

Indigenous Relations Framework (January 2020)

VISION

The Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) is committed to building its relationship with Indigenous peoples and advancing reconciliation. To support Indigenous relations as a strategic driver, the CVRD proposes adopting a framework to deliver core services with an Indigenous relations lens and promote greater cultural awareness.

OBJECTIVES

- To enhance the knowledge and understanding of Indigenous culture and history, including the modern day legacy of colonial history.
- To build capacity of all staff, elected officials and committee/advisory members to be engaged in collaborative work with Indigenous communities and peoples.
- To maintain ongoing staff to staff engagement and information sharing, seeking opportunities to collaborate and learn from each other.
- To explore and respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for engaging with First Nations peoples and advancing national and provincial objectives/commitments.
- To seek ways to maximize Indigenous engagement while minimizing demands on Indigenous peoples time and resources.
- To evaluate opportunities for Indigenous participation on Board, committee, commission and advisory bodies.
- To build strong and enduring relationships with First Nations governments and peoples.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Develop policy:

- Update and amend CVRD plans, policies, procedures and bylaws to reflect the Indigenous relations lens.
- Explore and respond to TRC's Calls to Action and UNDRIP framework
- Align projects with the CVRD Board's strategic priorities
- Integrate an Indigenous lens into CVRD program development and service delivery (including broad public engagement)

2. Strengthen relationships

- Release a statement of reconciliation to signal the organization's commitment to staff but also the larger community
- Explore new partnerships with KFN to support KFN in their pursuit of economic development opportunities and conservation efforts (i.e. servicing agreement for future treaty settlement lands, implementation agreements)
- Explore new opportunities to partner with First Nations outside of band and council (i.e. UBCM grant program in progress with Wachiay Friendship Centre or CVRD Water Treatment Project)

- Create physical spaces that celebrate Indigenous people's history and culture (e.g. installation of Indigenous artwork at new CVRD administrative building)
- Develop signage or educational materials for the inclusion of Indigenous history (e.g. Seal Bay Nature Park)
- Reach out to KFN early and often (e.g. CVRD/KFN engagement handbook)
- Build and enhance relationships and establish new partnerships with Indigenous peoples
- Engage with K'ómoks First Nations on how to incorporate an Indigenous lens and ongoing consultation at the CVRD
- Engage with First Nations of the Comox Strathcona Waste Management service area on projects of interest and in collaboration with other agencies
- Continue with monthly project updates with K'ómoks First Nation Chief and Council; CVRD projects/initiatives are all guided through this process
- Engage with other regional districts to share opportunities, learnings and best practices

3. Support learning

- Provide staff time for self-directed learning as well as professional development training opportunities such as articles (UNDRIP, TRC Executive Summary) webinars, and online learning
- Incorporate into CVRD practices, where appropriate, Provincial and Federal legislative updates relating to Indigenous peoples/reconciliation.
- Commit to co-hosting with KFN annual community-to-community forums to ensure ongoing dialogue and relationship building
- Identify champions to get the message out to the larger organization
- Provide Indigenous cultural training for staff and elected officials
- Dedicate at least one of the elected officials forums annually to Indigenous topics with participation of other relevant government agencies (i.e. Islands Trust, School Districts)
- Update the CVRD Board annually on progress and findings, including specific tasks undertaken and response to TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing the Indigenous relations framework is an ongoing effort that will evolve and respond to current events and future goals. Adequate resources must be considered for effective implementation, and will be addressed as programs are considered.

- Develop cultural competency¹ training program for staff and elected officials (e.g. material for new employees, resources for fieldwork, CVRD library, etc.)
- Establish interdepartmental working group and/or advisory committee to review projects and services that intersect First Nations interests and provide input on regional decision-making
- Establish the resources (in-house capacity and budget) to manage and support this initiative (e.g. meeting expenses, training, administrative fees and staff time).

¹ Cultural competency training is designed to enhance self-awareness and to strengthen the skills of those who work directly and indirectly with Indigenous peoples. The goal is to develop an understanding and promote positive relationships between service providers and Indigenous peoples.