



# OUR LIVING WATERS

All waters in Canada in good health by 2030

## 2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT



A project of

MakeWay

# A Ripple of Wisdom from the National Director

When the headwinds are strong, it can be really hard to measure progress. For many organizations working toward healthy waters, highlights for 2024-25 were the result of years of work rooted in deep alignment and collective action. Our heartfelt gratitude is extended to everyone who advocated for the new Canada Water Agency within the federal government, now responsible for national freshwater governance.

The importance of this work cannot be understated: civil society organizations work on long-term goals for the benefit of all of society and their mandates are not interrupted by elections. When we are networked and working together, collectively, building on each other's strengths, we represent a formidable intelligence that spans the entire country.

This year, Our Living Waters focused on listening and weaving together the strengths of our members. We mapped our Network to demonstrate how tightly connected organizations are both regionally and nationally, and we shone a spotlight on their collaborative successes from coast to coast to coast. We brought people together online through member meetups, webinars, workshops and focus groups with bilingual supports to help us bridge francophone and anglophone efforts toward healthy waters. We sharpened our focus, honing in on [seven key offerings](#).

This year will be full of challenges. From the now annual impacts of climate-change related emergencies to the emerging geopolitical threats to economies and ecosystems, it's clear that the headwinds are gathering force. It's in times like these that coordinating our efforts becomes doubly important.

In 2025-26, we'll focus on renewing how we collectively measure progress toward [all waters in Canada in good health by 2030](#). We'll continue to amplify the voice of watershed groups across the country who are calling for national policy that protects water and for the investments that will help watersheds across the country thrive. And most importantly, we'll create opportunities for our Network members to stay connected, aligned and informed.

With gratitude,

*Julie*  
*National Director*  
*Our Living Waters*



# The Year At-A-Glance

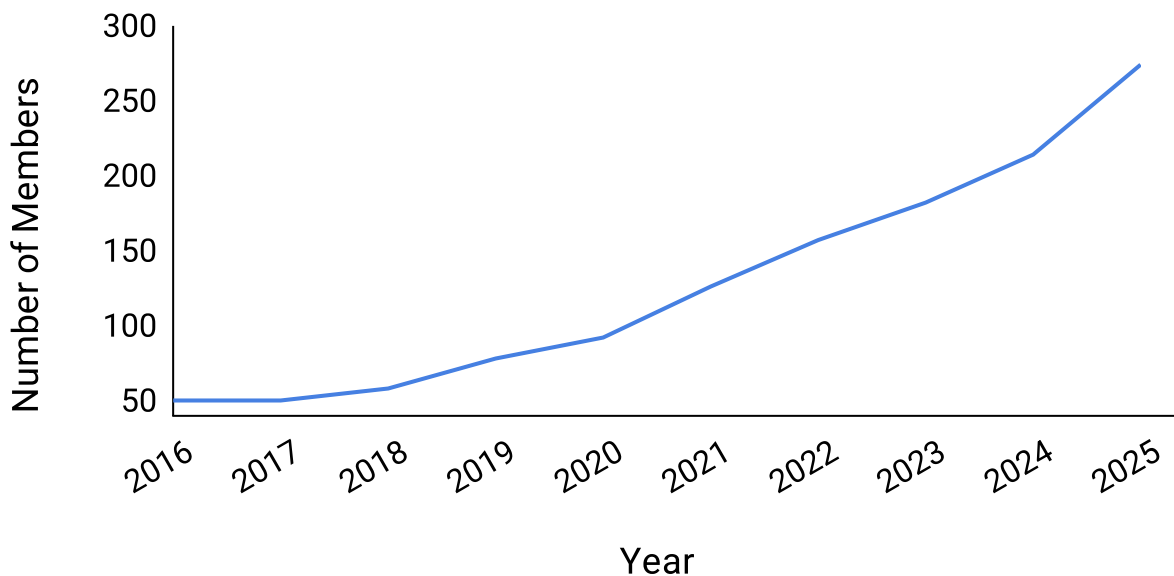
We're excited to reflect on our 2024-25 year at Our Living Waters (OLW), our ninth year of supporting Network member collaboration and amplifying voices for healthy waters. This year centered on deepening member engagement, led by our new Network Engagement lead, Natalija Vojno. We worked hard to amplify pan-Canadian water leadership and convene among regions and across themes of interest.

