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Broadened Notion of Water Security

Need to “reorient the concept of water security away from a utilitarian focus on material water and towards a critical approach based on water-society relations”

(p. 50).

In this framing, water security is less about obtaining water and more about fostering a wider set of hydro-social relations to promote well-being—highlighting the complex and patterned relations through which water is accessed, used, managed and manipulated; and the social and political dynamics and processes in which these relations are embedded.”

Jepson et al 2017

PROGRAM ON
WATER GOVERNANCE

Historic Exclusions and recent legal challenges:

British Columbia Assembly of First Nations:

> "For our Nations, ownership of water, or title to water, is considered an aspect of Aboriginal title. We maintain that our Nations have Aboriginal title to water, and therefore the right to use it, and to govern its use"
>
> (BCAFN 2010, 445)

-Halalt First Nation vs. BC Environment

BC Supreme Court: Halalt had prima facie title to land and groundwater associated with it

-2014 Supreme Court of Canada's *Tsilhqot'in decision*

Supreme Court of Canada: conferred ownership rights to Aboriginal peoples, including: the right to decide how land will be used; the right to economic benefits of the land; …

Water Sustainability Act (2014) BC

A number of **key elements define the new legislative regime**, including:

- **Regulation of groundwater for the first time**. Ability to manage surface and groundwater as interconnected resource.
- Improved protection of **water flows for ecosystems and fish**. The WSA requires decision-makers to consider environmental flow needs when issuing new water licenses and also includes provisions to ensure shorter critical flow and fish population protections.
- **A new comprehensive planning regime. The WSA enables the creation of water sustainability plans,** allowing regional solutions, which can be made binding through regulation.
- The potential for delegated decision-making.
- A new power to set water objectives to better integrate water into land-use decisions. Water objectives can be set for the purposes of sustaining water quality, quantity, and aquatic ecosystems. Once established, they will require all decision-makers and local governments in a watershed to consider the impacts of their decisions on the stated water objectives (As stated before, essential to have **measurable and enforceable targets**)

(source: Polis)

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Building Resilient Water Futures

Our goal is to create a prototype of an Indigenous-led community-based water monitoring initiative that is rooted in Indigenous laws, and is a practical expression of Indigenous water governance.

www.Decolonizingwater.ca

Article

E Nature and Space

Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space
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Respecting water: Indigenous water governance, ontologies, and the politics of kinship on the ground

