



COMOX VALLEY REGIONAL DISTRICT

Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Assessment Report

December 2021

Prepared by







Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Assessment Process	2
1.2 Report Organization	4
2. The Framework for Reconciliation in Canada	5
2.1 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	6
2.2 Truth and Reconciliation Commission	6
2.2.1 Calls to Action	6
2.2.2 Principles of Truth and Reconciliation	7
2.3 Principles Respecting the Government's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples	8
2.4 Emerging Legislative Frameworks	9
2.4.1 Provincial Legislation	9
2.4.2 Federal Legislation	9
3. Jurisdictional Scan - What Local Governments are doing to Advance Reconciliation	11
3.1 City of Powell River & qathet Regional District	12
3.2 Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District and the City of Port Alberni	14
3.3 Capital Regional District	16
3.4 Islands Trust	18
3.5 Fraser Valley Regional District	20
3.6 City of Vancouver	20
3.7 City of Lethbridge	22
3.8 City of Ottawa	24
3.9 City of Yellowknife	25
3.10 Local Governments in Australia	26
3.11 Assessment Findings and Considerations for the CVRD	27
4. Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation at the CVRD	31
4.1 2019-2022 Strategic Plan	31
4.2 Indigenous Relations Framework	31
4.3 Statement of Reconciliation	32
4.4 The CVRD's Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Journey	34
4.5 Inputs from CVRD Staff Engagement	38
4.5.1 Staff Survey	38
4.5.2 Focus Group	43
4.6 Assessment Findings and Considerations for the CVRD	46
5. Recommendations for Strategies & Actions	49
5.1 Foundational Strategies	49
5.2 Potential Mid- and Long-term Strategies and Actions	50
References	57



1. Introduction

The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) is committed to building its relationship with Indigenous Peoples and advancing reconciliation. This is reflected in the CVRD's:

- *2019-2022 Strategic Plan*, which identifies Indigenous Relations as a priority area;
- *Indigenous Relations Framework*, which identifies three action areas for Indigenous relations and reconciliation – developing policy, strengthening relationships, and supporting learning; and
- *Statement of Reconciliation*, which is intended to guide general decision making in the organization.

Recognizing that commitment alone is not enough, the CVRD Board of Directors set a goal in January 2021 to develop meaningful mid- and long-term strategies and actions to support the implementation of the Indigenous Relations Framework and to advance reconciliation efforts.

Dillon Consulting Limited (Dillon) has undertaken this Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Assessment (the Assessment) to:

1. Assess and summarize the CVRD's current policy and practices related to Indigenous relations and advancing reconciliation. This was prepared based on review of the above noted documents as well as discussions with CVRD staff.

2. Identify a series of strategies and actions that support Indigenous relations and reconciliation (within the three action areas of the Indigenous Relations Framework) that the CVRD could potentially undertake over the mid- to long-term. This was prepared based on desktop research to review actions and practices that other local level governments across Canada and abroad have undertaken, as well as drawing upon our team's experience in working with Indigenous communities and various levels of government to strengthen Indigenous relations.

The proposed strategies and actions included herein build on the existing policy, relationships and awareness at the CVRD. The strategies and actions should be considered preliminary in nature and are intended to be further developed in collaboration with interested Indigenous communities and groups based on a collective vision and respective needs and interests, in the true spirit of reconciliation and for mutual buy in for success.



1.1 Assessment Process

1. Project kick-off meeting with CVRD staff and Dillon

Dillon team representatives met virtually with CVRD representatives on September 2, 2021, to review and discuss the work plan, including task timelines and the approach to engagement with CVRD staff and Indigenous communities and groups, and to enable the Dillon team to learn more about the CVRD's efforts to date in terms of Indigenous relations and reconciliation.

2. Collect and review relevant background and reference materials

The Dillon team collected and reviewed potentially relevant and publically available reference materials from other jurisdictions, as well as background documents provided by the CVRD, through September and October. The intent of the review was twofold: to develop an understanding of the CVRD's approach to building Indigenous relations and addressing reconciliation in a meaningful way, and to complete a 'jurisdictional scan' to explore and identify actions and best practices employed by other local governments in terms of Indigenous relations and reconciliation that may lend support to the assessment.

3. Communication and Engagement Plan

The Dillon team prepared a brief communication and engagement plan in mid-September. The plan outlined the approach to engagement with CVRD staff and Indigenous communities and groups, including rationale, anticipated participants, roles and responsibilities, and timelines. The plan was developed based on the discussion during the project kick-off meeting and subsequent communications. It was determined that engagement with Indigenous communities and groups would be limited at this point in time to enable the CVRD to first focus on building a stronger organizational understanding of potential pathways to reconciliation. This Assessment Report lays the foundation for future engagement with Indigenous communities and groups with respect to reconciliation planning and implementation.

4. Introduce the Project to K'ómoks First Nation

The CVRD introduced the Assessment Project to K'ómoks First Nation (KFN) during the monthly Chief and Council meeting in September. Based on the associated and preliminary discussions, it was agreed on that while there is general interest from KFN in the Assessment, the CVRD will undertake the Assessment internally for now to put in the upfront work rather than placing burden on KFN to identify how to reconcile. This Assessment Report will serve as a starting point to a reconciliation plan and set the stage and inform future engagement with KFN and others on relations and reconciliation.



5. CVRD staff survey

The Dillon team prepared a brief survey that was made available to all CVRD staff through October 2021. The intent of the survey was to: support the CVRD in beginning to assess the level of Indigenous awareness among staff and the level of interest in learning; and inform the Assessment in terms of potential actions and strategies to improve Indigenous awareness among staff.

6. Focus Group with CVRD Executive Team and Senior Managers

The Dillon team prepared and facilitated an interactive focus group with the CVRD's executive management team and senior managers on October, 12, 2021. The purpose of the focus group was to: gauge the general level of awareness, understanding, and interest with respect to Indigenous Peoples, relationships and reconciliation and associated learning among leaders in the organization; and identify potential opportunities and constraints to increasing learning and awareness among the wider team at the CVRD.

7. Summary Memo and presentation to the CVRD Board of Directors

The Dillon team prepared a summary memo on October 20, 2021, describing the activities completed to date, the themes and considerations that will inform the recommendations for potential mid- and long-term strategies and actions to implement the existing Indigenous Relations Framework, and several preliminary and overarching recommendations. Dillon representatives presented the summary memo to the CVRD Board of Directors on October 26, 2021. Both the information presented and the suggestions received from the Board of Directors are incorporated into this Assessment Report.

8. Develop potential mid- and long-term strategies and actions

The Dillon team developed a series of strategies and actions that support Indigenous relations and reconciliation (within the three actions areas of the existing Indigenous Relations Framework) that the CVRD could potentially undertake over the mid- to long-term. These are presented within this Assessment Report.

1.2 Report Organization

Section 1 provides an overview of the process undertaken to complete the Assessment.

Section 2 provides an overview of important national and international guiding principles and legislation that have contributed to shaping the complex relationship between Canada and Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous relations and reconciliation efforts today.

Section 3 explores some of the Indigenous relations and reconciliation efforts undertaken by other local governments and identifies key themes and planning considerations to inform potential mid- and long-term strategies and actions and guide future efforts by the CVRD.

Section 4 provides an overview of current CVRD policy and practice related to Indigenous relations and reconciliation and a summary of CVRD's efforts and commitments to date. This section also provides an overview of the engagement efforts undertaken with the CVRD as part of the Assessment to better understand the level of knowledge, awareness, and interest in learning with respect to Indigenous Peoples and reconciliation within the organization. Key themes and planning considerations are also identified to inform potential mid- and long-term strategies and actions and to guide future efforts by the CVRD.

Section 5 provides recommendations for potential strategies and actions that can support Indigenous relations and advance reconciliation, and the implementation of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework.



2. The Framework for Reconciliation in Canada

The following summary is based on information available at the time of preparation of this Assessment. It is important that the CVRD continues to monitor and learn as new information, frameworks, policies and commitments come forward at the international, federal and provincial levels.

Reconciliation generally refers to efforts to learn, acknowledge and raise awareness on the ‘truth’ about colonization and the lasting effects on Indigenous Peoples, and to address the associated impacts through relationship building based on respect and meaningful actions. Reconciliation requires knowledge of the truth about the experiences of Indigenous Peoples in Canada so that we can move forward together to reconcile what has been done (TRC, 2015a).

The Government of Canada has committed to achieving reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples through government-to-government relationships based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnerships (Government of Canada, 2018). Official discussions on reconciliation in Canada started in 1998 when the federal government delivered a public *Statement of Reconciliation* in response to the report by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which was established in 1991 in the wake of the Oka Crisis to study the evolution of the relationship between Indigenous Peoples, the government of Canada, and Canadian society as a whole. Since then, the Government of Canada has been charting a new relationship with Indigenous Peoples and a path towards reconciliation. This journey has been guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which serves as a foundational framework for reconciliation in Canada.

The following sections provide an overview of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other seminal efforts and reports that have contributed to the framework for reconciliation in Canada.

2.1 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (the UN Declaration) is an international instrument that enshrines the rights of Indigenous Peoples of the world and describes how Indigenous Peoples should be treated, through 46 articles. It is intended to protect the collective and individual rights of Indigenous Peoples that may not be addressed in existing human rights charters. These include rights related to:

- Self-determination and self-government;
- Equality and non-discrimination;
- Culture and language;
- Identity;
- Religion and spirituality;
- Lands, territories and resources;
- Environment;
- Indigenous institutions and legal systems;
- Health;
- Education; and
- Community.

The Declaration is the result of almost 25 years of collaboration and mutual efforts between UN member states and Indigenous Peoples from around the globe, including Indigenous leaders in Canada who played a significant role in its development. It was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007 by the majority of member states. However, Canada did not offer support for the UN Declaration until November 2010 when it was endorsed with a provision that it was considered an aspirational document and not legally binding; this was largely due to concerns about how land disputes and natural resource extraction could be impacted given the UN Declaration's call for free, prior and informed consent by Indigenous Peoples prior to project approvals, and associated impacts on Canadian constitutional law (Papillon & Rodon, 2017).

Canada's objector status for the UN Declaration was not removed until May 2016, when the federal government officially adopted the UN Declaration as a full supporter, without qualification. This important action in support of reconciliation came in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Final Report and associated "Calls to Action".

2.2 Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was officially established in 2008 in response to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history. The purpose of the TRC was to document the history and lasting impacts of the residential school system in Canada on Indigenous students and their families, and to facilitate reconciliation among those impacted and all Canadians. The TRC spent six years travelling across the country to listen to the testimony of over 6,500 witnesses including residential school survivors and others impacted by the school system. In doing so, the TRC also took on the important role of educating the public about the experiences of survivors. The TRC's six-volume *final report* was released in December 2015.

2.2.1 Calls to Action

A summary report with 94 *Calls to Action* to redress the legacy of residential schools and to advance reconciliation was released in June 2015. The Calls to Action are meant to provide a path for governments and Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to create a joint vision of reconciliation. They are important because they not only acknowledge the historical wrongdoings with respect to Indigenous Peoples in Canada, they also acknowledge the ongoing legacy of colonialism still in place today.

The Calls to Action are divided into two categories: Legacy and Reconciliation. The Legacy Calls to Action are focused on redressing the impacts of the residential school system and are organized into the following sub-categories: child welfare, education, language and culture, health, and justice. The Reconciliation Calls to Action are focused on creating better relationships between governments and Indigenous Peoples (TRC, 2015b).

While the majority of the Calls to Action are directed toward the federal, provincial and territorial governments, eight of the actions are addressed to "all levels of government" and five specifically refer to "municipal governments".



2.2.2 Principles of Truth and Reconciliation

The TRC has also identified 10 *principles* that from its perspective must be followed for reconciliation to succeed (TRC, 2015c):

1. The UN Declaration provides the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society.
2. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, as the original peoples of this country and as self-determining peoples, have Treaty, constitutional, and human rights that must be recognized and respected.
3. Reconciliation is a process of healing of relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledges and redresses past harms.
4. Reconciliation requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Indigenous Peoples' education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, the administration of justice, and economic opportunities and prosperity.
5. Reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health, and economic outcomes that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.
6. All Canadians, as Treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.
7. The perspectives and understandings of Indigenous Elders and Traditional Knowledge-Keepers about the ethics, concepts, and practices of reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation.
8. Supporting Indigenous Peoples' cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential.
9. Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust-building, accountability, and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources.
10. Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and Indigenous rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Indigenous Peoples to Canadian society.