## Growth in 2024-2025

OLW was born in 2016 after 50 member organizations came together around a common agenda for change, and continued to expand rapidly this year. Our membership has increased more than five times in our nine years of operations.

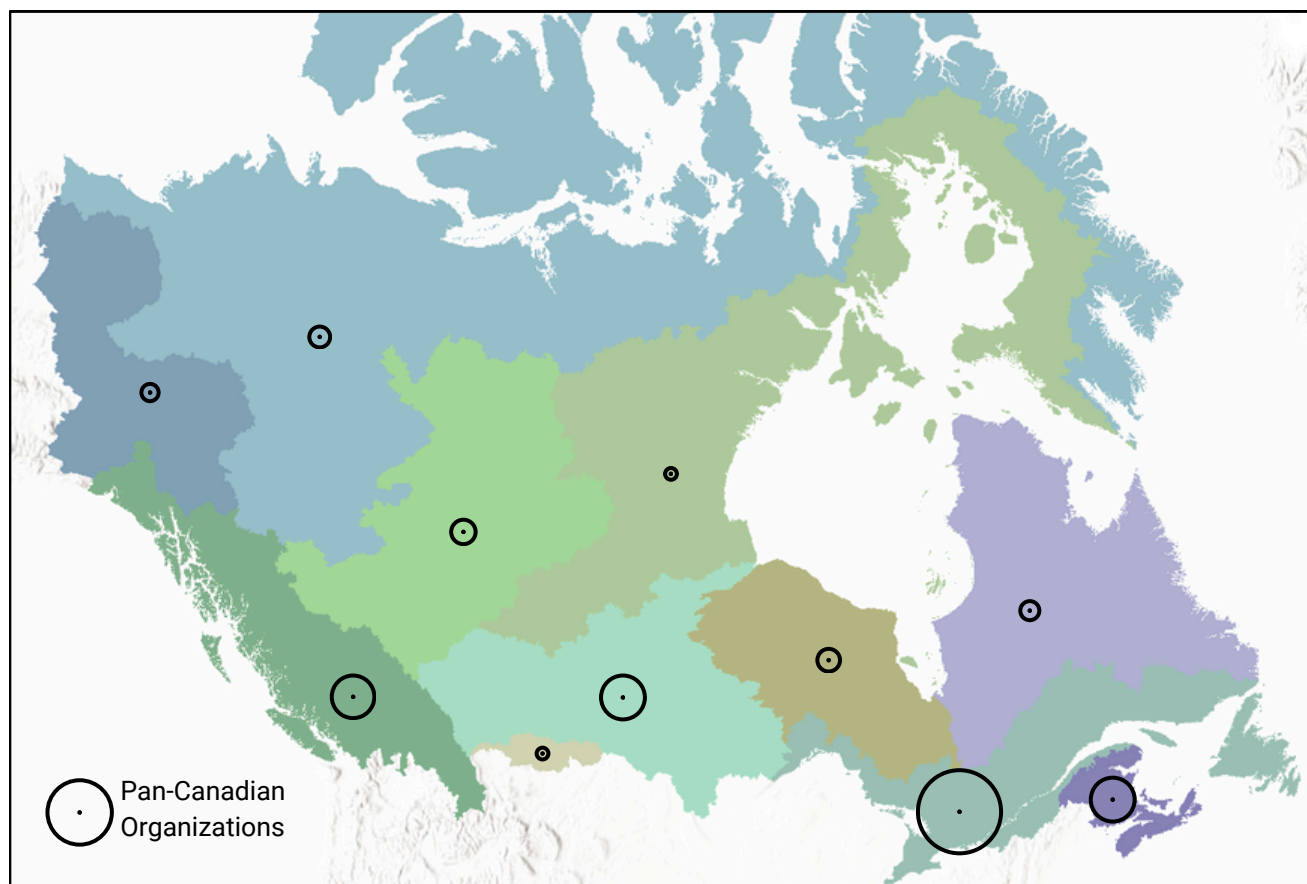
**274 total members: 155 organizations and 119 individuals**  
► up from 214 last year, representing an increase of 28% in one year

## Growth in Membership Over Time



## The Waters that Network Members are Protecting

Network members work at different scales to protect the waters. Many organizations are pan-Canadian in scope, working across all eleven major drainage areas (40 of 155 groups). On this map, the size of the black circles indicates the relative number of member organizations working in each major drainage area across the country.



