



Hybrid Board of Directors Meeting Minutes January 15, 2026
Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District office and on zoom

Directors present: Doug Kaupp, Randall Wolf Tail, Mark Svenson, Brad Schlossberger, Linda Cerney, Rick Cooke, Chris Gallagher, Lori Goater, Kristen Dykstra, Errol Kutcher, Lori Harasem, Bill MacMillan, Michael Wagner, Henk De Vlieger, Andy Hurly, Cheryl Dash, Erik Cline, Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head)

Staff present: Shannon Frank

Doug called the meeting to order at 1:09pm. A land acknowledgement was given.

Motion: Brad moved, seconded by Mark, to approve the agenda as presented. 12 in favour. Carried.

Motion: Chris moved, seconded by Bill, to approve the minutes from the December 18, 2025 meeting as amended. 13 in favour. Carried.

Executive Director report

- April to December 2025 budget vs actual
 - A draft was sent out prior to the meeting and highlights were shared.
 - Grant revenue is \$97,500 higher than planned and a surplus for the year is expected due to new grants being approved recently.
 - Many grants do not align with our fiscal calendar and unspent funds are deferred to the next fiscal year.
 - Project spending is on track and all grants will be spent as agreed in contracts.
- Budget 2026-27
 - A draft was sent out prior to the meeting and highlights were shared.
 - Deferred revenue from 2025-26 is not included until May (after our financial audit) and will increase the budget.
 - Total budget is expected to be over \$2,000,000, a new record for OWC.
 - We expect to hear back from several grants in March/April so the budget will need to be updated in April or May and will increase.
 - A surplus is projected due to successful fund development strategies and discussions will be had during our upcoming strategic planning sessions this winter about how we would like to allocate the funds and manage long-term growth.
 - Includes funds for 3 newest positions; Writer and Content Specialist extended for 1 year (Sarah Moore), Development Manager (to be hired, permanent), Administrative Assistant (to be hired, permanent).
- Proposal to manage growth

- A slideshow, salary review spreadsheet and Boland Survey of Nonprofit Sector Salaries was sent out prior to the meeting.
- OWC has grown substantially over the past few years and last 12-14 months in particular with 4 new staff positions, a doubling of grant revenue, and individual donations up 70% as of December.
- Staff are struggling to keep up with the workload and have not taken their allowed vacation time, increasing our accrued liability.
- A new approach and added capacity are needed to ensure long-term stability of the organization. Staff retention and a healthy work-life balance are essential to the OWC's success.
- Shannon plans to change the organizational structure to elevate 3 long-term staff to Director level positions with more responsibilities, including supervising new staff.
- These changes will add capacity for Shannon to focus more on fund development and strategic initiatives, recognizes talented long serving staff with 7-10 years of service, and helps ensure we will be well positioned to meet all of our goals.
- The Board does not need to approve these changes as it is the Executive Director's responsibility but input is appreciated, and the Board is responsible for approving the budget.
- Elevating staff will require increased compensation and a salary review was undertaken for senior staff.
- Benefits and considerations for this change were discussed.
- See attachments for more information.
- Suggestion that Sofie's title needs refinement. Ideas include Director of Stewardship Programs, adding the word watershed, debate on the word 'community'.

Motion: Bill moved, seconded by Brad, to approve the 2026-27 budget as presented. 14 in favour. 1 abstained. Carried.

Motion: Henk moved, seconded by Bill, to approve a \$9,000 increase to the newly rebranded Chief Executive Officer salary, effective April 1st, 2026. 14 in favour. Carried.

- Fund development

- A \$15,000 Calgary Foundation Strategic Opportunity Grant was approved to develop an Indigenous Relations Policy and Protocol. Lauren will be leading this as it is essential to have this in place prior to launching the Indigenous perspectives pillar in the State of the Watershed assessment.
- Waiting to hear back from 4 grants, totalling \$375,000 (2 for State of the Watershed assessment, 1 for CABIN reference model, 1 for riparian/range health assessments and restoration activities).
- Annual donation requests to municipalities and irrigation districts have been sent and donations are coming in.