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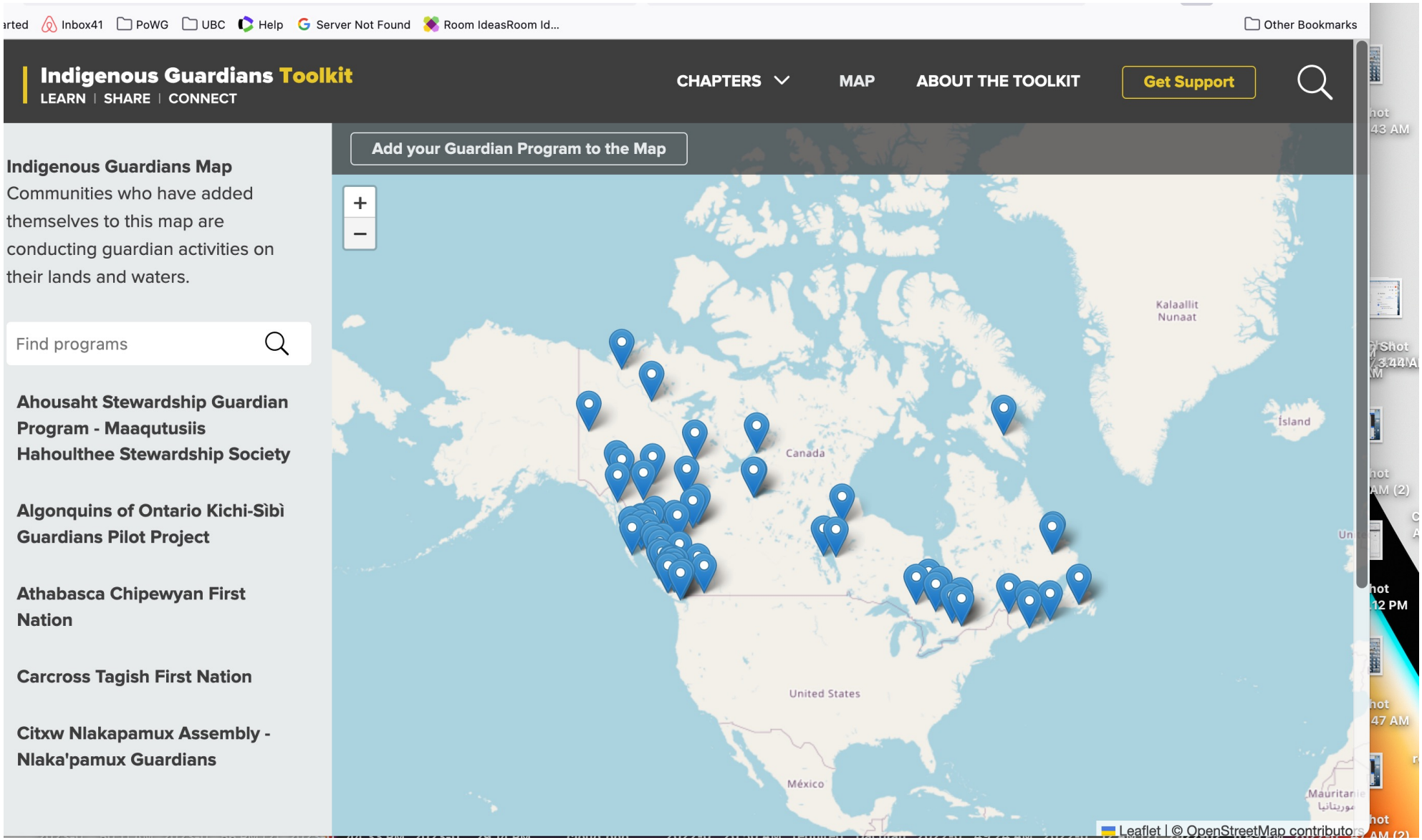
University of Alberta/Yukon College, Canada

Abstract

Indigenous peoples often view water as a living entity or a relative, to which they have a sacred responsibility. Such a perspective frequently conflicts with settler societies' view of water as a "resource" that can be owned, managed, and exploited. Although rarely articulated explicitly, water conflicts are rooted in ontological differences between Indigenous and settler views of water. Furthermore, the unequal water governance landscape created by settler colonialism has perpetuated the suppression of Indigenous ways of conceptualizing water. This paper thus examines the "political ontology" of water by drawing on insights from the fields of critical Indigenous studies, post-humanism, and water governance. Additionally, we engage a case study of four Yukon First Nations (Carcross/Tagish, Kluane, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and White River First Nations) in the Canadian North to examine their water ontologies through the lens of a politics of kinship including ideas about "respecting water." We also examine the assumptions of settler-colonial water governance in the territory, shaped by modern land claims and self-government agreements. We close by discussing the implications of Indigenous water ontologies for alternate modes of governing water.