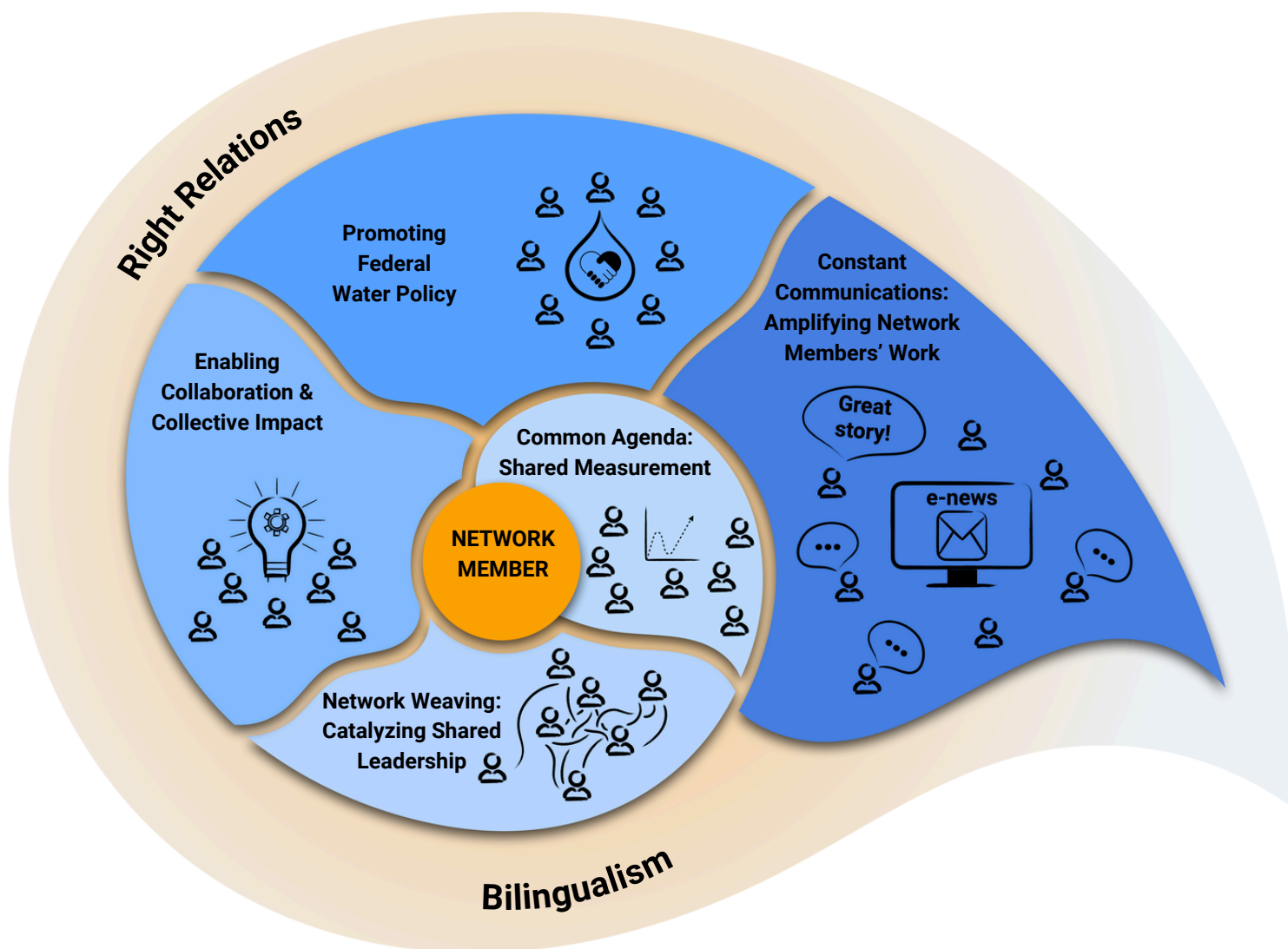
### MAJOR DRAINAGE AREAS

- |                                 |                              |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Yukon River                     | Mississippi River            |
| Arctic                          | Southwestern Hudson Bay      |
| Pacific                         | St. Lawrence                 |
| Great Slave Lake                | Northern Quebec and Labrador |
| Western and Northern Hudson Bay | Maritime Provinces           |
| Nelson River                    |                              |

Map and data adapted from [Esri, USGS 2025](#) | Esri, TomTom, FAO, NOAA, USGS, NRCan | Water Survey of Canada (Environment Canada)  
[Standard Drainage Area Classification \(SDAC\) 2003, Statistics Canada](#)

## OLW's Network Services

OLW provides [seven integrated key services](#) to Network members centered on members' needs. Custom-designed collaborations connect the water community by theme and amplify collective impact across the country. We facilitate knowledge mobilization and track progress towards the ambitious goal of [all waters in Canada in good health by 2030](#), in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Our values, including Right Relations and bilingual trust-building, are woven into our work.