2.3 Principles Respecting the Government's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples

The federal government has identified *principles* respecting its relationship with Indigenous Peoples. These principles are intended to guide the review of laws and policies that is required to implement the UN Declaration. They are rooted in Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, guided by the UN Declaration and informed by the TRC's Calls to Action. The following provides an overview of these principles but they are meant to be read in their entirety with their supporting commentary (Government of Canada, 2018):

1. All relations with Indigenous Peoples need to be based on the recognition and implementation of their right to self-determination, including the inherent right of self-government.
2. Reconciliation is a fundamental purpose of section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.
3. The honour of the Crown guides the conduct of the Crown in all of its dealings with Indigenous Peoples.
4. Indigenous self-government is part of Canada's evolving system of cooperative federalism and distinct orders of government.
5. Treaties, agreements, and other constructive arrangements between Indigenous Peoples and the Crown have been and are intended to be acts of reconciliation based on mutual recognition and respect.
6. Meaningful engagement with Indigenous Peoples aims to secure their free, prior, and informed consent when Canada proposes to take actions which impact them and their rights on their lands, territories, and resources.
7. Respecting and implementing rights is essential and any infringement of section 35 rights must, by law, meet a high threshold of justification which includes Indigenous perspectives and satisfy the Crown's fiduciary obligations.
8. Reconciliation and self-government require a renewed fiscal relationship, developed in collaboration with Indigenous Nations, which promotes a mutually supportive climate for economic partnership and resource development.
9. Reconciliation is an ongoing process that occurs in the context of evolving Indigenous-Crown relationships.
10. A distinctions-based approach is needed to ensure that the unique rights, interests and circumstances of the First Nations, the Métis Nation and Inuit are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented.

The province also introduced a set of *draft principles* that guide its relationships with Indigenous Peoples. These principles are modeled on the principles introduced by the federal government in 2017 but have been released in draft form as a starting point for engagement with Indigenous Peoples. It is expected that future guidance and inputs from Indigenous Peoples may lead to the evolution of the principles over time (Government of BC, 2018).



2.4 Emerging Legislative Frameworks

2.4.1 Provincial Legislation

The provincial government passed the BC *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act* (the *Declaration Act*) in November 2019 – the first jurisdiction in Canada to do so. It establishes the UN Declaration as the province's framework for reconciliation and sets out a process to align provincial laws with the Declaration; Section 4 of the Declaration Act requires the provincial government to prepare and implement an action plan to achieve the objectives of UNDRIP. The Declaration Act also sets the tone for implementing Indigenous Peoples' rights and fundamental freedoms into provincial practices, policies, laws, and institutions to advance reconciliation (Government of BC, n.d.).

In November 2020, the Premier tasked the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation to bring forward a plan for Cabinet consideration by the end of 2021 to create a dedicated secretariat to coordinate the government's work on reconciliation and alignment of laws with the UN Declaration; initial work to develop the secretariat is underway (Government of BC, 2021). The province has also been working on developing a 5-year draft action plan in collaboration with First Nations and Indigenous partners. Initial engagement with a range of Indigenous partners to inform the draft action plan took place in 2020 and 2021. More extensive engagement is expected to take place through 2021 with a goal of achieving broad endorsement for the final action plan, which is anticipated to be complete by the end of 2021 (Government of BC, 2021). Once finalized, the action plan will be reviewed annually with progress reporting.

2.4.2 Federal Legislation

Most recently, the federal government passed *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (formerly Bill C-15), with Royal Assent received on June 21, 2021. The Act sets out Canada's obligation to uphold the human and inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples, as affirmed by the UN Declaration. It also requires the federal government to work with Indigenous Peoples to review and reform Canadian laws, and to work in cooperation with Indigenous Peoples to develop a National Action Plan. The first National Action Plan must be complete within two years and include:

- Measures to address injustices, combat prejudice and eliminate all forms of violence, racism and discrimination, including systemic racism and discrimination;
- Measures to promote mutual respect and understanding as well as good relations, including through human rights education; and
- Measures related to monitoring, oversight, recourse or remedy, or other accountability measures with respect to the implementation of the UN Declaration.

The new Act ultimately provides a shared road map for Indigenous Peoples, industry, communities and government to work together to implement the framework for reconciliation established by the UN Declaration (Government of Canada, 2021).



3. Jurisdictional Scan-What Local Governments are Doing to Advance Reconciliation

The jurisdictional scan was undertaken to explore strategies, actions and best practices employed by other local governments that may be relevant options for CVRD to advance Indigenous relations and reconciliation efforts. The number of jurisdictions included in the scan was more extensive than shown here. For the sake of brevity and to avoid redundancies in terms of the types of efforts and actions undertaken by other local governments, not all jurisdictions explored are included in this report.

The following sections present an overview of local governments that collectively illustrate the breadth of efforts and actions undertaken with respect to Indigenous relations and reconciliation, including:

- City of Powell River and qathet Regional District;
- Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District and the City of Port Alberni;
- Capital Regional District;
- Islands Trust;
- Fraser Valley Regional District;
- City of Vancouver;
- City of Lethbridge;
- City of Ottawa;
- City of Yellowknife; and
- Local governments in Australia.





3.1 City of Powell River & qathet Regional District

Over the past 15 years, the City of Powell River (City of PR), the qathet Regional District (qRD, formerly the Powell River Regional District), and Tla'amin Nation (formerly Sliammon First Nation) have modelled a successful government-to-government structure based on a trusting and respectful relationship. For the City of PR and Tla'amin Nation, a moment of significant conflict served as a catalyst for relationship building and reconciliation efforts. In 2002, sites of cultural significance to the Tla'amin community were disturbed, destroyed and buried during the construction of a sea walk. The plans to build the sea walk had not been shared with Tla'amin Nation prior to these actions. In recognizing the mistake, City of PR leaders provided Tla'amin Nation with a \$1.5 million contract to build the sea walk, enabling the Nation to protect cultural heritage sites while also providing employment for the community (UBCM, 2019).

The relationship between Tla'amin Nation and the qRD also evolved from initial conflict when a dispute arose between the regional district and Tla'amin Nation over treaty land selection in the region. This led to a joint Land Use Harmonization Initiative, funded by the province, to identify opportunities to coordinate land use planning between the two governments (UBCM, 2019).

Since these early efforts, the qRD, the City of PR, and Tla'amin Nation have fostered strong relationships and partnerships built on trust and mutual respect. The qRD is the first district in the province to recognize Treaty Settlement Lands within city boundaries.

Notable Actions¹

- **Community Accord** developed by the City of PR and Tla'amin Nation in 2003 to guide partnerships and collaborative governance and to serve as an early framework for reconciliation.
- **Protocol Agreement on Culture, Heritage and Economic Development** developed by the City of PR and Tla'amin Nation in 2004 to establish the consultation process for proposed developments and to lay the foundation for government-to-government cooperation and collaboration.
- The City of PR invited a Tla'amin Nation representative to be an active participant on the **Official Community Plan Steering Committee** in 2004 to enable the active involvement of the Nation in the review of the plan.
- **Land Use Harmonization Initiative** undertaken by Tla'amin Nation and the Powell River Regional District in 2008.
- The City of PR, Powell River Regional District/ qRD and Tla'amin Nation have **collaborated on a number of regional planning initiatives**, including a Sustainability Charter (2009), Regional Emergency Plan (2013), Regional Transportation Plan (2014), Regional Trails Plan (2016), Regional Recreation Initiative (2018), and a Regional Housing Needs Assessment (2021).
- CPR **designated two parcels of land within the historic town** site to Tla'amin Nation in 2018, giving the Nation full governance of the parcels.
- Tla'amin Nation **gifted the name qathet**, which means “work together”, to the (formerly) Powell River Regional District in 2017 in recognition of the relationship; the name was officially adopted by the province in 2018.
- All three governments have worked on a **Regional Social Planning Program** since 2015, which led to the creation of a **Social Action and Planning Advisory Committee** to work on regional initiatives that enhance social wellbeing, alleviate poverty, reduce income disparity, support early childhood development, and create suitable housing for all.

Additional Considerations for the CVRD

- **Developing Policy:** The Community Accord established a base of understanding and respect between the City of PR and Tla'amin Nation but lacked specificity. Political leaders on both sides quickly recognized the need for a more comprehensive document and drafted the Protocol Agreement on Culture, Heritage and Environment. This document has been recognized as a model agreement and created a strong foundation for future policy work.
- **Strengthening Relationships:** Local relationship building paved the way for important changes at the provincial and federal levels. Despite treaty negotiations for Tla'amin Nation stagnating in 2003, the City of PR pursued a government-to-government relationship. This demonstrated trust and respect but also supported the relationship through the treaty process, which concluded in 2016 with the Tla'amin Nation Final Agreement.
- **Supporting Learning:** Involving a variety of actors in the community in learning about reconciliation is valuable to advance these efforts. For example, in 2004 Tla'amin invited Catalyst, a pulp and paper manufacturer, to a series of cross-cultural workshops. This ultimately resulted in an official Cooperation Protocol. Learning is a vital part of reconciliation for all members of the community, including businesses.

1. See Sliammon First Nation & City of Powell River (2007) and UBCM (2019).



3.2 Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District and the City of Port Alberni

The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) is a federation of member municipalities (Port Alberni, Tofino, and Ucluelet), six electoral areas, and four Maa-Nulth Treaty First Nations (Huu-ay-aht, Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ, Uchucklesaht Tribe Government and Toquaht Nation). The ACRD is located within the traditional territories of 10 First Nations, being Ahousaht, Ditidaht, Hesquiaht, Hupačasath, Tla-o-qui-aht, and Tseshaht, in addition to the four Maa-Nulth Treaty First Nations that are part of the ACRD federation. The four Maa-Nulth Treaty First Nations are members of the ACRD and four of the 14 Directors at the ACRD are First Nations leaders.

Community engagement workshops held by Reconciliation Canada in the Alberni Valley in 2013 led to a resolution that all municipalities in the ACRD declare 2013 the year of reconciliation. The resolution was adopted, marking the beginning of a concerted and sustained effort to educate, cooperate and heal with the help of Indigenous leaders like Chief Dr. Robert Joseph (ACRD, 2021).

Discussions at the local level with respect to reconciliation in Port Alberni began in 2017, the catalyst being a walk for reconciliation that saw more than 200 people from all different backgrounds gather. Following this, the City of Port Alberni formed a Reconciliation Committee to investigate practical actions for the City and the community to help foster reconciliation with Tseshaht and Hupačasath First Nations. In 2019, the Reconciliation Committee presented to Council a Reconciliation Report with 27 recommendations.

Notable Actions²

- The **t’āšii Orientation Manual** was developed in 2012 by the BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation to support regional cooperation and governance among the First Nations of the Maa-nulth Treaty and the ACRD.
- Reconciliation Canada held **community engagement workshops** in 2013 to raise awareness of Indigenous Peoples, the legacy of residential schools, and reconciliation.
- The ACRD member municipalities declared 2013 as the **year of reconciliation** and committed to learning and cooperation for reconciliation.
- A Councillor for the Huu-ay-aht First Nations was elected **Chairperson of the ACRD** in 2016, and they continue to hold this position today.
- A **Walk for Reconciliation** was held in Port Alberni in 2017 with over 200 Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members in attendance, demonstrating a collective desire for reconciliation.
- The City of Port Alberni formed a **Reconciliation Committee** made up of two representatives from Tseshaht First Nation, two representatives from Hupačasath First Nation, one from City Council, and three from the community at large in 2017.
- A **Community to Community** Forum was held by the Reconciliation Committee in 2018 to further reconciliation efforts and foster cross-cultural awareness, with 112 residents, elected officials and local First Nations representatives in attendance.
- The Reconciliation Committee developed a **Reconciliation Report** containing recommendations to advance reconciliation in 2019.
- A **Planning Working Group** will be established for the forthcoming Connect the Quays Project with representatives from the City and Tseshaht and Hupačasath First Nations to provide input on pathway design, Indigenous place names, and cultural significance.

