Forum communications, highlighted the benefits of enhanced communication, and provided examples of successful and unsuccessful communication efforts from other areas.

Prompt questions for the break-out session:

1. How can we improve the ways we communicate internally where we can more effectively share information across Forums to support one another, leverage opportunities, and dampen challenges?
2. What is important for others to know about our shared work, who we are, and what we are trying to achieve? How can we tell our story to gain supporters and dispel critics?



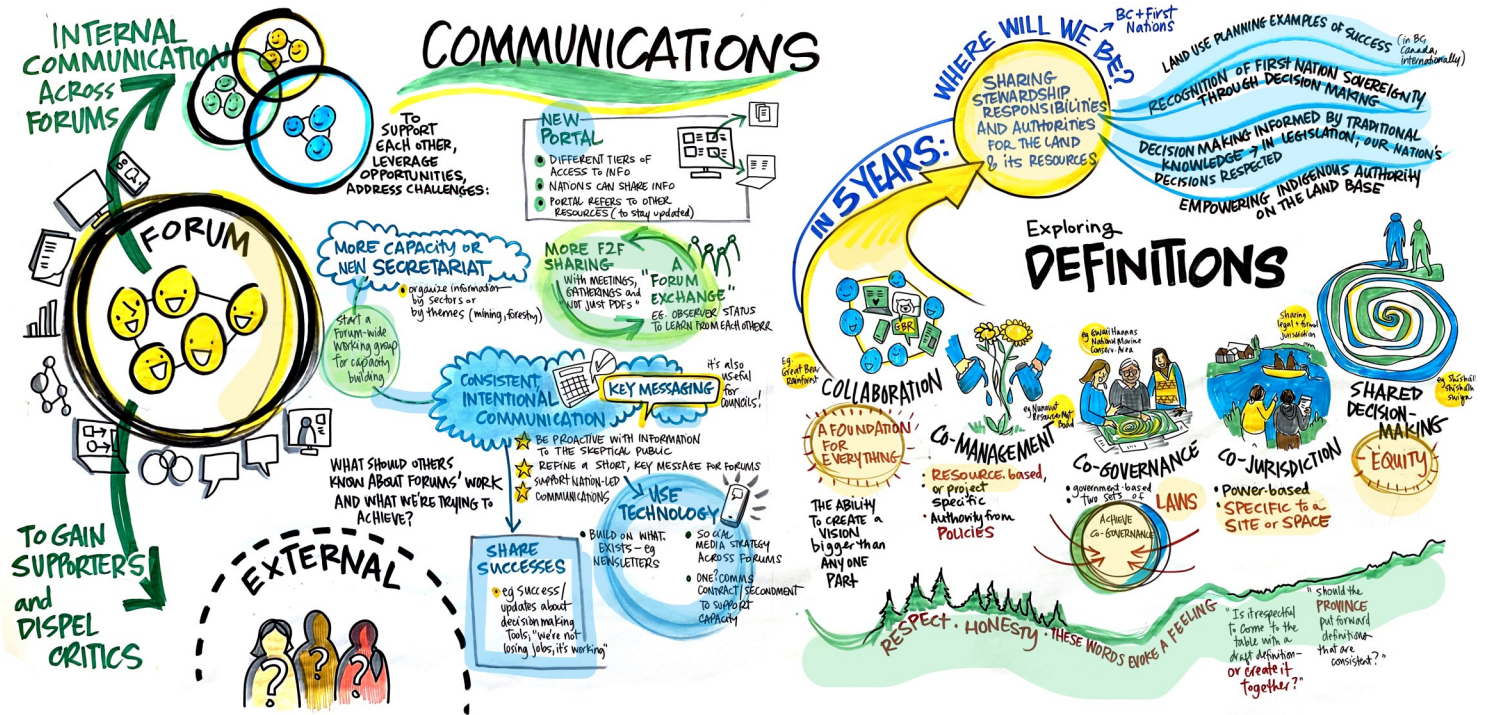
Topic 2: Definitions & Terminology

Presenter: Dan George, President of Four Directions Management Services

Context: The presentation provided an overview and sample definitions of several terms that are often used interchangeably at collaborative tables, rooted in real-life examples of implementation.

Prompt questions for the break-out session:

1. We want to create a shared understanding on the following key terms which are used frequently and sometimes interchangeably despite being distinct. As such, how should we define: Collaboration; Co-Management; Co-Governance; Co-Jurisdiction; Shared Decision-Making.
2. Considering where we are now and ultimately where we want to be, where do you think we (First Nations and the Province of BC) can realistically strive to be within the next 5 years when it comes to sharing stewardship responsibilities and authorities for the land and its resources?



