

Reconciliation Advisory Table

Summary Report 1: Laying the Foundation

Presented by Wi'la'Mola Consulting
September 2023



"All travel together."



INTRODUCTION

In 2021, the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) undertook an Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Assessment Report to help advance the organization down the path of reconciliation. A key recommendation from that report was to establish an Advisory Group that would include Indigenous communities and groups in decision making processes related to reconciliation moving forward.

After consultation with its partner municipalities, it was agreed that the four local governments would embark on this work together with the CVRD as the administrative lead. It was agreed that working together enables a consistent approach from all local governments that respects the sensitivity of this work.

In 2022, the CVRD asked Wi'la'mola Consulting to lead the outreach and facilitation of this important work and following six months of outreach, the Advisory Table on Reconciliation was formed in late 2022.

ABOUT THE ADVISORY TABLE

The Advisory Table is made up of regular participants from K'ómoks First Nation, Indigenous Women's Sharing Society, Kumugwe Cultural Society, MIKI'SIW Métis Association, Sasamans Society, the Upper Island Women of Native Ancestry, the City of Courtenay, CVRD, Town of Comox and the Village of Cumberland.

The following groups have expressed an interest in the work of the Advisory Table and have asked to stay informed about its activities: Homalco First Nation, Klahoose First Nation, Laich-Kwil-Tach Treaty Society, Laichwiltach Family Life Society, Northern Vancouver Island Aboriginal Training Society, Qualicum First Nation, We Wai Kai Nation and Wei Wai Kum First Nation.

The members have determined that it will focus its work in two key areas:

- 1) Develop an Action Plan** for local governments that proposes reconciliation initiatives which are appropriate and meaningful to the Indigenous community and support a healing journey.
- 2) Provide advice** on proposed local government initiatives to include an Indigenous viewpoint that will help staff and elected officials to take a thoughtful and culturally safe approach to partnerships or collaboration with Indigenous partners.

“Coming together in community to support a healing journey in the spirit of reconciliation.”

Advisory Table Goal

TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES

This Advisory Table is envisioned as a long-term project to establish a process for working together on reconciliation that will stand the test of time and endure through election cycles and staffing changes.

“Like a tree we are ever growing, expanding our branches to bring new people and ideas in.”

Advisory Table Statement

A timeline has been established to guide the committee’s work through 2025, with the recognition that its activities will grow and change over time.

2022 – Coming Together

- Outreach, Relationship Building, Establish Membership

2023 - Laying the Foundation

- Terms of Reference, Engagement Framework, Priority Themes for Action

2024 – Identifying Actions

- Pursue learning and healing opportunities for committee members with elected officials
- Develop the Communications Plan
- Deliver First Action Plan to local governments
- Share work with the community, including developing an information portal

2025 and Beyond – Reporting and Monitoring

- Monitor local government implementation and report progress to the community
- Evaluation and affirmation of Advisory Table role and activities moving forward

PRIORITY THEMES FOR ACTION PLAN

The Advisory Table will play an important role in identifying reconciliation priorities for local governments. The group has decided it will focus its work in three key priority areas and these themes will guide the key actions that will be recommended to the local governments.

1. Education

Learning is foundational to reconciliation and local governments have the responsibility of providing their employees and elected officials with the tools to learn, acknowledge and raise awareness about the impacts of colonialism.

Some areas the committee will explore include cultural safety, acknowledgement of impacts, history of the Indigenous people of the Comox Valley, knowledge gathering, connecting to nature, healing together and sharing learnings and resources by connecting with other community groups

2. Cultural Heritage

Efforts to support the celebration of cultural heritage and the reclamation of culture and language will help the community to move forward from the damage caused by colonial policies that were intended to alienate Indigenous people from their culture. The committee will consider actions that involve community youth, bring back culture through art and dance, support language revitalization and reclamation, share local stories and assist in the preservation of historical sites, artifacts and ancestral remains.

3. Policy and Practices

The committee will play an important role in identifying reconciliation priorities for local governments that in many cases will require meaningful changes to operational practices and policies. Decolonization will support better decision making, encourage collaboration and build trust among the Indigenous community. Acknowledging privilege and using it in a positive way to make change will be central to taking meaningful action.

Jurisdictional Boundaries

The committee acknowledges that some of their areas of interest may go beyond the jurisdictions of local government and in these cases, they may request local governments to support the work of other organizations or to advocate to senior levels of government.

ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

- Advisory Table participants commit to four meetings per year
- The committee will follow a process founded in Indigenous culture and customs that provides a culturally safe space
- All participants will follow the safe space guidelines that have been developed together as a group
- All activities will be led by an Indigenous Facilitator with the guidance of three Elders from K'ómoks First Nation, MIKI'SIW Métis Association and an Indigenous community organization.
- Participants will strive to develop consensus recommendations and have agreed on a dispute resolution process should issues arise
- Elders will be compensated for their time and guidance

SUMMARY REPORT 1: LAYING THE FOUNDATION

- Honorarium and travel expenses will be available to Indigenous participants
- Administration support for Advisory Table meetings and activities will be provided by the CVRD
- Funding will be provided through the UBCM Urban Communities Partnering for Reconciliation Pilot Program and the CVRD.

PARTICIPANTS AND INTERSTED PARTIES

Nation or Organization	Member	Title/Position
K'ómoks First Nation	Evelyn Voyageur	Elder
Comox Valley Regional District	Christianne Wile	Senior Manager of Strategic Initiatives
Comox Valley Regional District	James Warren	Acting CAO
Town of Comox	Jordan Wall	CAO
City of Courtenay	Geoff Garbutt	CAO
Village of Cumberland	Michelle Mason	CAO
Indigenous Women's Sharing Society	Patti Alvarado, Paul Sture	Executive Director
Indigenous Women's Sharing Society	Doris Weislein	Elder (President)
Homalco First Nation	Darren Blaney	Chief Councilor
Klahoose First Nation	Steven Brown	Chief
K'ómoks First Nation	Pamela Mitchell	Cultural Coordinator
K'ómoks First Nation	Candace Newman	Councillor
Kumugwe Cultural Society	Wedlidi Speck	Director
Laich-Kwil-Tach Treaty Society	Ted Assu and Art Wilson	Directors
Laichwiltach Family Life Society	Audrey Wilson	Executive Director
MIKI'SIW Métis Association	Chrys Sample	Vice President
MIKI'SIW Métis Association	Colleen Devlin	Elder
Northern Vancouver Island Aboriginal Training Society	Sherri Simms	Manager
Sasamans Society	Kaitlyn Williams	Indigenous Youth Navigator
Upper Island Women of Native Ancestry	Danielle Vander Molen	
We Wai Kai Nation	Ronnie Chickite	Chief Councilor
Wei Wai Kum First Nation	Chris Roberts	Chief Councilor