The remainder of this annual report provides a snapshot of [How We Did](#), [What's New](#), and [What's Next](#) for each Network service.

# Our Common Agenda: Shared Measurement

## How We Did

19 of 24 impact measures populated with data

1,377 Shared Measurement System (SMS) web users

3 most visited impact measures:

[human right to water](#)



[drinking water advisories](#)



[national drinking water standards](#)



56 SMS [Primer](#) downloads

## What's New

Digital Network Map Prototype

Our Common Agenda Focus Group

## What's Next

Co-designed Workshops for SMS refresh

Next iteration of the Network Map



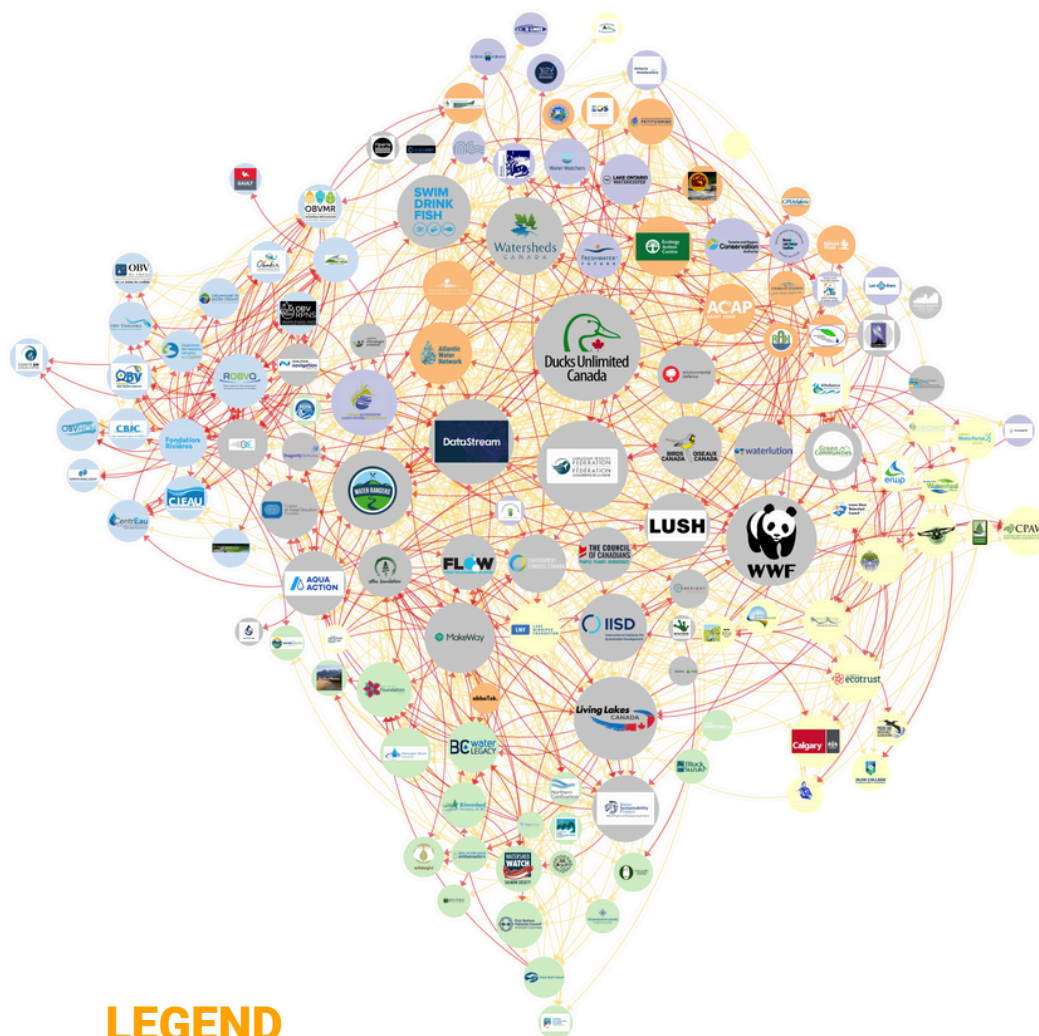
Our ambitious goal of [all waters in Canada in good health by 2030](#) unites the Our Living Waters Network towards a thriving future, while our 24 impact measures track our collective progress towards this ambitious goal. Overall, the [Shared Measurement System](#) (SMS) provides a common agenda to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