Topic 3: Funding

Presenter: Lisa Helmer, Executive Director, CISF, WLRS

Context: The presentation provided an overview of the history and timeline of the CISF funding model, anchored by Recommendation 1 (Establish long term, cost effective and equitably distributed funding) of the Joint Recommendations to Cabinet that were drafted in partnership with the GWGE and endorsed by Cabinet in 2022. Multiple funding partnerships have now been secured in support of CISF including with Environment and Climate Change Canada and the B.C. Parks Foundation, and Forums have evolved to the point where the decision about how to allocate existing funding among Forums will be informed collaboratively by the GWGE. The presentation touched on preliminary principles for allocation already established by the GWGE, which provide a starting point for these important conversations.

Prompt questions for the break-out session:

1. What specific criteria should be used to define equitable distribution of funds among the Forums, considering factors like the number of participating First Nations, land base size, activity levels, and project complexity? How can these criteria ensure fairness while respecting each Forum's unique structure and function?
2. How can we balance the goal of inclusivity, which welcomes new participants, with the imperative of ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of existing Forums? What criteria or principles should guide this balance?

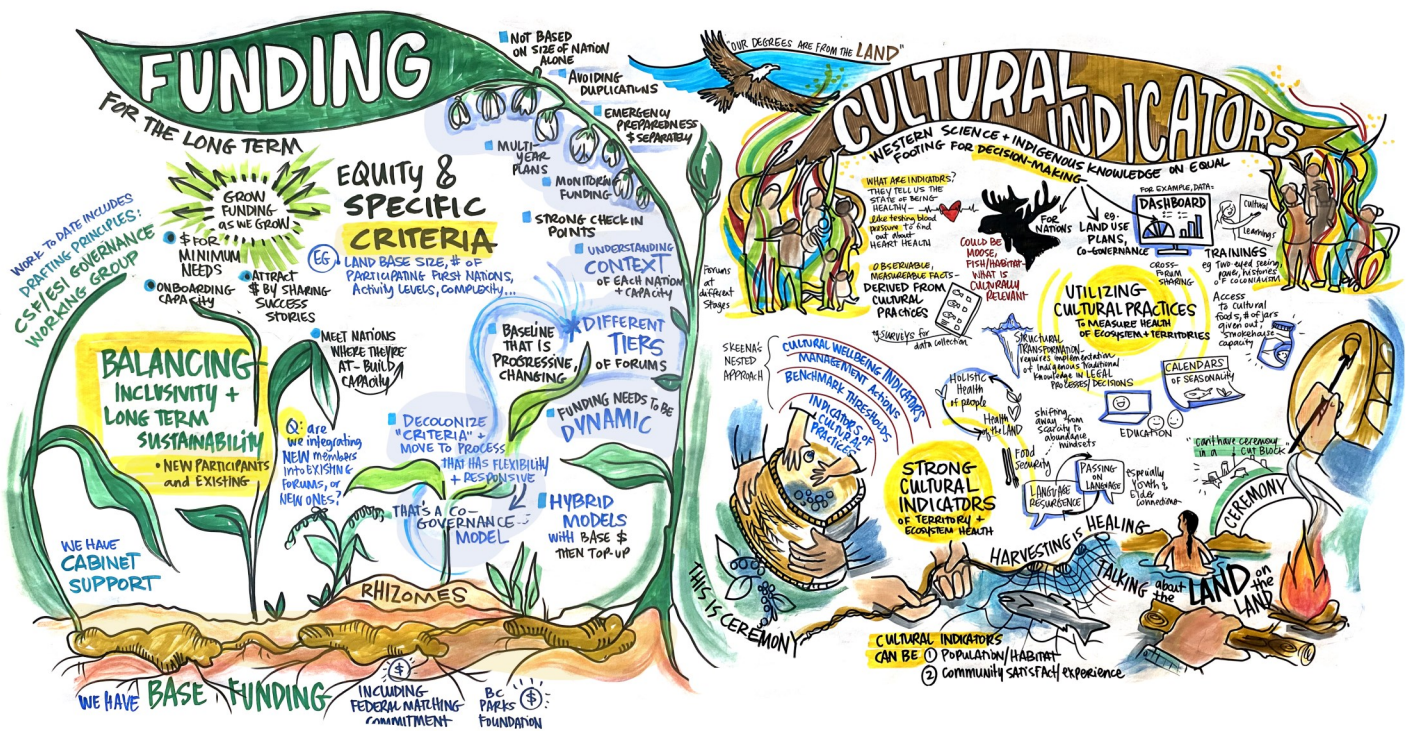
Topic 4: Cultural Indicators

Presenter: Tara Marsden, Hlimoo Sustainable Solutions, Skeena Sustainability Assessment Forum

Context: The presentation provided an overview of the implementation of cultural indicators within one of the regional CISF Forums, the Skeena Sustainability Assessment Forum (SSAF). Tara provided context that the Environmental Stewardship Initiative intended to have equal footing of western science and Indigenous knowledge – but there was a lot of focus on western science training, so SSAF developed Indigenous knowledge cultural indicators. Cultural Indicators were defined as “observable, measurable facts about the state of the five Skeena ESI values that are derived from cultural practices of the Skeena ESI First Nations.” She provided examples of types of cultural indicators used within the SSAF, and recommendations for use and implementation.