Additional Considerations for the CVRD

- **Developing Policy:** Reconciliation through policy reform has not been a key focus of the ACRD and City of Port Alberni until more recently. The Reconciliation Committee’s final report included a recommendation to conduct a review of all City policies to ensure they reflect the intent of the UN Declaration and the TRC’s Calls to Action.
- **Strengthening Relationships:** Port Alberni Mayor and Reconciliation Committee co-chair, Sharie Minions, sees “relationships as the key to reconciliation” (Port Alberni Reconciliation Committee, 2019, pg. 17). Part of her approach as a community leader has been to build relationships through meaningful and inclusive engagement. The Reconciliation Committee has used grant money from the UBCM to organize larger and more inclusive engagement opportunities.
- **Supporting Learning:** The Walk for Reconciliation illustrates an approach to learning that is based in acknowledging moments of conflict. A proposed (and later defeated) motion to rename Neill Street illuminated underlying prejudices among some community members. In response, Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents marched to city hall and jump-started the reconciliation efforts in this area. The Reconciliation Committee recommended that March 27 – the day of the march – be a day that recognizes reconciliation in the Alberni Valley.

2. See ACRD (2021), BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (2012), City of Port Alberni (2021), and Port Alberni Reconciliation Committee (2021).



3.3 Capital Regional District

The Capital Regional District (CRD) is comprised of 13 municipalities and three electoral districts, and spans the territory of 20 Indigenous communities, including the Coast and Strait Salish and Nuuchahnulth Peoples, and the following First Nations: Songhees, Esquimalt, W̱JOŁŁP (Tsartlip), BOŲEĆEN (Pauquachin), S̱ÁUTW (Tsawout), W̱SIKEM (Tseycum), MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat), Sci'aneű (Beecher Bay), T'Sou-ke, Pacheedaht and Pune'laxutth' (Penelakut).

During his address to the CRD Board of Directors in 2014, Chief Ron Sam signalled an interest from Songhees Nation in having formal representation on the CRD Board (CRD, 2018). While the Local Government Act prohibits non-treaty First Nations from holding seats on standing committees, recent bylaw amendments have enabled the inclusion of First Nations elected representatives on CRD standing committees.

In 2015, the CRD Special Task Forces on First Nations Relations was created to make recommendations for decision-making between First Nations governments and the CRD and to engage in reconciliation. The Task Force's Final Report with recommendations was completed in 2018.

Notable Actions³

- The **First Nations Relations Division** was established at the CRD in 2015 in response to the TRC's Calls to Action.
- The **Special Task Force on First Nations Relations** was established in 2015 with a 1-year mandate to recommend more inclusive models of governance and decision-making between the CRD and First Nation governments. In 2016, the Task Force's term was extended to 2018 and its mandate was broadened to explore the ways the CRD could engage in reconciliation.
- The Task Force prepared **Year End Reports** for 2015, 2016 and 2017 and a **Final Report** in 2018 summarizing findings and recommendations with respect to governance and reconciliation.
- The CRD issued a **Statement of Reconciliation** in 2018 that acknowledges the UN Declaration as the reference framework for reconciliation.
- The CRD has negotiated a number of **service agreements and contracts** with First Nations communities, including water and sewer service, animal control, fire protection, waste collection and building inspection.
- The CRD **First Nations Relations Committee** was established in 2019 to provide advice and make recommendations to the Board of Directors relating to programs that strengthen relationships, the implications of the BC Treaty Process, coordination of regional events, recommendations on initiatives identified in the First Nations Task Force Final Report, and reconciliation progress and continued efforts.
- The CRD Board of Directors approved a number of **bylaw changes** in 2021 to provide for the inclusion of elected First Nations representatives on CRD standing committees.

Additional Considerations for the CVRD

- **Developing Policy:** The Task Force on First Nations Relations recommended a Regional Parks Naming Policy that considers First Nations interests and traditional place names. The Task Force also recommended a framework for reducing unintended employment barriers to Indigenous People by enshrining principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in hiring practices (CRD, 2018).
- **Strengthening Relationships:** The Task Force on First Nations Relations led a successful Forum of All Councils in 2016 with a focus on cultural education. The Task Force has recommended that the CRD commit to a similar event annually to continue building respect and familiarity and provide a forum to discuss emergent issues and solutions (CRD, 2018).
- **Supporting Learning:** Over 400 CRD employees (almost 50% of all CRD employees) participated in cultural education programs between 2016 and 2018 through ongoing organization-wide cultural training workshops (CRD, 2018).

3. See CRD (2018) and CRD (2021).



3.4 Islands Trust

The Islands Trust is a special purpose government created in 1974 and mandated to protect and preserve over 450 islands located in the Salish Sea (the Trust Area) including their environments and their unique amenities. The Islands Trust is governed by an elected 26-member Council comprised of two local trustees from each of 12 local trust areas and two municipal trustees from Bowen Island.

The Islands Trust Area is located within the territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, comprised of a large number of First Nations governments and Treaty and Tribal Alliances. The Islands Trust Council has committed to reconciliation and associated principles since 2015 (Islands Trust, 2021a). A formal Reconciliation Declaration was adopted in 2019 and a [Reconciliation Action Plan](#) has since been developed to implement the UN Declaration.

Notable Actions⁴

- A First Nations **Engagement Principles Policy** was implemented in 2016 to provide a framework for engaging and building relationships with First Nations.
- First Nations were engaged in 2017 and throughout 2019 and 2020, for the first time in the history of the Islands Trust, to participate in a **review of the Policy Statement**, which was undertaken through the lens of reconciliation to identify where amendments are required.
- The Trust Council passed a **Reconciliation Declaration** in March 2019 to formally acknowledge, commit to, and strive for the principles of reconciliation.
- The **Islands Trust Conservancy Board Reconciliation Declaration** was ratified in June 2019 to commit to knowledge sharing, understanding, and collaboration to preserve and protect the islands.
- A four-year **Reconciliation Action Plan** was adopted in 2019 to guide the Islands Trust in the implementation of the UN Declaration, the TRC's Calls to Action, and the provincial Declaration Act.
- **First Nations leaders spoke to newly elected trustees** at a special meeting in January 2019 to encourage them to approach their term as a journey of reflection and action toward reconciliation.
- A **Reconciliation Report** was prepared in 2021 to report on progress on implementing the **Reconciliation Action Plan**.
- The Islands Trust aims to establish **processes to share information and engage in a government-to-government manner** on matters of shared interests with First Nations through future protocol agreements and other instruments.

Considerations for the CVRD

- **Developing Policy:** Islands Trust staff worked closely with senior staff at the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation to collaborate on First Nations engagement processes and the Policy Statement amendment process. Capacity funding was provided to interested First Nations to support their participation (Islands Trust, 2021c).
- **Strengthening Relationships:** The Islands Trust was not successful in early attempts to engage First Nations on the Policy Statement review in 2017. This led to the focus on building meaningful relationships with First Nations in the Trust Area in 2019 through to 2021 through discussions on past wrongs and the Trust's reconciliation efforts. Over 160 engagements were undertaken with First Nations, primarily through meetings with Chief and Councils, Elders Councils, Tribal Councils, staff and community members, and phone calls and emails to share information (Islands Trust, 2021c).
- **Supporting Learning:** The **Reconciliation Action Plan** is divided into two phases, the first of which involves developing internal competencies and education to empower staff and develop organizational knowledge and skills, as well as internal reviews of policy and processes through the lens of reconciliation. The second phase is focused on implementing revised policies and processes, and developing protocols and agreements to advance cooperation and reconciliation. The learning approaches used in the first phase were diverse and included one-on-one dialogue sessions, facilitated workshops, mandatory sessions with all staff, learning at home modules, a speaker series, a lunch and learn series, and experiential sessions on the land with Indigenous community members (Islands trust, 2021b).

4. See Islands Trust (2016, 2019, 2021a,b)

3.5 Fraser Valley Regional District

The Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) is the third most populous district in the province and consists of six municipalities (Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Harrison Hot Springs, Hope, Kent and Mission) and eight electoral areas in the Lower Mainland (FVRD, 2019). The FVRD takes a proactive approach to First Nations relations given the presence of 30 First Nation bands, numerous urban and rural reserves, and a complex organizational network, and 25 additional First Nations have varying degrees of interest in the region as far west as Vancouver Island and as far north as Lillooet. The core values that guide the FVRD's First Nations Relations Program are relationships built on mutual respect and open dialogue, collaboration to solve common problems with creative solutions, and continuous learning (FVRD, 2020a).

The amount of information on the FVRD's approach to Indigenous relations and reconciliation available online, beyond what is provided above, is very limited. As a result, discussions with FVRD representatives to learn more were required. Unfortunately this could not be undertaken given the floods and the FVRD's state of emergency in November 2021. What is known based on online background research is that the FVRD has implemented an online resource referred to as the CEDAR (Community, Education, Data and Resources) Network, accessible to staff and elected officials of the FVRD and its member municipalities, and First Nation communities and organizations. Initially developed in 2016 and launched in 2017, the CEDAR Network is an evolution of the former FVRD First Nation Resource Guide and provides dynamic mapping, data and information that can be searched, and pronunciation guides and other tools to support learning (FVRD, 2018). The FVRD's 2020 Annual Report indicates that 208 FVRD and member municipality staff have used the CEDAR Network as a learning tool (FVRD, 2020b).

Considerations for the CVRD

- **Supporting Learning:** The CEDAR Network serves as tool for both information sharing and learning by both non-Indigenous and Indigenous community members. This, in turn, likely supports relationship building with First Nation communities and organizations.

3.6 City of Vancouver

Vancouver is located on the traditional territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), sálilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh), and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Peoples, and is also home to Indigenous Peoples from all over the continent. The City has the third largest Indigenous population in Canada following Winnipeg and Edmonton (City of Vancouver, 2021a).

The City formally began reconciliation efforts when it supported a Year of Reconciliation in 2013. The City was then designated a City of Reconciliation in 2014 with the aim of forming sustained relationships with local First Nations and the urban Indigenous community based on mutual respect, incorporating Indigenous perspectives into decision making, and providing services that benefit local First Nations and the urban Indigenous community (City of Vancouver, 2021b). Since this time, the City has established community partnerships, committees, and projects aimed at advancing reconciliation.

Notable Actions⁵

- The Vancouver **Aboriginal Community Policing Centre Society** was established in 2006 as a non-profit society to address social justice issues, improve safety for Indigenous People, and build relationships with the Vancouver Police Department.
- The **Aboriginal Community Policing Centre** was developed to provide a safe space for community members to gather to discuss and address social justice and safety issues.
- The City established **formal working relationships** through Memorandums of Understanding with Squamish Nation and the Musqueam Indian Band prior to 2013.
- An **Urban Indigenous Peoples' Advisory Committee** has been guiding the City on matters of interest and relevance to Indigenous Peoples and reconciliation since at least 2014.
- The City was designated a **City of Reconciliation** in June 2014 following a Year of Reconciliation from June 2013 to June 2014, during which time a variety of programs related to reconciliation were offered.

5. See City of Vancouver (2020), City of Vancouver (2021a,b,c,d,e), Fong (2017), and VACPC (2021).



- The City implemented an **Indigenous Relations Manager** role in 2016 to provide strategic advice on the City's approach to reconciliation and Indigenous relations.
- The City signed a **Memorandum of Understanding with Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council** in 2016 to establish a cooperative relationship to address the needs of the urban Indigenous community.
- More than 1,400 engineering staff have been **trained on issues related to archaeology management and Indigenous awareness** since 2017.
- Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish Nations and the City announced the **renaming of public spaces** in the downtown in 2018, including šxʷáxən Xwtl'a7shn (formerly known as the Queen Elizabeth Theatre Plaza) and šxʷáxənəq Xwtl'e7énk Square (formerly the Vancouver Art Gallery north plaza).
- The City opened the **Saa'ust Centre** in 2018 to support families and community members through the provision of trauma-informed counselling services for the duration of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls National Inquiry's stop in Vancouver.
- The City's Engineering Department **hired a full-time Archaeologist** in 2019 in collaboration with Tsleil-Waututh and Squamish Nations and the Musqueam Indian Band, who supported the hiring process, for the protection of cultural heritage resources during infrastructure projects.
- Mayor Kennedy Stewart issued a proclamation recognizing 2019 as the **International Year of Indigenous Languages**.
- Mayor and Council passed a motion to **implement the UN Declaration within the City** in March 2021.