Keywords

Indigenous law, indigenous water governance, ontological politics, Yukon First Nations, Yukon, Canada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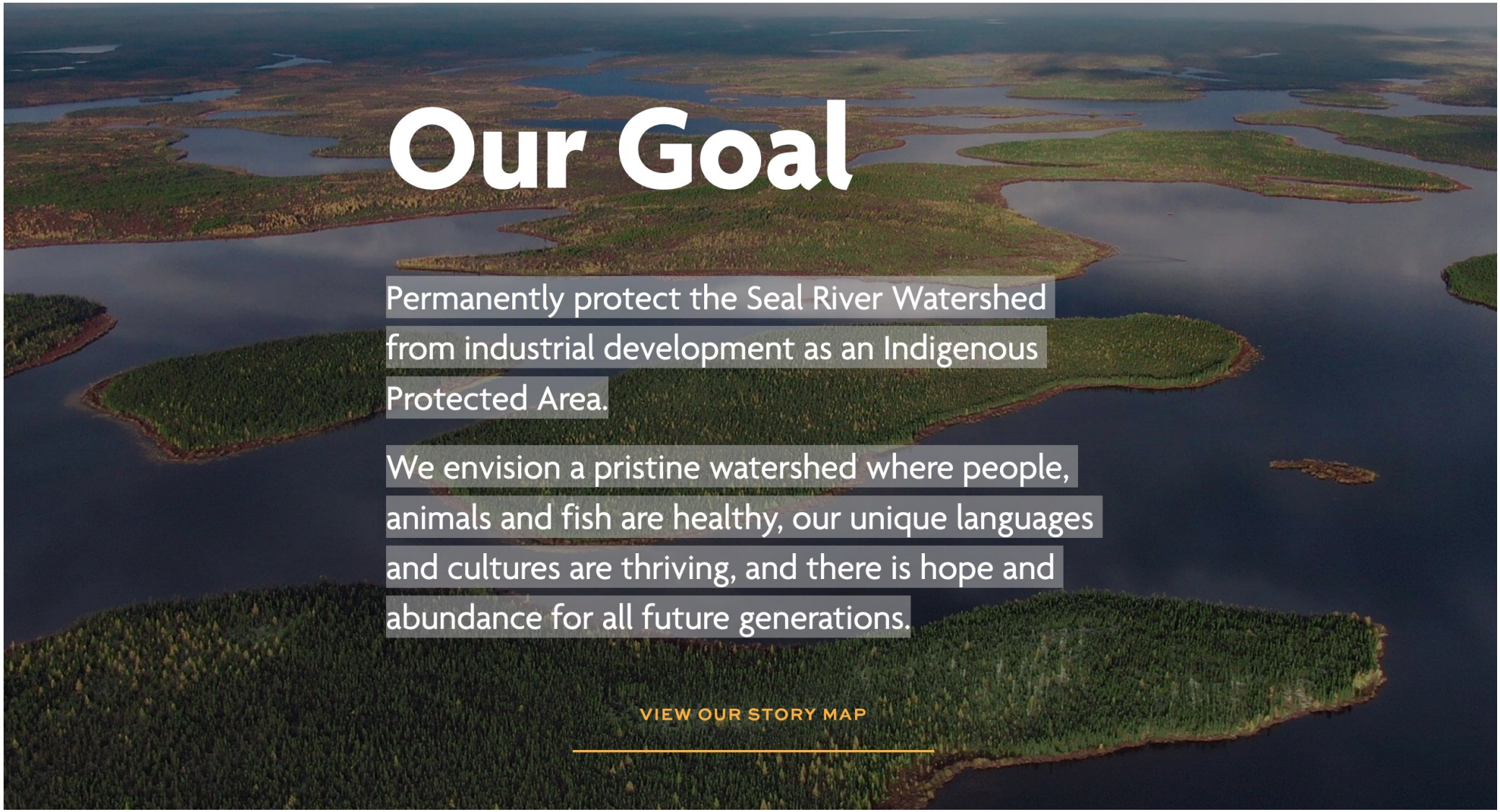