Prompt questions for the break-out session:

1. How can your Forum improve how cultural practices are utilized to measure the health of your territories and ecosystems?
2. Is there one cultural practice that you think is a very strong indicator of territory and ecosystem health?



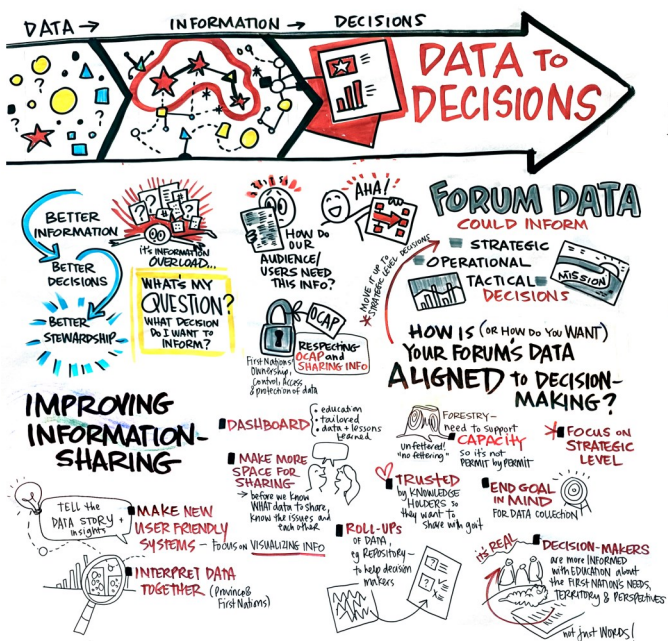
Topic 5: Data to Decisions

Presenter: Carolyn Gibson, Director, Cumulative Effects, WLRS

Context: Building off another component of the 2022 Joint Recommendations to Cabinet, the presentation provided an overview of how to work towards Recommendation 2 (Enabling and Informing Decision-Making), which seeks to explore expanding existing mandates of each Forum to ensure Forum data and outputs inform decision-making processes. Determining the type of decision (strategic, operational, or tactical) as a starting point can inform what type of information is collected, underpinned by a shared decision-making space that informs how the information is packaged. It is important to determine if specific data is positioned to inform decisions, and supports First Nation's ownership, control, access and possession of the data and adheres to the principles of First Nations data governance and sovereignty

Prompt questions for the break-out session:

1. Recommendation 2 speaks to the need to remove barriers for advancing Forum outputs into decision-making processes at all levels. Forum data can inform all types of decisions (operational, tactical, strategic) but certain data types lend themselves better to informing certain types of decisions – do you feel your Forum data is better positioned to inform certain types of decisions? Why? Is this aligned with the decisions you want to be informing?
2. As data is advanced to decisions, how can we improve the ways information is shared in a way that respects the principles of OCAP? How would you like to see Forum outputs stored and information shared across Forums?



Topic 6: Assessing Cumulative Effects

Presenter: Dave Schaepe, S'ólh Téméxw Stewardship Alliance-British Columbia (STSA-BC) Collaborative Stewardship Forum

Context: The presentation provided an overview of the culturally informed approach to cumulative effects assessment and stewardship planning undertaken through one of the CISF Forums, the STSA-BC Collaborative Forum. The S'ólh Téméxw Integrity Analysis utilized a pilot methodology founded in Indigenous world view and incorporates a two eyed seeing approach. It is watershed-based and collectively enhances understanding of wellbeing based on interconnectedness, wellbeing, and integrity of the land, and applies a long-term (seven generation) outlook.

Prompt questions for the break-out session:

1. What are the key elements of a successful collaboration between your Nation and the Province when assessing and managing cumulative effects? How do we ensure that Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous data sovereignty is respected and honoured, while working on collaborative CE assessment?
2. There are many approaches to cumulative effects assessments. Looking forward, what methodologies, protocols and/or approaches would you like to use as we work on collaborative cumulative effects assessments?





Closing

Dan George provided closing slides, speaking about where to go from here with the information gained. He spoke to learnings surrounding communication (increase engagement, improve productivity, increase innovation), collaboration (accept multiple perspectives, minimize competition, share resources), change management (manage risk, identify outcomes, continually improve), and conflict transformation (increase understanding, value others, listen generously). He relayed that Forums can use these tools to unify, that strategy falls on a continuum from aspirational to specific and tangible, and that the outputs of the break-out sessions and online survey would help to inform a strategic report.

Lisa Helmer provided a closing address, acknowledging innovation, the huge opportunity ahead for Forums, and the progress made to date. She noted the support from Ministers and provincial executive and thanked everyone for making the time to attend. Building on the work of communities as the foundation of Forum work, she encouraged folks to tell at least three people about their work upon returning home.

The Gathering was closed with a prayer by Nikkayla Gladstone from Haida and Heiltsuk territory, Indigenous Youth Intern with the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship.

Thank you to all who made the journey.