- The City is committed to **providing municipal services** to local First Nations at the same level as other residents in Vancouver, and it has a Service Agreement with the Musqueam Indian Band and is in the process of negotiating a Service Agreement with Squamish Nation for their planned Señákw development.
- Various **Indigenous positions have been implemented** at the City over the years (e.g., Social Policy Indigenous Planner, Indigenous Arts and Culture Planner, Indigenous Planner at the Vancouver Public Library, and Decolonization, Arts and Culture Manager at the Vancouver Park Board) to encourage departments to look at planning through an Indigenous lens.

Considerations for the CVRD

- **Developing Policy:** While City staff have started a high level analysis and policy research on how to implement the UN Declaration a Task Force comprised of elected representatives from local First Nations and the City, as well as staff from the City, local First Nations and urban Indigenous organizations, will be established to direct how the City will implement the UN Declaration.
- **Strengthening Relationships:** The City approaches its relationships with the Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples at the government-to-government level and through partnerships where possible. It has also formalized relationships with other Indigenous organizations to support the urban Indigenous community.
- **Supporting Learning:** The City has focused on identifying new roles in the organization to support learning and awareness building and the integration of Indigenous perspectives in planning and decision-making processes.

3.7 City of Lethbridge

The City of Lethbridge is committed to relationship building and advancing reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and communities including the Blackfoot Kainai, Piikani and Siksika First Nations and the Lethbridge Métis Council. The City's Indigenous Relations Office leads this work with the support of the Reconciliation Lethbridge Advisory Committee. The City has worked to increase the representation of and integrate the perspectives and voices of Indigenous Peoples and communities into heritage and land use planning projects since 2015.

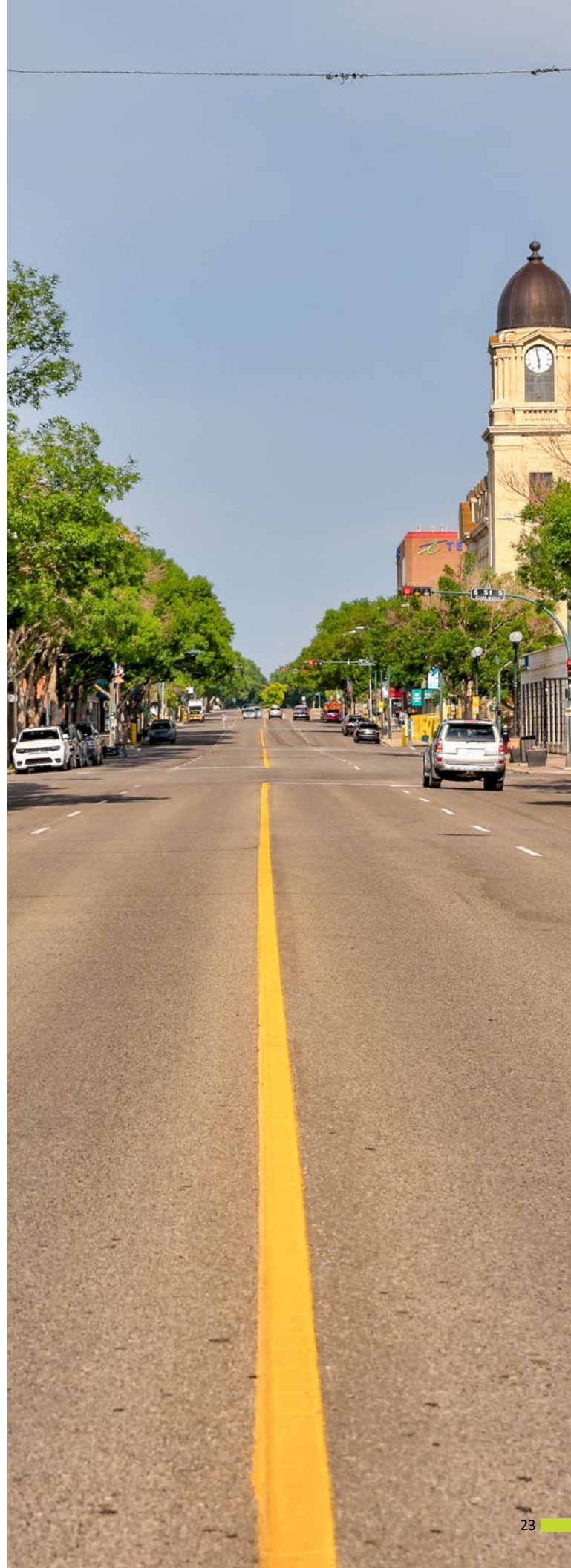
Notable Actions⁶

- A **Traditional Knowledge and Land Use Assessment** was completed in 2017 to create an inventory within City limits to inform land use planning processes.
- The City established the **Reconciliation Lethbridge Advisory Committee** (RLAC) in 2017 to act as an advisory committee to City Council on issues relating to reconciliation.
- The RLAC and community partners have hosted a **week of events promoting reconciliation** in Lethbridge since 2017.
- A **Reconciliation Implementation Plan** was developed in 2017 through on-going collaboration between the City and Indigenous community serving organizations, and the fulfillment of actions is a joint responsibility of the City and these organizations, led by the RLAC.
- The **Blackfoot word** for “greetings” – Oki – was **adopted as the City's Official Greeting** in 2019 with associated promotion of the Blackfoot language.
- The City has been exploring how to incorporate Blackfoot and other Indigenous languages, cultures, and stories into public spaces through **Indigenous Placemaking** since 2019, including murals, utility box wrapping with artwork, Indigenous landscape design, and the placement of the Blackfoot Confederacy Flag at City Hall.
- An **Indigenous Relations Office** was established with an Indigenous Relations Advisor in 2019 to support the development of meaningful relationships between the City, local Indigenous communities, and urban Indigenous People and organizations.
- The **Historic Places Advisory Committee Terms of Reference were updated** in 2020 to include dedicated Indigenous representation.
- A feasibility study for the development of an **Indigenous Cultural Centre** was completed in 2020, and governance and site planning are currently underway.
- The **City and the Kanai / Blood Tribe ratified a Memorandum of Understanding** in 2021 to create a formalized structure to strengthen the ability of elected officials and staff to work more closely together for the benefit of both communities.
- The City launched the **Indigenous Summer Student Program** in 2021 to create employment and economic development opportunities for Indigenous People.
- **Extensive urban and regional Indigenous community engagement was undertaken for the 2021 update to the Municipal Development Plan** to strengthen the narrative of Lethbridge's past and the contributions of Indigenous Peoples to its future, and provide specific considerations for Indigenous relationship building, engagement, and reconciliation.
- The **Heritage Management Plan is being updated** in 2021 to respond to the City's Reconciliation Implementation Plan and enable meaningful consideration of Indigenous cultural heritage.
- Lethbridge Council has directed a **Public Real Asset Audit** to review the names of public spaces through the lens of truth, reconciliation and inclusion, with community engagement on the audit beginning in 2021.

6. See City of Lethbridge (2020, 2021a,b,c) and the City of Lethbridge & Lethbridge Indigenous Sharing Network (2017).

Considerations for the CVRD

- **Developing Policy:** The RLAC developed 25 recommendations to address social, economic, and institutional barriers that disproportionately impact Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Peoples in the community through a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Work Plan with a three-year commitment. Council approved the recommendations in 2021 (City of Lethbridge, 2021c).
- **Strengthening Relationships:** The City is currently undertaking an Indigenous Legacy Commemoration Project to honor those who have been impacted by the tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and the residential school system (City of Lethbridge, 2021c).
- **Supporting Learning:** The City hired Blackfoot consultants to develop a Reconciliation Ally Toolkit to generate greater understanding of what it means to live in Blackfoot territory. The City is also developing an Indigenous Awareness Training Program for staff with the advice and support of a Piikani Knowledge Keeper (City of Lethbridge, 2021c).



3.8 City of Ottawa

The City of Ottawa is located on the unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation. Ottawa has historically been, and continues to be, a gathering place for Indigenous Peoples as it was an important trading area and meeting place for a diversity of Indigenous cultures (City of Ottawa, 2018).

The Indigenous population in the City is over 22,500, though urban Indigenous service providers estimate that the true population is more than double what is reported. The City is home to the third largest Inuit population and the fourth largest population of First Nations people without registered “Indian Status” in census metropolitan areas across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016, cited in City of Ottawa, 2018).

Notable Actions⁷

- An **Aboriginal Working Committee** (AWC) was established in 2007 as a formal partnership between the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition (a group of Indigenous community organizations), non-Indigenous community organizations, and City staff to address emerging issues and improve services for Indigenous communities.
- City Council adopted a **Statement of Reconciliation** in 2018 to commit to learning from the lessons of the TRC, and to taking action to ensure the needs and aspirations of Indigenous People are fully acknowledged in policy and throughout the City.
- A **Reconciliation Action Plan** was developed in 2018 to address the TRC’s Calls to Action and confirms the City’s commitment to reconciliation.

Considerations for the CVRD

- **Developing Policy:** The AWC is a strong partnership achieving numerous accomplishments in various policy and programming areas across the City, including the development of a Commemoration Policy with a naming process for rooms in municipal buildings to honour Algonquin and other Indigenous Peoples and languages (City of Ottawa, 2018).
- **Strengthening Relationships:** The relationship and trust built through the AWC, along with its many collaborative accomplishments, serve as a foundation for the City’s **Reconciliation Action Plan**. The City’s **Reconciliation Action Plan** was developed in partnership with the local First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities and facilitated by the AWC (City of Ottawa, 2018).
- **Supporting Learning:** The City hosts an annual Indigenous Awareness Day with learning and awareness raising activities to commemorate National Indigenous Peoples Day (City of Ottawa, 2018); over 350 City staff and partners attended the 2016 and 2017 Indigenous Awareness Day events focused on the legacy of residential schools and the TRC’s Calls to Action (City of Ottawa AWC, 2018b). The City also aims to identify and repurpose highly visible and dedicated spaces at City hall and other municipal buildings and public spaces for commemoration, education and awareness (City of Ottawa AWC, 2018a).



3.9 City of Yellowknife

As a northern capital with approximately 24% of residents identifying as Indigenous, the City of Yellowknife values its relations with Indigenous Peoples, governments, agencies and institutions (City of Yellowknife, 2021a). The City has identified reconciliation as a core value and partnerships with Indigenous communities as a key priority. In support of this, elected City leaders have been attending regular Joint Council meetings with elected leaders of Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN) since the 1990s and this continues today. The City also strives to meet and collaborate with the Tłıchʔ and the North Slave Métis Alliance (City of Yellowknife, 2019).

Notable Actions⁸

- The City and YKDFN entered into a **Memorandum of Understanding** (MOU) in 2002 to guide relationship building and service delivery.
- City Council **adopted the TRC's Calls to Action and the UN Declaration** in 2015 and the City continues to work to implement the actions.
- The City has been **supporting the Urban Hide Tanning Camp** financially and through the use of outdoor City space since 2016.
- The City supported the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation to **establish a healing camp** in 2018 by providing the land and funding for the camp through a non-colonial process.
- The City implemented an **Indigenous Relations Advisor Role** in 2018 to facilitate the development of a **Reconciliation Action Plan** across all City departments.
- An **Intercultural Heritage and Placemaking Plan** was developed in 2018 to visibly recognize locations significant to the rich history of the YKDFN.
- The **MOU was updated** in 2019 to recognize the City and YKDFN's commitment to reconciliation and mutual support guided by common values and mutual interests.
- The City released its document **Reconciliation: Starting the Conversation in 2019** as a means to engage with the community on a **Reconciliation Action Plan**, seeking input through coffee breaks, online and written comments, one-on-one engagement, and community gatherings.
- Indigenous Elders have been invited by the City to host **Elders Circles at the Public Library** since 2020.
- City Council approved a **Reconciliation Framework** and a **Reconciliation Action Plan** in 2021.
- The City and YKDFN completed a **Joint Economic Development Strategy** in 2021 to guide shared economic development interests and provide a framework for partnership to move forward.