The SMS was built based on six water health indicators adopted from WWF-Canada's Watershed Reports, which were [updated in 2025 by Water Rangers](#). While the Watershed Reports focus on water health itself, the SMS impact measures [track actions and policies](#) for improving water health. Updating impact measure data remained on hold for OLW this year as we built out a prototype digital Network map. The map has the capacity to visualize connections between Network members and the impact measures they are working on.

We also ran a Focus Group of Network members to explore Our Common Agenda and provide initial recommendations on refreshing the SMS. Participants discussed how they apply the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their work and the links to the SMS. Challenges related to data fragmentation, interoperability, and accessibility were raised, emphasizing the need for localized and user-friendly dashboards that integrate both community and government data. The Focus Group examined the merits of aligning with existing government and corporate sustainability reporting as well as incorporating emerging technologies like AI. In the short-term, steps were identified to improve SMS user experience and to understand who is accessing the website and why. Further work is needed to integrate with local SDG stock takings.

In the next fiscal year, we hope to create the next iteration of the Network mapping tool, investigating how it can enable groups to strengthen collaboration across the country. We also plan to build upon the Our Common Agenda Focus Group by launching a co-design process with virtual and in-person workshops to modernize the SMS over the long term.

## Prototype Network Map



## LEGEND

- Strong Collaborative Relationships, Organizations Depend on Each Other
- Medium Collaborative Relationships, Organizations Share Projects
- Number and Strength of Connections
- National Organizations
- B.C. Organizations
- Prairie Organizations
- Ontario Organizations
- Quebec Organizations
- Atlantic Organizations

# Network Weaving: Catalyzing Shared Leadership

## *How We Did*

325 participants at OLW convenings

34 regional hubs identified, 10 attended by OLW staff

## *What's New*

1 Annual Network Gathering

5 Monthly Member Meetups

## *What's Next*

Quarterly Water Leaders Workshops

With our new Network Engagement Lead Natalija Vojno on board, we rolled out our Network Weaving Strategy this year and offered engagement opportunities based on our [Member Journey](#) model. Members start as Supporters, then move to being Partners, Co-Creators, and National Water Champions. We approached the model with the awareness that organizations lack time and capacity to focus on initiatives outside their region or scope of work. Yet all perspectives are critical for progress towards [all waters in good health](#), and Network members benefit from weaving skills, relationships and knowledge beyond their organization. For these reasons we convened an Annual Network Gathering; launched our Monthly Member Meetups, Focus Groups, and National Water Champions Circle; and planned new Water Leaders Workshops.

### Stages of the Member Journey



## Monthly Member Meetups

Our new recurring Monthly Member Meetups foster decentralized Network activity and nation-wide peer connections. They facilitate informal dialogues one innovative topic at a time by featuring a guest presentation followed by an open space for questions and sharing.

## Water Leaders Workshops

OLW staff attend convenings of regional watershed hubs across Canada to build a birdseye view of challenges and opportunities for collaboration in the Canadian waterscape. To address overlapping regional challenges, we identified the need for Water Leaders Workshops to unite regional caucuses, coalitions, and network leaders. We plan to offer these next year based on themes chosen by Network members.

<i>Member Benefits</i>	Supporters	Partners	Co-Creators	National Water Champions
E-news & <u>LinkedIn</u> amplifying <u>Events</u> , <u>Jobs</u> & <u>Grants</u> & member stories	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bilingual <u>Webinars</u> on topics of national importance	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regular <u>Member Meetups</u> across shared themes or geography	✓	✓	✓	✓
Federal Water Policy Promotion through the separate <u>Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters</u>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Workshops catalyzing collective action		✓	✓	✓
<u>Impact Stories</u> with a national collaborative lens on water		✓	✓	✓
Focus Groups accelerating collective action to form OLW Teams			✓	✓
<u>Teams</u> where Network members convene in collaborative forums to drive collective action on a shared water goal			✓	✓
National Water Champions Circle				✓
<u>OLW Steering Committee</u>				✓

# Enabling Collaboration & Collective Impact

## *How We Did*

We reset our focus!