- Individual donations are up 70% and about 30 new donors have contributed.
- A Fund Development Plan is underway and will be discussed this winter.
- A job posting for a Development Manager will be posted soon.
- Government Relations
 - Promoting OWC and nature-based solutions
 - Presenting to municipal governments over the next few months.
 - Minister of Environment and Protected Areas is now Grant Hunter, MLA for Taber-Warner, who we have a good relationship with and met with in mid December.
 - Recent GoA engagements (water availability, SSRP 10 Year Review, Nature Strategy)
 - Nothing to report.
- Communications and Project Updates
 - Nothing new to report as staff have been on holidays and the Board received a comprehensive update at the December meeting.

Governance Committee (Terrence, Mark, Linda, Shannon)

- Topics that we will work on next include:
 - Updating Procurement of Contract Services Policy.
 - Updating Neutrality Policy.
 - Developing a 'supporting external groups' policy.
- Shannon and Lauren to develop an Indigenous Relations Policy and Protocol in partnership with Indigenous partners.

External Committee Reports

- Water Supply Outlook / SSRB Interbasin Water Coordination Committee - Doug Kaupp, Shannon Frank, Chris Gallagher
 - Delayed until spring.
- Irrigation Districts Update - Chris Gallagher
 - The Oldman reservoir is at 64.3% of full volume and rising to spillway crest. The Oldman/Keho combined volume is 67%. The St. Mary River Irrigation District (SMRID) website states that as of December 23, 2025 their combined headworks and internal storage was at 69% of irrigation full supply level (FSL).
 - Snowpack is above upper quartile for all three snow pillows upstream of the Oldman River Dam (Gardiner, Lost, South Racehorse). Snowpack is mixed for the southern tributaries with Flattop above the upper quartile, Many Glacier below lower quartile/last year, and Akamina ahead of last year (no quartiles shown).
 - Irrigation districts are continuing off-season construction and maintenance activities with good weather. AGI-WIOB is completing further upgrades to the Lethbridge Headworks canal upstream of the Oldman River flume.
 - The next Canadian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage (CANCID) webinar will be February 11, 2026 at 12:00pm MT. Register through cwra.org/events.

- Registration is open for the annual AIDA conference in Lethbridge February 2-4, 2026. <https://www.albertairrigation.ca/>
- LNID is issuing our 2026-2028 Strategic Plan next week and will be posted to our website. LNID has set their AGM for April 16, 2026 @ 1:30 pm at the Picture Butte Community Centre.
- Kainai Environmental Protection Association - Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head)
 - Tree give-away day planned for May in partnership with OWC, to plant willows, poplar and saskatoon.
 - 12th Annual Summit will be held June 3-5 with the theme Niitsitapi Cultural Keystone Species, which has never been done before. There will be camping, field trips and presentations.
 - Commended OWC for its role in supporting stewardship and partners like KEPA over the past 10-12 years. OWC's collective impact has grown and is now a household name.
- Alberta Coalition for Watershed Security - Shannon
 - Focused on building its membership and awaiting provincial budget to see if WRRP funding will be renewed.
- International Joint Commission St. Mary Milk Rivers Study Board Public Advisory Group (PAG) - Cheryl Bradley
 - Nothing new to report.
- Crowsnest Forest Products / West Fraser Public Advisory Group - Rick Cooke
 - Nothing to report.
- Alberta Water Council (AWC)
 - WPAC seat on the Board of Directors - Doug Kaupp
 - Next meeting is February 19th.

Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head) moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:50pm.

Next meeting: Thursday, February 19th from 1pm-4:30pm but may change. A doodle poll will be sent out.

The foregoing minutes were approved by the Board of Directors on _____.

_____, Doug Kaupp, OWC Chair