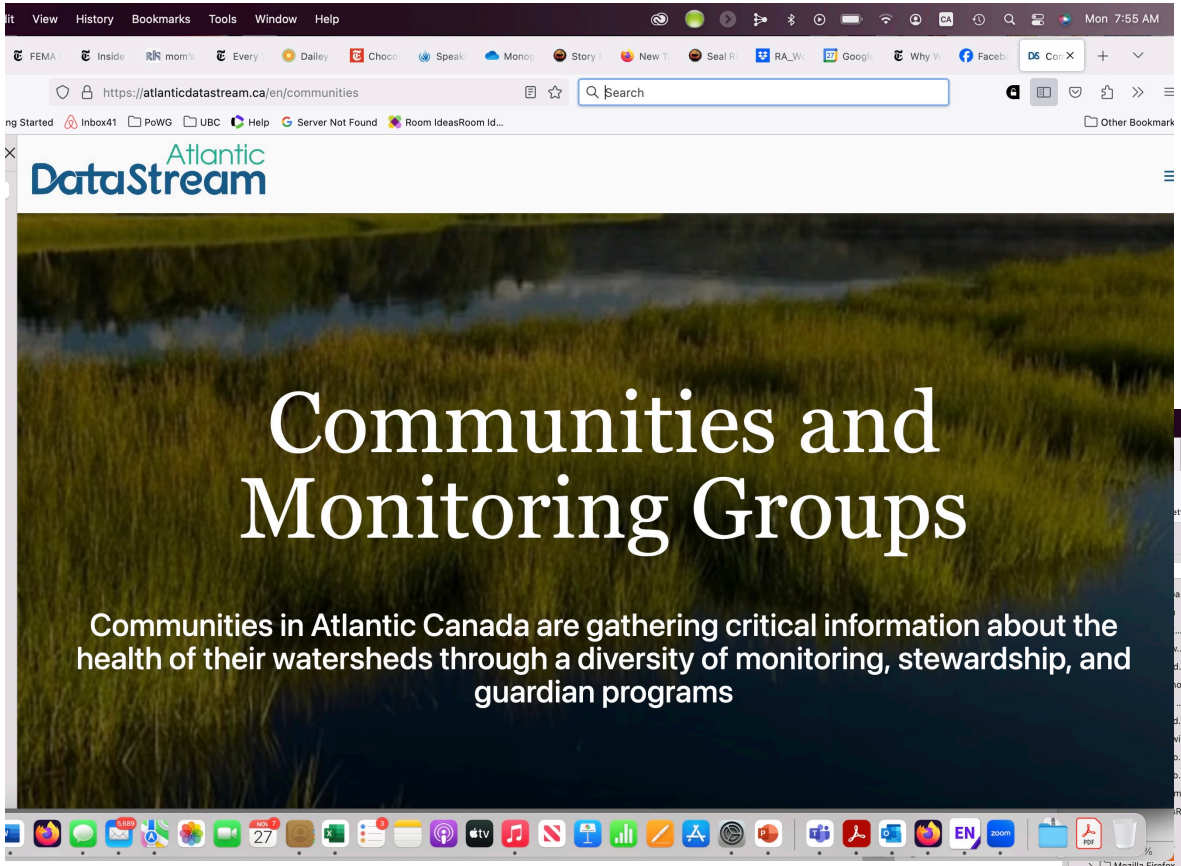
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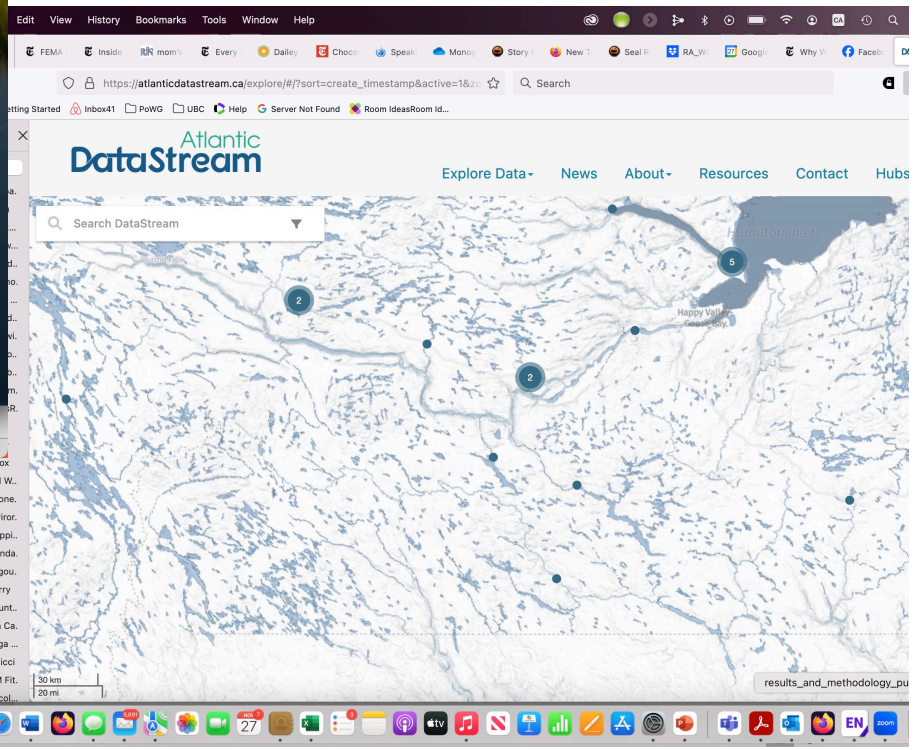
Communities and Monitoring Groups
Communities in Atlantic Canada are gathering critical information about the health of their watersheds through a diversity of monitoring, stewardship, and guardian programs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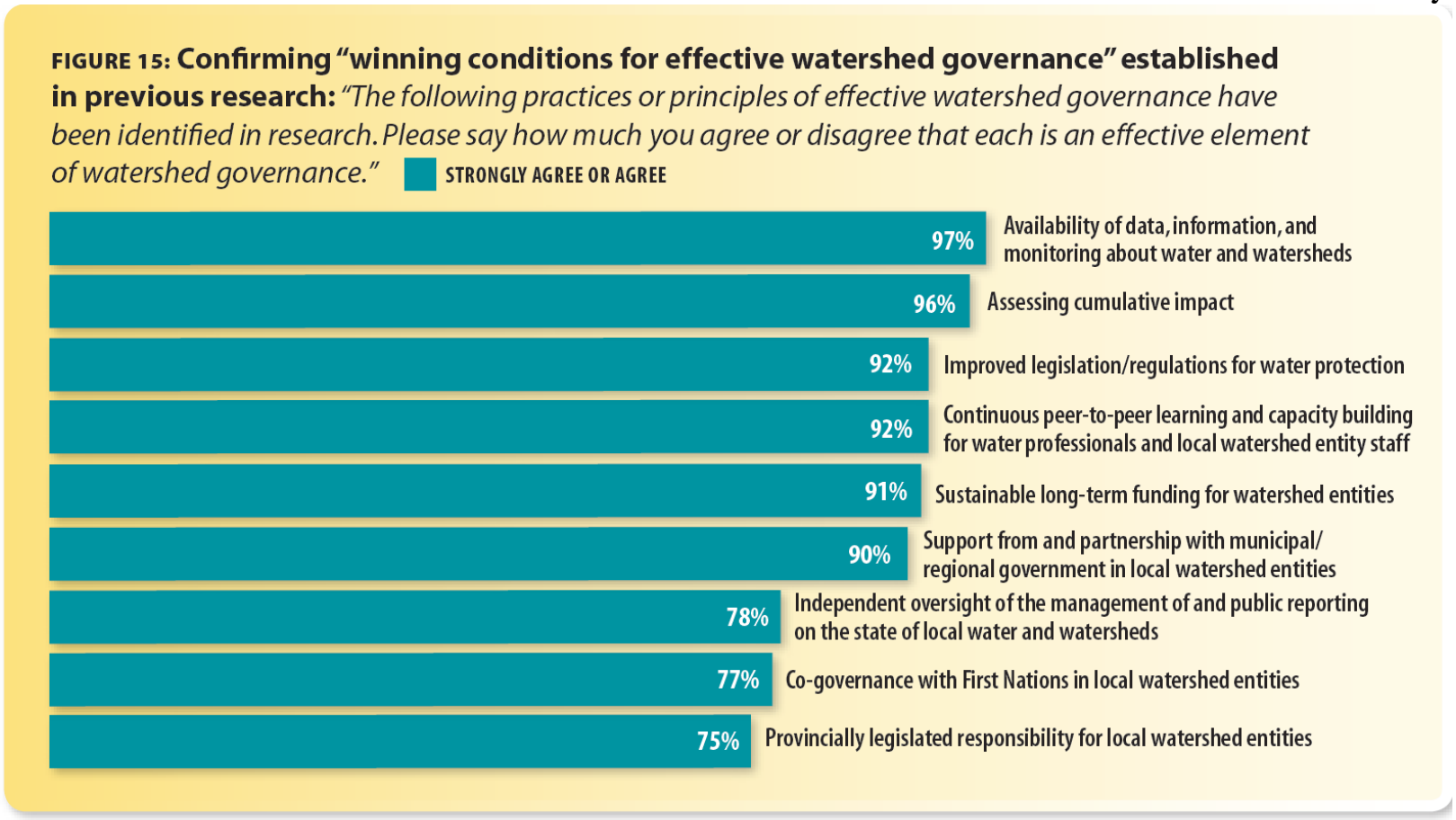
Polis, **2022 Watershed security survey**



Six in ten (62%) B.C. residents say they are concerned about pollution of lakes, rivers, and streams—topping the list of concerns about interrelated environmental issues, including climate change (59%), declining salmon stocks (59%), and deforestation (55%).

Article

E Nature and Space

EPE: Nature and Space
1–27
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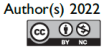
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From "trust" to "trustworthiness": Retheorizing dynamics of trust, distrust, and water security in North America

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Thank you!

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