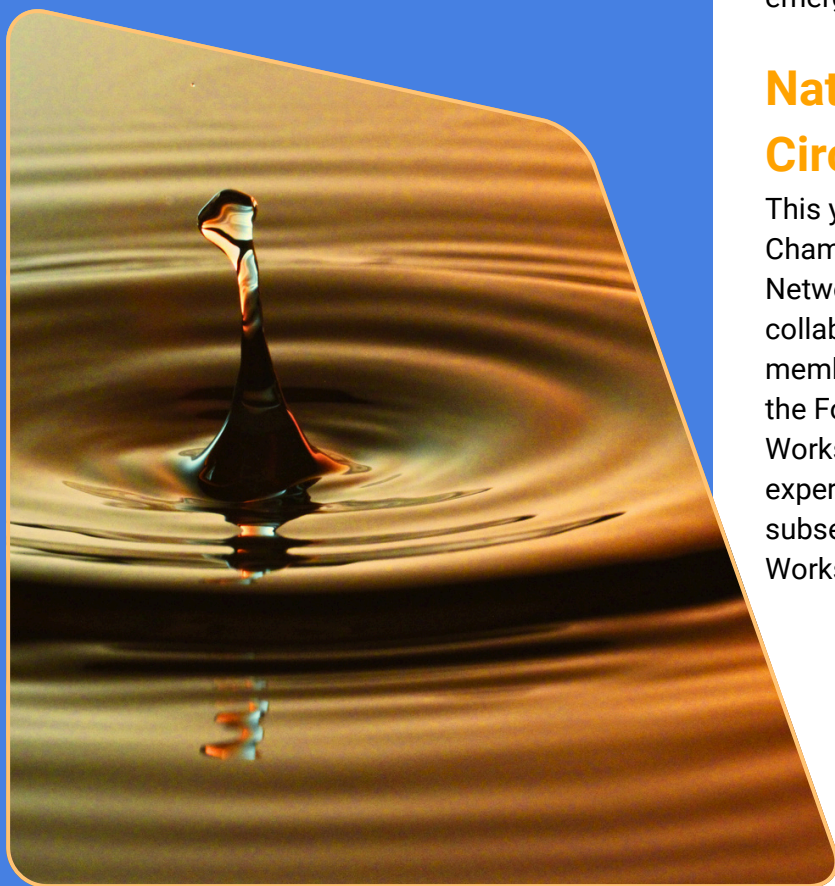
## *What's New*

1 National Water Champions Circle Meeting

2 Focus Groups with 3 Meetings Each

## *What's Next*

New Round of Focus Groups & Water Champions Circle Meetings



Designing for emergence and adapting to current realities, we shifted our focus this year from OLV Teams to convening two Focus Groups on priority themes identified by Network members, including Our Common Agenda (page 5) and Right Relations (page 12).

## Focus Groups

Time-limited OLV Focus Groups have the potential to accelerate their collective actions to form OLV Teams, or collaborative forums where Network members convene to drive action on a shared water goal. The intention is that some, but not all, Focus Groups can seed long-term collaborations between highly engaged Network members, provided that funding resources are in place to support the emergence of the Team.

## National Water Champions Circle

This year we also launched a National Water Champions Circle that convenes quarterly to guide Network strategy and identify new pockets of collaboration. We designed the Circle so that members receive summaries and feedback from the Focus Groups, and in future, the Water Leaders Workshops. In this way, they can provide collective expert insight to inform the establishment of subsequent Focus Groups and Water Leaders Workshops.

# Promoting Federal Water Policy

## *How We Did*

### OLW's Support

- 1 National Bilingual Webinar on the Canada Water Agency (CWA)

The [Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters](#) (CCHW) continued its federal advocacy work, with:

- 1 Op-Ed in the [National Observer](#)
- 4 CCHW members funded to attend CWA National Freshwater Data Strategy Workshop
- Outreach to 4 ENVI Committee elected reps and staff in the Prime Minister's Office
- 1 Submission to 2025 Budget consultation
- Representation at World Water Week in Sweden

## *What's New*

OLW formalized ongoing Secretariat support for CCHW

Change in CCHW Steering Committee Chair

## *What's Next*

CCHW prep to inform a new government and work on 2026 budget request

Biannual Webinars

Led by co-chairs Emily Lorra Hines (FLOW) and Dominique Monchamp (de Gaspé Beaubien Foundation) in 2024 and Kariann Aarup (Aqua Action) in 2025, the Canadian Coalition for Healthy Waters (CCHW) focused on the launch of the Canada Water Agency (CWA) and contributing to the consultations informing the 2025 Budget, Freshwater Action Plan, and the National Freshwater Data Strategy.