Considerations for the CVRD

- **Developing Policy:** The City has included Indigenous programming (e.g., Naturally Dene Workshops, traditional games night at the multiplex) into recreational programming. The Flags and Proclamation Policy was adopted in 2021 and the YKDFN and North Slave Métis Alliance flags are now raised at City Hall permanently (City of Yellowknife, 2021b).
- **Strengthening Relationships:** Regular Joint Council meetings between elected leaders of YKDFN and the City started in the 1990s and continue today. YKDFN's Chief Executive Officer and the City's Administrator have a standing monthly meeting to work on issues of common interest. The City has also initiated meetings with the leadership of the North Slave Métis Alliance (City of Yellowknife, 2019) and the two governments are working on an MOU to strengthen the relationship (City of Yellowknife, 2021b).
- **Supporting Learning:** All City staff participated in training on the history and legacy of colonialism and residential schools between 2017 and 2019. Street signs have also been updated to include Willııdeh Yatıı, the language of the YKDFN; 40 bilingual signs were erected in 2020. The City is also aiming to coordinate an annual public event to encourage dialogue on reconciliation (City of Yellowknife, 2021b).

8. See City of Yellowknife (2019, 2021a,b,c)

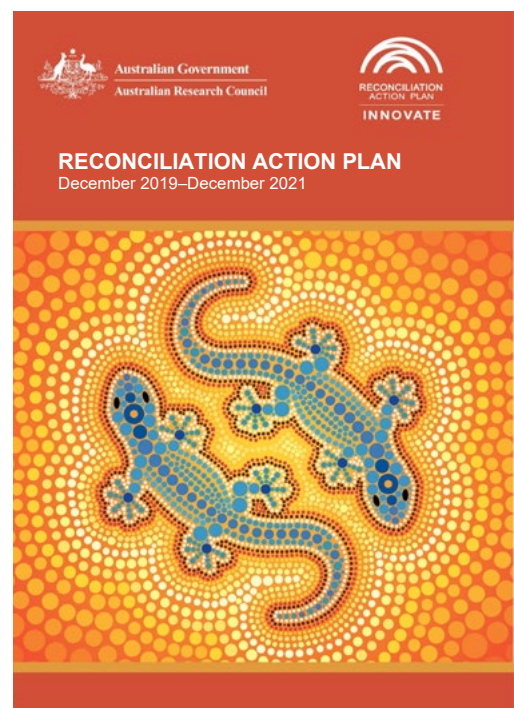
3.10 Local Governments in Australia

Local governments in Australia have been developing Reconciliation Actions Plans for well over a decade. A **Reconciliation Action Plan** (RAP) is a tool developed in 2006 by Reconciliation Australia to help organizations promote reconciliation and support the closing of the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples. By 2011, over 250 organizations had started the development of a RAP (Reconciliation Victoria, 2011).

Reconciliation Victoria implemented a Reconciliation in Local Government Action Research Pilot Project in partnership with the Victoria Local Governance Association in 2010. The aim of the project was to assess the extent to which RAPs are an effective tool for local governments to advance reconciliation. The project found that RAPs can serve as an effective tool for improving relationships between local governments and Indigenous communities. The project findings point to the RAP model as a practical, clear, and simple way to approach and understand reconciliation through respect, relationships, and opportunities. However, some limitations were identified that require awareness and active planning to address (Reconciliation Victoria, 2011).

Considerations for the CVRD

- The process of developing a RAP can contribute to building relationships between Indigenous Peoples and local governments, and relationships built through engagement and collaboration in the development of a RAP can become one of the most enduring outcomes of the project.
- Relationships can be built on by embedding a mechanism for meaningful Indigenous participation in local government planning and decision making, such as an advisory structure to Council.
- Formalizing reconciliation commitments through a RAP helps to embed commitments and actions across the whole organization.
- The quality and/or strength of actions in a RAP are impacted by how broad they are and the level of Indigenous engagement and involvement in their development.
- A RAP should emphasize change within the local government as opposed to simply programs delivered by the organization, and encourage local governments to consider their role in terms of providing community leadership to raise awareness and understanding among non-Indigenous people in the community.
- Auditing and progress tracking of RAPs is also key for success.
- It is recommended that local governments employ and provide appropriate support to an Indigenous Liaison Role or equivalent within Council, and that regional cooperation is encouraged to resource such a position across a group of Councils.





3.11 Assessment Findings and Considerations for the CVRD

The Assessment identified a variety of approaches to Indigenous relations and reconciliation that are influenced by the characteristics of local governments and neighbouring Indigenous communities (e.g., size, location, number of communities, and accessibility), the history of relations, the extent of existing relationships and the level of engagement required to strengthen them, and the nature of opportunities for collaboration and partnerships.

It is important to note that in the majority of examples reviewed as part of this Assessment, emphasis has seemingly been placed on relationship building and reconciliation with First Nations Peoples, with little to no specific consideration for Métis Peoples. In addition to building relationships with First Nation Peoples, we also suggest that the CVRD consider ways to engage with and include the needs and aspirations of Métis Peoples in the Comox Valley.

Key themes relevant to strengthening Indigenous relations and advancing reconciliation identified through the Assessment are as follows:

- **Understanding the truths first:** Developing an understanding of the truths of colonialism and its impacts on Indigenous Peoples, as well as awareness of previous and ongoing work in the area of reconciliation (e.g., TRCs Calls to Action and the UN Declaration), is crucial for advancing reconciliation – you must understand the past to move forward. Local government organizations may need to spend time focusing on building this foundation before being able to take meaningful actions.
- **Diversity in learning and awareness building is important:** Information sharing and training that is dynamic and varied and is facilitated through a variety of perspectives, experiences, and worldviews supports a strong foundation of awareness and understanding amongst staff in an organization.
- **Government-to-government relations are key:** Approaching the relationship with Indigenous communities and groups at the government-to-government level supports the incorporation and recognition of Indigenous perspectives in the provision of services and local government initiatives.

- **Agreements, protocols and plans are valuable tools:** Agreements and protocols between local governments and Indigenous communities and groups and reconciliation plans can serve as valuable tools to support recompilation commitments in the face of changes in leadership on respective sides.
- **Collaboration for capacity building and achieving mutual interests:** Working collaboratively with Indigenous communities and groups to identify and address common issues can enable collective action to meeting respective community needs (i.e., mutual benefits) and broaden the resources to do so on all sides.
- **Indigenous participation in policy and reconciliation planning:** Working collaboratively with Indigenous communities and groups ensures they have a voice in decision making for policy and reconciliation planning, and also leads to more meaningful and achievable strategies and actions. Working groups and/or advisory committees can serve to enable true collaboration for reconciliation planning and implementation.
- **Consideration for Indigenous people living in urban areas:** It is important to consider the needs of and include Indigenous People living in urban areas in reconciliation planning and implementation. This can be supported through relationships with local organizations and their participation on working groups and/or committees.
- **Flexibility and adaptability in engagement timelines:** Flexibility and adaptability in engagement and collaboration timelines established by local governments when working with Indigenous communities and groups is important to enable engagement and collaboration that is culturally appropriate and respectful.
- **Relationships take time and commitment:** Recognizing resource limitations for both local governments and Indigenous communities and groups and allowing sufficient time for the progression of relationships as interest and capacity allows is essential to success. A commitment on all sides to relationship building is also crucial, and local governments can support this by assisting Indigenous communities and groups with the resourcing needed to enable them to participate on committees and working groups; this may require support with human and financial resource building.

- **Reconciliation planning instruments as starting points:** Reconciliation documents should be considered as stepping stones to important conversations about relationships, perspectives, interests, aspirations, and how best to reconcile to enable a holistic approach that can be sustained and evolve over time.
- **Potential to influence other relationships:** Building relationships at the local government level can support and/or initiate change at the provincial and federal levels.

These themes, as well as the specific considerations for the CVRD identified throughout the preceding sections, have informed the recommendations for potential strategies and actions in Section 5.







4. Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation at the CVRD

The CVRD has formalized its commitment to building its relationship with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples and advancing reconciliation through strategic planning with an Indigenous relations lens, the adoption of an Indigenous Relations Framework, a Statement of Reconciliation, and associated actions.

4.1 2019-2022 Strategic Plan

The CVRD Board of Directors utilizes strategic planning to review core services and identify goals for each that are framed by a set of key drivers. The key drivers identified for the *2019-2022 Strategic Plan* include Indigenous relations to support the implementation of the CVRD's commitment to reconciliation and relationships building with Indigenous Peoples and specifically KFN.

Key initiatives identified in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan that support reconciliation and relationship building with Indigenous Peoples as shown (CVRD, 2019):

- Complete the Water Treatment Project in partnership with KFN;
- Enhance recreational programming with First Nations involvement;
- Partner with KFN and food security organizations with respect to the Regional Growth Strategy;
- Partner with KFN for bridging of emergency programs (e.g., Fire Smart Program); and
- Support KFN community-to-community forums, regular project updates with KFN Chief and Council, and broaden Indigenous cultural awareness among staff, elected officials and the public.

4.2 Indigenous Relations Framework

The CVRD adopted an *Indigenous Relations Framework* (the Framework) in January 2020 to support Indigenous relations as a key driver for strategic planning and associated initiatives. The intent of the Framework is to enable the delivery of core services with an Indigenous relations lens and greater cultural awareness. The specific objectives of the Framework are as shown (CVRD, 2020):

1. Enhance the knowledge and understanding of Indigenous culture and history, including the modern day legacy of colonial history.
2. Build capacity of all staff, elected officials and committee/advisory members to be engaged in collaborative work with Indigenous communities and peoples.
3. Maintain ongoing staff to staff engagement and information sharing, seeking opportunities to collaborate and learn from each other.
4. Explore and respond to the TRC's Calls to Action and the UN Declaration as a framework for engaging with First Nations Peoples and advancing national and provincial objectives/commitments.
5. Seek ways to maximize Indigenous engagement while minimizing demands on Indigenous Peoples' time and resources.
6. Evaluate opportunities for Indigenous participation on Board, committee, commission and advisory bodies.
7. Build strong and enduring relationships with First Nations governments and Peoples.

Annual reporting on specific activities undertaken and planned to support the Framework is undertaken. Funding to accomplish these objectives and associated activities come from a combination of sources including grants and the general government administration service. Additional resources may be required as associated work plans evolve and mid- and long-term strategies are implemented.

4.3 Statement of Reconciliation

At its first meeting of 2021, the CVRD Board of Directors adopted a *Statement of Reconciliation* to formally recognize the CVRD's commitment to reconciliation and to guide the organization's work with Indigenous Peoples. Four themes that guide the CVRD's path to reconciliation are identified within the Statement of Reconciliation (CVRD, 2021):

- **Self-Determination** – The CVRD acknowledges the fundamental right of self-determination to Indigenous Peoples. In the spirit and intent of inclusivity, the CVRD is committed to working with First Nations through the governance systems they choose. When First Nations wish to participate in our decision-making process, then we will support them. The CVRD will look to First Nations for leadership in understanding how to create new decision-making systems together on their Traditional Territories.
- **Shared Prosperity** – The CVRD recognizes the gap in wealth between First Nations and non-Indigenous Peoples. The CVRD will respect its interest in fiscal responsibility and believes that improving the lives of the most vulnerable citizens creates a stronger and more resilient region for everyone. The CVRD will seek partnerships, share information and deliver fair and equitable services in working with First Nations on achieving their economic goals.
- **Protecting Cultural Heritage** – The CVRD recognizes that since the arrival of settlers, Indigenous cultural heritage sites have been damaged and destroyed through development, and ancestral burial places and artifacts have been looted and sold. The CVRD will work with First Nations to respect, learn from and appropriately manage Indigenous cultural heritage in the Comox Valley.
- **Relationship with the Land and Water** – The CVRD recognizes the integral relationship First Nations have with the land and water. The CVRD will work with First Nations on taking care of the land and water while providing space for cultural and ceremonial use, food and medicine harvesting, traditional management practices and reclaiming Indigenous place names.



Image Source: CVRD website - <https://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca>



4.4 The CVRD’s Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Journey

The following provides a timeline of the CVRD’s journey of Indigenous relations and reconciliation and associated actions since 2008. The CVRD will continue to apply for grant funding and consider programming options in partnership with Indigenous communities and groups to advance reconciliation (CVRD, 2020).



December 2008

Liaison for the KFN Treaty Process: The CVRD Board of Directors appointed a liaison between the CVRD and the provincial Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation for the KFN treaty negotiation process.

2010

Protocol Agreement for Communication and Cooperation: The Agreement was established on June 14 between the CVRD, the City of Courtenay, the Town of Comox, the Village of Cumberland, and KFN. It is intended to serve as a guide for establishing and maintaining a long-term cooperative relationships through effective and adequate communications, and to provide a venue to encourage discussion related to common areas of interest and responsibility.

2017

KFN Tribal Canoes Journey Support: The CVRD provided facilities during KFN's Tribal Canoe Journeys in August.

2012

Referrals Management Program: A comprehensive referrals management program was implemented on September 25 to enhance communication and information sharing between the CVRD and KFN, as well as the We Wai Kai, Wei Wai Kum and Homalco First Nations, and to enable effective shared decision-making for project referrals. This program also enhances the ability of the CVRD and KFN in particular to manage the increasingly complex nature of and volume of project referrals.

June 2020

Interpretive Signage at Xwee Xwhya Luq (Seal Bay Nature Park): The CVRD and KFN unveiled new interpretive signage and new trail names which reflect a variety of natural park elements, animals, and cultural references with an emphasis on the traditional ayajuthem language, a Coast Salish language shared between the K'ómoks, Tla'amin, Homalco and Klahoose Peoples.

July 2020

Earthbound Kids Cultural Camp: The CVRD and the Wachiy Friendship Centre co-hosted an all-day Indigenous cultural camp to raise awareness of Indigenous cultural identity and enhance the community's understanding of reconciliation. Funding was provided through a UBCM grant.

November 2020

Community to Community Forum: The CVRD participated in the forum, hosted by KFN, for discussions on reconciliation, the provincial Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, and KFN's Cultural Heritage Policy.

December 2020

Community Benefit Agreement: The CVRD and KFN signed a Community Benefit Agreement on December 18, confirming KFN support for the Comox Valley Sewer Conveyance Project and committing both parties to work collaboratively on a regional solution for sewer services to KFN development lands in the south. The agreement provides for needed upgrades for Comox Valley sewer service infrastructure while also supporting the growth and economic development plans of the K'ómoks community.

Throughout 2020

Monthly Meetings with KFN: The CVRD Chair, Chief Administrative Officer, Elected Officials, and/or project managers participated in monthly meetings with KFN Chief and Council to review CVRD operational procedures and supporting documentation as projects are initiated and advanced. In 2020, 11 meetings were held with discussions on over 30 projects.

September 2021

Indigenous Affordable Housing Project: The CVRD provided \$70,000 in funding to the Wachiay Friendship Centre in support of an Indigenous affordable housing project.

Comox Valley Water Treatment Plant Project Completed: The new facility was completed to provide drinking water to 50,000 residents in the Comox Valley, including the K'ómoks community. The project was delivered in partnership with KFN to meet shared long-term planning and environmental protection goals. The boardroom doors and a canoe were carved and installed by a KFN artist and information about KFN's story of water is included on informational kiosks at the site. A Welcome Pole is currently being developed.

November 2021

Community to Community Forum: The forum was hosted by the CVRD to engage in discussion amongst KFN and local government leadership on projects and interests related to climate resiliency and poverty reduction.

December 2021

Meaningful Engagement Handbook: The CVRD has been working with KFN since 2019 to develop a handbook to be used as a resource to assist CVRD staff in building successful engagement experiences with KFN. The handbook was drafted with guidance from KFN Chief and Council and provides clarity on the efforts that must be made to embed awareness and sensitivity into internal and external practices and processes. It also provides staff with the tools needed to work with KFN, in accordance with the Nation's own procedures and decision making authority. It is anticipated that the handbook will be finalized and made publicly available in December.

January 2021

Statement of Reconciliation: The CVRD Board of Directors adopted the statement to formally recognize the CVRD's commitment to reconciliation and to guide the organization's work with Indigenous Peoples (see Section 4.3).

February, April and May 2021

Cultural Awareness Training: The training was offered to elected officials and CVRD staff members to provide an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the continued impacts of a range of Indigenous issues and learn how Canada's colonial history has impacted the lives of Indigenous Peoples. Approximately 30 CVRD representatives participated in the training.

May 2021

Statement on the Residential School

Findings: The CVRD issued the statement to pay its respects to the 215 children whose remains were discovered at a former Kamloops residential school.

March 2021

Local Government and the UN Declaration Discussions:

In partnership with KFN, the CVRD hosted a meeting to discuss how local governments can move towards implementing the UN Declaration, with presentations and discussions led by the BC Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and Merle Alexander, an Indigenous Resource Law practitioner and part of the co-development team for the provincial Declaration Act. The meeting included elected officials and staff representatives from neighboring local governments and School District 71.

Throughout 2021

KFN Cultural Heritage Policy Internal

Discussions: The CVRD has been working on furthering its understanding of ways in which the KFN Cultural Heritage Policy, announced in late 2020, can be integrated into CVRD policies and practices, including through legislated and educational means.

Monthly Meetings with KFN: The CVRD continued monthly meetings with KFN Chief and Council through 2021. A total of 14 meetings were held with discussions on over 28 projects, with a year-end meeting scheduled for December.

4.5 Inputs from CVRD Staff Engagement

The following sections provide a summary of the inputs received through CVRD staff engagement activities undertaken as part of the Assessment – the staff survey and focus group.

4.5.1 Staff Survey

The CVRD staff survey was conducted in October 2021. The survey was made available to all CVRD staff. The intent of the staff survey was to support the CVRD in beginning to assess the level of Indigenous awareness among staff and the level of interest in learning, and to inform the Assessment in terms of potential actions and strategies to improve Indigenous awareness among staff.

The response rate was approximately 40% of total staff with 96 completed responses received. This response rate is high relative to the benchmark response rate of approximately 15% in general for CVRD staff surveys (CVRD, personal communication, October 2021). A summary of results is provided below.

Roles

Approximately 73% of respondents indicated that they consider, consult, or engage with Indigenous People at least sometimes in their role at the CVRD. This suggests that many staff members are involved in Indigenous relations in some form in their role and/or that staff members who are involved in Indigenous relations were most likely to complete the survey.

Approximately 40% of respondents are involved in the analysis or formation of policies at the CVRD at least sometimes. Given that only a third of respondents indicated what department they are part of, there was insufficient data to correlate policy-related roles to specific departments.

Level of Knowledge and Awareness

A summary of the proportion of respondents that indicated they had fairly or very good levels of awareness and knowledge for various subject matters related to Indigenous Peoples, relations and reconciliation is provided in Table 1 below. Key findings include:

- Respondents are most aware and knowledgeable about the residential school system, the concept of reconciliation, and the history of Indigenous Peoples in Canada; no one responded that they had no awareness or knowledge of these subject matters. This is not surprising given the many efforts in our society today to build this awareness and knowledge in these specific areas.
- Respondents are least aware and knowledgeable of the UN Declaration and the TRC's Calls to Action, and approximately 15% of respondents indicated they have no awareness or knowledge of these documents at all. While this is not surprising given the nature of information in these documents, awareness of these seminal documents is important, particularly among staff whose roles intersect with or contribute to Indigenous relations and reconciliation.
- Just over a third of respondents are aware and knowledgeable of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework and Statement of Reconciliation, while almost 12% indicated they have no awareness or knowledge of these efforts matter at all.
- The extent to which employees consider, consult or engage with Indigenous People in their role was not necessarily tied to their level of awareness and knowledge (i.e., some respondents who indicated they very much need to consider, consult or engage with Indigenous People in their role characterized their level of awareness and knowledge as generally low).

Table 1: Summary of the responses on awareness and knowledge of the subject matters presented.

Subject Matter	% of respondents			
	Fairly or very good	Somewhat	Barely	Not at all
The residential school system and its legacy and generational impacts	62.8	31.6	5.3	-
What reconciliation means or refers to	51.6	36.8	11.6	-
The CVRD's relationship building efforts with Indigenous Peoples in the Comox Valley	45.3	34.7	16.8	3.2
The history of Indigenous Peoples of Canada	41.1	48.4	10.5	-
The Indigenous Communities and organizations located in the Comox Valley	37.9	47.4	14.7	-
The CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework and Statement of Reconciliation	35.8	28.4	24.2	11.6
Opportunities to contribute to reconciliation in your personal life	34.7	35.8	22.1	7.4
The rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples in Canada	32.6	48.4	16.8	2.1
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action	21.3	36.2	28.7	13.8
The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	16.8	42.1	26.3	14.7

Sources of Information

In terms of the primary sources of information used to build awareness and knowledge, the large majority of respondents indicated news media as a primary source, followed by experiences learning directly from Indigenous Peoples, workshops or training organized by the CVRD or past employer, and experience working with Indigenous communities (Table 2). Formal training and self-directed courses or workshops contributed the least to awareness and knowledge with respect to Indigenous Peoples, relations and reconciliation. Responses to “Other” included books, research, and discussions with friends and colleagues.

Table 2: Summary of responses on information sources used to build awareness and knowledge.

Sources of Information	% of respondents
News media (online, newspaper, television coverage)	91.7
Experience learning directly from Indigenous People (e.g., attending Indigenous Community led events, based on personal relationships with Indigenous People, etc.)	45.8
Workshop or training session organized by past or present employer	43.8
Social media	37.5
Experience working with Indigenous Communities	35.4
Self-directed online course(s) or workshop(s)	28.1
Formal training or coursework (e.g., postsecondary education, classes, etc.)	12.5
Other	8.3



Interest in Learning

An overview of the level of interest in information sharing, education and training on the various subject matters related to Indigenous Peoples, relations and reconciliation, as indicated by respondents, is provided in Table 3 below. Key findings include:

- The highest level of interest among respondents is for information on local Indigenous Peoples and the CVRD's relationship with them, and the TRC's Calls to Action.
- While some respondents are not interested in the various subject matters presented, the overwhelming majority are at least somewhat interested.

Table 3: Summary of the responses on the level of interest in the different subject matters presented.

Subject Matter	% of respondents		
	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not interested
The culture and cultural protocols of Indigenous Peoples in the Comox Valley	67.0	26.6	6.4
The CVRD's relationship building and reconciliation efforts with Indigenous Peoples in the Comox Valley	63.8	29.8	6.4
Indigenous Peoples and their histories (e.g., colonialism, residential school system, legacies, etc.)	55.8	33.7	10.5
Indigenous rights and interests (e.g., federal and provincial legislation and policies, the UN Declaration, etc.)	50.0	40.4	9.6
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and role of local governments	46.8	46.8	6.4
Opportunities for reconciliation actions in daily life	44.7	44.7	10.6

Preferred Learning Approach

In terms of the preferred or ideal format for delivery of information on the subject matters listed in Table 3, workshops or training sessions organized by the CVRD and experiential learning (e.g., attending Indigenous community events, learning directly from Indigenous community members, etc.) were indicated most often, followed by self-directed resources provided by the CVRD, and regular workshops or information sessions in the workplace (Table 4). Responses to “Other” included being involved in partnership with First Nations on various projects or initiatives, and witnessing planning and actions towards CVRD public and private truth and reconciliation initiatives.

Table 4: Summary of responses on ideal format(s) for information sharing.