In advance of the official CWA launch in October 2024, OLW hosted a bilingual webinar for Agency officials to bring attention to its mandate and key projects like the National Freshwater Data Strategy, review of the Canada Water Act, and implementation of the Freshwater Ecosystem Initiatives under the strengthened Freshwater Action Plan. Freshwater community leaders also presented their perspectives on the potential role of the CWA.

## Transitional Times

While the CWA is off the ground, the incoming federal government must make generational public investment in a wide range of water security projects to ensure that communities are able to grow sustainably and in balance with their local watersheds. A significant top-up of the federal government's pledge of \$650M over ten years for the Freshwater Action Plan is essential, as is a meaningful federal contribution to the BC Watershed Security Fund. Launched in 2024 through an historic BC Government investment, the fund could serve as a model for other regions, especially with CCHW support to bring new watershed asks to the federal budget process.



# Bilingual Communications

## How We Did

12 e-blasts, members featured >100 times

65% open rate (60% last year)

22% click rate (16% last year)

2,483 engagements (1,983 last year)

12 bilingual impact stories, 1,372 readers (789 last year)

26 francophone member organizations (24 last year)

706 [LinkedIn](#) followers (100 last year), >30,000 impressions

## What's New

Website update showcasing Network engagement

## What's Next

Focus on amplifying regional collaborative work



OLW provides bilingual e-news, impact stories and a LinkedIn account that help weave our Network together, amplifying the influence and impact of the water community in Canada. These tools inform members about each other's work, provide a sense of belonging to a well knit water community, and increase trust and understanding among diverse stakeholders. This year we updated our website to showcase Network engagement, including new [Member Benefits](#), [Events](#), and [Jobs & Grants](#) pages. Moving forward, we'll continue leveraging our bilingual communications channels to amplify the Network's thought leadership, with a strong focus on regional storytelling to weave together our national waterscape.

## 2024-25 Impact Stories

Amplifying Network Members' Collaborative Work

[Business Case Guidebook and Toolkit for Community-Based Water Monitoring](#)

[Canada WaterPortal Launch](#)

[Don River Revitalization](#)

[Land Trusts and Watershed Protection](#)

["Love Your Lake" Program Collaboration](#)

[New Brunswick Watershed Caucus](#)

[Ontario Salt Pollution Coalition](#)

[Youth Engagement For Water](#)

Network Weaving

[Prototype Network Map](#)

Federal Water Policy

[Canada Water Agency Webinar](#)

A Bit of Fun

[OLW Water Podcasts](#)

# Right Relations

## *How We Did*

100% of e-news highlighted Right Relations

~40 monthly web users on our Right Relations page, similar to last year

## *What's New*

Draft Right Relations Strategy

Focus Group on Right Relations

## *What's Next*

Grant-writing to support Right Relations work



OLW continues to be transparent about our commitment to [Right Relations](#) and to center our water declaration, grounded in our relationship with water, in our collective vision and actions. Each staffperson weaves her own [personal place-based narrative](#) into our work towards healthy waters.

Steps towards reconciliation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples entail building trustful relationships that enable co-governance practices, prioritizing Indigenous knowledge in water policy, and supporting capacity-strengthening efforts. This year we completed a draft internal Right Relations Strategy for bridge-building and accountability in our professional commitments. We based the framing on the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) and the [94 Calls to Action](#) of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We also offered a Right Relations Focus Group for Network members to engage in a reflexive practice and discuss aligning watershed work with reconciliation. Participants explored:

- valuing and understanding different worldviews in relation to water;
- respectfully incorporating cultural practices and ceremonies into professional settings;
- Indigenous laws and teachings at the heart of watershed governance;
- trust-building;
- and best practices for organizations to support and amplify Indigenous calls for action.

Moving forward, we are being intentional in our grant-writing to seek support for Indigenous water leaders' participation and to amplify Indigenous voices and ways of knowing in our convenings and storytelling.

*As always, we will continue to weave Right Relations into all that we do.*

# Our Living Waters Network Member Organizations

AbbaTek • ACAP Saint John • Adopt A Lake • Aiding Dramatic Change in Development • Alberta WaterPortal Society • Alberta Wilderness Association • Alliance of Canadian Land Trusts • Antigonish Rivers Association • AquaAction • Aqua Health Products • Aquality Environmental Consulting Ltd. • Arrimage.Com Inc. • Athabasca Watershed Council • Atlantic Water Network • Battle River Watershed Alliance • BC Water Legacy • Bighill Creek Preservation Society • Birds Canada • Blood Tribe • Blue Lion Labs • Bow Bioregion Regeneration Network • British Columbia Conservation Foundation • Canada WaterPortal Society • Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - Southern Alberta Chapter • Canadian Water Network • Canadian Wildlife Federation • Carrot River Valley Watershed Association • CentrEau • Centre d'interprétation de l'eau • Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources • City of Calgary • City of Charlottetown • Coalition for Responsible and Sustainable Navigation • Comité ZIP Jacques-Cartier • completewaters • Conseil du bassin versant de la région de Vaudreuil-Soulanges (COBAVER VS) • Conservation Council of New Brunswick • Conservation Ontario • 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 • Ducks Unlimited Canada • Ecology Action Centre • Ecorana Environmental Ltd. • EcoSpark • EcoSuperior • Elbow River Watershed Partnership • Environmental Defence • Environment Funders Canada • EOS Eco Energy • Etobicoke Climate Action • Evergreen Theatre • False Creek Friends Society • First Nations Fisheries Council of BC • Five Bridges Wilderness Heritage Trust • Fondation Rivières • Foresight • Forum for Leadership on Water (FLOW) • Fraser Basin Council • Freshwater Future • Friends of Second Marsh • G3E - Groupe d'éducation et d'écovigilance de l'eau • Gault Nature Reserve • GPI Atlantic • Grandmothers Act to Save the Planet (GASP) • Green Communities Canada • Green Roofs For Healthy Cities • Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation • International Institute for Sustainable Development • International Secretariat for Water • 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 • Lower Trent Conservation • Mag River Nature Hub • MakeWay • Manitoba Association of Watersheds • Manitoba Eco-Network • Maritime Aboriginal Peoples Council • Morice Watershed Monitoring Trust • Muskoka Watershed Council • Niagara Coastal Community Collaborative • Northern Confluence • Nova Scotia Nature Trust • Okanagan Basin Water Board • Oldman Watershed Council • Olds College • One Cowichan • Ontario Headwaters Institute • Organismes de bassins versants de Kamouraska, L'Islet et Rivière-du-Loup • Organisme de bassins versants de la zone du Chêne • Organisme de bassins versants des rivières Rouge, Petite Nation et Saumon • 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 • PEI Watershed Alliance • Petitcodiac Watershed Alliance • Pigeon Lake Watershed Association • POLIS Water Sustainability Project • Quinte Conservation • Real Estate Foundation of BC • Red Deer River Watershed Alliance • Re-imagining Atlantic Harbours • Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition • Resilient Waters • Restigouche River Watershed Management Council • 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 • Skeena Knowledge Trust • 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 • Synapse Strategies Inc. • T Buck Suzuki Foundation • Tesera Systems Inc. • The Council of Canadians • The District Municipality of Muskoka • The WaterWealth Project • Toronto and Region Conservation Authority • Toronto Green Community • U-Links Centre for Community Based Research • Urban Ecology Centre • Waterlution • Water Rangers • Watersheds BC • Watersheds Canada • Watershed Watch Salmon Society • Water Watchers • Wildsight • WWF-Canada • plus 1 member not publicly listed

## 2024-25 Staff Team

**Julie Wright, National Director**

**Natalija Vojno, Network Engagement Lead**

**Rebekah Kipp, Network Communications Lead**



## 2024-25 Steering Committee

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

**Sébastien Cottinet:** Engagement & Public Policy Coordinator, Regroupement des organismes de bassins versants du Québec (Quebec Network for Watershed Organizations)

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

*A heartfelt thank you to Liz for her years of service, as this was her last year on the OLV Steering Committee!*

**Ross Jameson:** Grants Manager, The Sitka Foundation

**Tim Morris:** Project Director, BC Water Legacy

*With thanks to our funders and individual donors*