Sources of Information	% of respondents
Workshop(s) or training session(s) organized by the CVRD	72.9
Experiential learning (e.g., attending Indigenous community events, learning directly from Indigenous community members, etc.)	70.8
Self-directed resources provided by the CVRD	49.0
Regular workshops or information sessions in the work place (e.g., monthly lunch sessions, etc.)	36.5
Other	3.1

Comments and Suggestions Received

Respondents were provided with an opportunity to share comments or suggestions. The following is an overview of the nature of the comments and suggestions received:

- Appreciation to the CVRD and Board of Directors for making Indigenous relations an important aspect of the organization.
- Interest in opportunities to learn from local Indigenous groups in the local community through organized events (e.g., guest speakers, volunteer opportunities, and events).
- Interest is leaning more about the jurisdictional and management implications of future Treaty Settlement Lands being granted to First Nations Peoples.
- Interest in learning more about the perspectives of local Indigenous People with respect to programs and service offerings in the CVRD.
- Suggestion that learning activities (training, workshops, etc.) are mandatory for all staff regardless of their personal interests to support the advancement of building awareness and understanding in support of reconciliation.
- Importance of framing these learning and awareness building opportunities as a practice (regular occurrence) and not a one-off.
- Acknowledgement that the CVRD is working hard to advance reconciliation in the Comox Valley.
- Appreciation for the survey.

4.5.2 Focus Group

The Dillon team facilitated a virtual focus group on October 12, 2021, with 10 members of the CVRD's executive team and senior managers. The purpose of the focus group was to gauge understanding of and interest in Indigenous Peoples, relations and reconciliation amongst the executive team and senior managers at the CVRD, and identify potential opportunities and constraints to increasing learning and awareness at the CVRD in this front. A summary of the input and perspectives received during the focus group is provided in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Summary of inputs received during the CVRD focus group.

Subject Matter	General Summary of Inputs and Perspectives
Reconciliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of reconciliation amongst the group was strong with general recognition among participants of the importance of acknowledging the past and education and awareness building to enable this, and the importance of actions to support new and positive relationships. • Participants were generally knowledgeable about concepts important to reconciliation, including decolonization and Indigenization. • There was general agreement that CVRD leaders are in a position to act in support of and to advance Indigenous relations and reconciliation, and to be community leaders.
Challenges to relationship building and reconciliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual attitudes or perspectives – buy-in is needed on all sides. • Need for public awareness, outreach and education. • Need for general staff awareness to support. • Human and financial resource limitations on all sides. • Different timeline drivers and constraints. • Pace of relationship building versus the pace of projects and planning processes. • Cultural and governance differences. • Differences in expectations. • Complexity of some projects. • Balancing service delivery needs and constraints with relationship building and reconciliation. • Overlapping statement of intent boundaries for First Nations in the BC Treaty process.
Responsibility for reconciliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General agreement among participants that local governments have a role to play in reconciliation. • All participants agreed that Indigenous Peoples' perspectives and rights should meaningfully inform planning and decision-making at the CVRD. • Actions and efforts to support reconciliation at the CVRD should be based on and specific to the local context.



Subject Matter	General Summary of Inputs and Perspectives
Awareness at the CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While most participants considered themselves to personally have a moderate to strong level of awareness about Indigenous relations and reconciliation, a few participants did not. • Participants perceived themselves to be generally knowledgeable about what the CVRD is doing in terms of Indigenous relations and reconciliation. • Perceptions of staff awareness among departmental teams varied, with perceived higher levels of awareness among the teams that are more likely to consider or engage with Indigenous communities (e.g., planning) or with team members that have their own personal experiences of relevance. • New team members who are from other geographies originally may not be familiar with Indigenous Peoples in the Comox Valley but their general awareness may be otherwise relatively high. • Some staff members may not fully recognize or understand the larger history of Indigenous Peoples, colonialism and impacts. • There may be discomfort about reconciliation among some staff members given the nature of systemic changes and shifts in perceptions needed, and the inherent discomfort to change for some people.
Learning (and interest in learning) at the CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some participants expressed interest in knowing more about ongoing Indigenous relations and reconciliation efforts at the CVRD. • Not all participants have been through awareness training at the CVRD. • All participants recognized the personal and collective benefits to learning more about Indigenous Peoples, their perspectives and reconciliation. • Interest in developing new relationships with Indigenous People(s) where they have not yet been developed. • General agreement among participants that knowing more about Indigenous Peoples and reconciliation would be valuable for their own roles in the organization, and for their team members. • Education and learning at the CVRD is a priority.



Subject Matter	General Summary of Inputs and Perspectives
Opportunities to support learning at the CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A committee(s) with Indigenous and non-Indigenous representation. • Education and training that effectively describes the why and how with respect to reconciliation. • Interactive workshops for staff members. • Collaboration and joint awareness-building initiatives with local Indigenous Peoples that support relationship building and an understanding of local Indigenous values, perspectives and culture. • Incorporate aspects of education and learning into onboarding program for new employees. • Education and training opportunities should be made available to all staff including front-line employees, with encouragement to participate, so the CVRD is not just educating like-minded people.
Constraints to learning at the CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing awareness training with project work and service delivery. • Organizational capacity given breadth and complexity of current projects. • Individual capacity and challenges to take on more with information overload. • Differences in individual willingness to learn. • Voluntary nature of training participation. • Concerns about virtue signaling if learning and awareness building is not meaningful and sustained. • Ongoing pandemic and associated resourcing and communication challenges.
Ideal approaches to learning at the CVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential learning approaches (e.g., village sessions, interactive workshops, speakers, attending Indigenous events) were most desired by participants. • Strong support amongst participants for specific workshops / training sessions organized by the CVRD and more regular information sharing sessions in the workplace. • Generally low support amongst participants for self-directed learning resources provided by the CVRD.

4.6 Assessment Findings and Considerations for the CVRD

The Assessment findings suggest that:

- The CVRD has been making meaningful efforts to build relationships with Indigenous communities and groups in the spirit of reconciliation for quite some time, prior to the more recent emergence of reconciliation frameworks and relative to many other local governments.
- The CVRD and KFN have fostered a strong relationship through mutual listening and learning and meaningful efforts to engage and work together, which provide a strong foundation for a mutually beneficial government-to-government relationship.
- The CVRD's relationship with the We Wai Kai, Wei Wai Kum and Homalco First Nations is primarily at the project referrals level at this point in time.
- There may be other First Nation communities with territories that overlap with the CVRD – this should be explored further to confirm and plan accordingly.
- The CVRD's relationship with the Wachiy Friendship Centre has largely been focused on the provision of recreational programs and related support, save for more recent efforts to support housing. There may be opportunities to continue to expand this relationship to enable the CVRD to better understand and support the needs of urban dwelling Indigenous People in the Comox Valley.
- The CVRD's relationship building efforts to date have not included meaningful efforts to engage the local Métis community to understand their needs and interests. There may be relationship building opportunities with the Comox Valley MIKI'SIW Métis Association to better understand how the CVRD can support Métis residents.
- The more recent efforts undertaken by the CVRD and KFN with respect to relationship building and collective and shared learning support and advance the objectives in the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework.
- Future education and awareness building efforts at the CVRD should be available to all staff, including front-line workers, and include information on the UN Declaration and the TRC's Calls to Action, and the CVRD's own approach to reconciliation. A variety of approaches to learning should be employed to maximize learning and participation.

Key themes and considerations identified through engagement with CVRD staff include the following:

- **Strong level of awareness and buy-in at the managerial level:** The CVRD staff leadership team has a good level of awareness and understanding of Indigenous issues, relations and the benefits of these, and reconciliation, and generally recognizes the importance of this, which provides a strong foundation for building awareness throughout the organization.
- **Reconciliation is a commitment:** The CVRD staff leadership team recognizes that reconciliation is an ongoing commitment and reconciliation planning undertaken by the CVRD should be adaptable and evolving based on relationships and respective needs, opportunities and constraints.
- **Service provisions to support reconciliation:** The CVRD is keen on pursuing opportunities that support reconciliation through the provision of services and the development of other initiatives, when time and resources allow.
- **Learning and awareness building is a priority:** Learning and awareness building throughout the organization in terms of Indigenous Peoples and relationship building is important for reconciliation and to broaden perspectives and experiences of staff members, and outreach and education to build this at the CVRD is a priority. The UN Declaration and the TRC's Calls to Action are important guidance for reconciliation and should be a focus of ongoing and future learning and awareness building efforts in the organization. Opportunities to enhance information sharing about the CVRD's ongoing efforts in terms of Indigenous relations and reconciliation throughout the organization should also be considered.
- **Ongoing and effective approaches to learning and awareness building:** Learning and awareness building is a journey that requires ongoing and effective efforts (including interactive and experiential approaches to learning), as well as commitment in the organization, to be successful. While not all staff members may be interested in learning and awareness building, there may be aspects of awareness building that should be mandatory based on specific roles and the extent to which they must consider, consult or engage with Indigenous People, and to support the systemic changes needed to advance reconciliation.

- **Commitment to overcome challenges and constraints:** There are challenges and constraints to relationship building and reconciliation for the CVRD, including legislative and capacity constraints, which require an ongoing commitment to identify opportunities and solutions to overcome these and adapt over time.
- **Need for realistic timelines and meaningful actions:** Reciprocal relationships between Indigenous communities and groups and the CVRD require sufficient time to establish and build trust, and ongoing meaningful actions to grow.

These findings, themes and considerations have informed the recommendations for potential strategies and actions in [Section 5](#).



5. Recommendations for Strategies & Actions

The following recommendations have been categorized as foundational strategies, and potential mid- and long-terms strategies and actions.

5.1 Foundational Strategies

The following are foundational strategies that can support all three of the ‘action areas’ identified by the CVRD in the Indigenous Relations Framework (i.e., develop policy, strengthen relationships, and support learning). As foundational strategies, these should be considered in the shorter term to support relationships building for meaningful reconciliation in all three actions areas.

1. Use the Assessment Report to engage Indigenous communities and groups on the CVRD’s path to Reconciliation

We recommend that this Assessment Report is considered and framed as preliminary in nature, and serves as a starting point for discussions with Indigenous communities and groups about the CVRD’s reconciliation efforts. Discussions should include if and how Indigenous communities groups would like to be engaged by the CVRD moving forward with respect to reconciliation planning and implementation.

2. Consider establishing a Reconciliation Working Group or Advisory Committee

While it is important for the CVRD to take on initial planning work for reconciliation, it is equally important to include Indigenous communities and groups and their perspectives in decision-making processes related to reconciliation moving forward. We recommend that a Reconciliation Working Group or Advisory Committee with representation from the CVRD and Indigenous communities and groups is established, assuming there is support for this from all sides. The working group or committee can serve to provide input and advice on issues relating to reconciliation and matters that may impact Indigenous Peoples, and can signal a long-term commitment toward reconciliation. The

working group or committee may also serve to explore solutions to constraints or barriers to reconciliation. The establishment of a Reconciliation Working Group or Advisory Committee would also support the objectives of the CVRD’s Indigenous Relations Framework.

It is acknowledged that participation in such a group or committee will require resources from the CVRD, as well as from Indigenous communities and groups. The CVRD will need consider the current internal resources available to participate in a working group and or committee and where additional resources may be required to enable this, in light of the final role or mandate of the working group or committee. The CVRD will also need to consider the potential resources required by Indigenous communities and groups to meaningfully participate.

3. Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan

Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) are commonly developed by local governments and Indigenous communities in Australia, and they are increasingly on the radar as a useful tool to support Reconciliation by local governments in Canada. The RAP can be developed by or with the participation of the Reconciliation Working Group or Advisory Committee, enabling the direct involvement of Indigenous community and group representatives in the planning process. In doing so, the development of the plan enables a collaborative approach to reconciliation and can also serve to strengthen relationship building. This Assessment Report can serve as a starting point to the RAP – the potential strategies and actions identified in this Assessment Report can be validated, refined and/or built on and prioritized based on the needs, values, aspirations, perspectives and resource capacities of Indigenous communities and groups and the CVRD.



5.2 Potential Mid- and Long-term Strategies and Actions

Table 6 provides an overview of the potential strategies and actions that could be implemented in the mid- or long-term for each of the three action areas identified in the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework and associated rationale. The proposed strategies and actions have not been categorized as mid- or long-term at this point in time as it is expected this will be undertaken in the next iteration of planning through the development of the RAP (see [Section 5.1](#)).

Definitions for mid- and long-term will also need to be developed⁹, and these definitions should take into account realistic opportunities and constraints to implementation and any other considerations relevant to these timeframes.

It is also recognized that the implementation of the proposed strategies and actions, and any additional ones identified during the development of a RAP, may require additional resources at the CVRD, as well as the provision of resource supports to Indigenous communities and groups as needed for participation. While commentary on resource considerations have been provided for some of the proposed strategies and actions where especially relevant, it is assumed that all strategies and actions will need to be reviewed through this lens, with associated resource planning for successful implementation.

9. A common definition for mid-term is two to five years and a common definition for long-term is more than five years.

Table 6: Overview of the potential mid- and long-term strategies and actions.

Proposed Strategy / Action	Rational
Developing Policy	
<p>1. Undertake a review of existing bylaws, policies, processes and forms through the lens of reconciliation and intent of the UN Declaration, TRC's Calls to Action and the Declaration Act to identify where updates and changes are required to begin to address systemic colonialism and racism and advance reconciliation. This should include a review of any procurement policies. Review findings and discuss options for updates and changes with the Reconciliation Working Group / Advisory Committee (see Section 5.1).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This action is key to aligning the organization with the reconciliation framework established by the UN Declaration. • Supports Objective #6 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework. • Aligns with Articles 18 and 19 of UNDIRP.
<p>2. Invite local Indigenous community and group representatives to participate on a planning or steering committee for key planning processes at the CVRD, including the forthcoming Solid Waste Management Plan review and Regional Growth Strategy update, and any future updates to the Official Community Plan. Consider including local Indigenous languages in planning documents. Additional human and financial resources may be required at the CVRD to enable this, and the CVRD may need to support Indigenous communities and groups with resources to be able to meaningfully participate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides for meaningful and early Indigenous participation in planning processes. • Supports Objectives #6 and #7 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework. • Aligns with Articles 18, 19, 26 and 32 of the UN Declaration. • Meaningful Indigenous participation in the planning process may support several TRC Calls to Action.
<p>3. Establish planning working groups with local Indigenous representation for larger projects to provide input on design and opportunities to incorporate Indigenous culture and language. Additional human and financial resources may be required at the CVRD to enable this, and the CVRD may need to support Indigenous communities and groups with resources to be able to meaningfully participate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would enable an Indigenous lens on project planning and design and support Indigenous cultural revitalization. • Supports Objective #6 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework. • Supports the TRC's Calls to Action #14.
<p>4. Review existing hiring practices at the CVRD through the lens of equity, diversity and inclusion, and identify strategies to reduce barriers to employment for Indigenous People and eliminate the potential for systemic discrimination in hiring practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing hiring practices can contribute to addressing systemic discrimination, which is critical for reconciliation and decolonization. • Aligns with Article 2 of the UN Declaration.

Proposed Strategy / Action	Rational
<p>5. Develop a plan or policy to support Indigenous place making and visibly recognize Indigenous history and locations significant to local Indigenous People in the Comox Valley. This could include naming and renaming of regional spaces (parks, buildings, etc.) with consideration for local Indigenous language and interests (e.g., incorporation of traditional place names), and design guidelines or considerations for public spaces to be welcoming to Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous communities and groups should be engaged in the development of the plan or policy; this could be achieved through a planning working group with Indigenous representation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligns with Articles 13 and 15 of the UN Declaration. Supports the TRC's Calls to Action #14.
<p>6. Review existing CVRD plans, policies and communication materials to remove references to KFN as stakeholders and revise to acknowledge their position as rights holders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using appropriate terminology and acknowledging and honouring the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada is part of reconciliation.
Strengthening Relationships	
<p>7. Build the capacity of the CVRD to: bridge Indigenous policies, programs and relations across departments; explore new opportunities to partner with Indigenous communities and groups; identify where new relationship building efforts may be required; and to champion the implementation of strategies and actions to advance reconciliation. It is expected that dedicated resources focused on these efforts are required, along with the necessary administrative capacity to enable this. This may entail the creation of a new position at the CVRD (e.g., an Indigenous Relations Manager) or the reallocation of existing resources to support these efforts. This could also involve strategic partnerships with Indigenous communities and groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This would increase the capacity of the CVRD to build and strengthen existing and new relationships with Indigenous communities and groups, and to implement reconciliation strategies and actions. Supports Objective #2 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework. May support Objective #5 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework.
<p>8. Commit to hosting an Annual Reconciliation Forum with KFN and local government Councils and representatives from local Indigenous groups to: report on reconciliation progress and successes; discuss emerging issues or challenges and solutions; and provide opportunities for greater regional collaboration for reconciliation. Representatives from federal and provincial levels of government can also be invited to participate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will support continued strengthening of existing relationships among local governments and Indigenous communities and groups in the Comox Valley as well as regional coordination for reconciliation efforts. Supports Objective #7 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework.

Proposed Strategy / Action	Rational
<p>9. Engage KFN to develop a Joint Economic Development Strategy to align economic development priorities (where possible), identify potential opportunities that will result in shared benefits, and explore strategic directions and actions to capitalize on opportunities. This may include engagement with member municipalities and other economic development service providers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships for economic development can result in new opportunities that would otherwise not be available or possible, and important synergies for mutual benefits. • Supports Objective #2 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework. • Aligns with Articles 3 and 4 of the UN Declaration.
<p>10. Develop a Cultural Heritage Protection Protocol to set out how the CVRD will work with KFN to integrate the KFN Cultural Heritage Policy into CVRD practices, and to assess and manage potential impacts to KFN cultural heritage resources during land development process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CVRD has committed to further understanding ways in which the KFN policy can be integrated into CVRD policies and practices. • Aligns with Article 11 of the UN Declaration.
<p>11. Work with KFN and local Indigenous groups (e.g., the Wachiay Friendship Centre, Comox Valley MIKI'SIW Métis Association) to establish an Indigenous Youth Internship Program to create employment and mentorship opportunities for Indigenous People in the Comox Valley.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the development and success of Indigenous youth is important for advancing reconciliation and support Indigenous community health and well-being. • Programs like these support objective #2 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework. • Aligns with TRC Principle 5.
<p>12. Engage KFN and Comox Valley Schools (SD71) to arrange for CVRD staff to go to local schools and Indigenous youth groups to speak about their careers and experiences. This can provide a form of youth mentorship to expose them to and spark interest in different professions (e.g., planning, engineering, etc.), which in turn may support them on their own educational and career paths.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the development and success of Indigenous youth is important for advancing reconciliation and support Indigenous community health and well-being. • Aligns with TRC Principle 5.
<p>13. Redesign the CVRD logo to incorporate elements representative of the Indigenous Peoples living in the Comox Valley. This could be undertaken as a collaborative project between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists in the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.
Supporting Learning	
<p>14. Establish a special working group or committee to analyze the provincial Declaration Act and its applicability to CVRD practices, and to keep up to date with and report on associated legislative changes and emerging challenges.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important for the CVRD to be aware of emerging legislative changes associated with the implementation of the Declaration Act and associated implications on local governments.

Proposed Strategy / Action	Rational
<p>15. Commit to recognizing September 30th as a Day for Truth and Reconciliation and establishing the respective week as a Week of Reconciliation. Identify opportunities and Indigenous community and group partnerships for public activities and events aimed at supporting learning and awareness building, particularly with respect to the legacy of colonialism in Canada, the UN Declaration, and the TRC's Calls to Action. This can also include things like on-the-land excursions, speakers, storytelling, and opportunities to learn about local Indigenous regalia and cultural practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and awareness building throughout the Comox Valley is important to advance reconciliation in the community. • The CVRD has an opportunity to be a leader for the community on this journey. • Supports Objective #1 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework. • May support Objective #2 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework. • Supports the TRC's Call to Action #57. • Aligns with TRC Principle 10.
<p>16. Partner with KFN and Indigenous groups to develop a Reconciliation Toolkit that provides information on how staff and all community members can support reconciliation in their daily lives through personal actions and commitments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports Objective #2 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework. • Supports the TRC's Call to Action #57. • Aligns with TRC Principle 10.
<p>17. Host mandatory training and awareness building sessions for all staff and community leaders during the annual week of reconciliation. Training should be tailored to various roles (e.g., front line workers, managers, etc.), as needed and appropriate, but should focus on learning about the truth of colonialism and the residential school system and associated impacts on Indigenous Peoples in Canada, and how to support cultural safety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While it is recognized that mandatory training may be considered a 'top down' approach, it is important to expose all staff to these truths, regardless of their own interest, to advance reconciliation throughout the community and Canadian society. • Supports Objective #1 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework. • Supports the TRC's Call to Action #57. • Aligns with TRC Principle 10.
<p>18. Develop new employee orientation materials and information modules focused on information sharing, learning, and awareness building with respect to Indigenous Peoples, reconciliation, and the commitments and efforts of the CVRD to strengthen Indigenous relations and advance reconciliation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports Objective #1 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework. • Supports the TRC's Call to Action #57. • Aligns with TRC Principle 10.
<p>19. Develop a secure online repository or database to house information and resources important for and relevant to Indigenous relations and reconciliation (e.g., milestones tracking information, meeting minutes, information about Indigenous Peoples in the Comox Valley, etc.). This should be available to CVRD staff and elected officials and could also be made available to Indigenous communities and groups for mutual information sharing and learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would enable greater information sharing within the CVRD, across departments, and potentially with Indigenous communities and groups. • May support Objectives #2 and #3 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework.

Proposed Strategy / Action	Rational
<p>20. Organize a monthly speaker series for CVRD staff and elected leaders. This can provide an opportunity for Indigenous People in the community to share their stories and perspectives. This can also serve as a platform for CVRD staff to present new developments relevant to reconciliation (e.g., emerging legislative changes, etc.). Speakers from the provincial and federal governments can also be invited to speak about their own experiences with reconciliation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports Objectives #1 and #3 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework. • Supports the TRC's Call to Action #57. • Aligns with TRC Principle 10.
<p>21. Provide an Indigenous relations and reconciliation update at regularly scheduled staff meetings to support awareness in the organization with respect to the CVRD's relationships with Indigenous Peoples and associated efforts (including any legislative, policy and/or procedural changes).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports Objective #1 and #3 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework. • Supports the TRC's Call to Action #57.
<p>22. Encourage all employees to pursue self-directed and informal learning and awareness building by providing options for self-directed learning. The CVRD could also consider establishing a Continuing Education credit system with minimum requirements for annual learning efforts with respect to Indigenous Peoples and reconciliation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports Objective #1 of the CVRD's Indigenous Relations Framework. • Supports the TRC's Call to Action #57.
<p>23. Provide all employees involved in projects that involve ground disturbance with mandatory training on issues related to archaeological and cultural resource management (e.g., archaeological due diligence, chance find procedures, KFN's Cultural Heritage Policy). Explore opportunities to partner with KFN to develop and provide this training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will support the CVRD's efforts to integrate KFN's Cultural Heritage Policy into CVRD practices. • Aligns with Article 11 of the UN Declaration.
<p>24. Identify opportunities to involve local businesses and other service providers in the CVRD community in learning about Indigenous Peoples in the Comox Valley and reconciliation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning is a vital part of reconciliation for all members of the community, including businesses and other service providers.
<p>25. Identify opportunities (e.g., grants) for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists in the Comox Valley to develop collaborative projects (e.g., an Indigenous legacy commemoration project) that contribute to education and awareness building about Indigenous Peoples and the legacy of colonialism and the residential school system in Canada.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to beautify public space(s) while supporting Indigenous culture in public spaces and mutual learning among local artists. • Supports the TRC's Call to Action #80. • Aligns with TRC Principle 3.



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