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REPORT TO FIRST NATIONS RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2024

SUBJECT **First Nations Relations Operational Update**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To provide an update on recent initiatives supporting the Board's priority of advancing respectful relationships with First Nations.

BACKGROUND

Recent initiatives to support the Board Priority of respectful relationships with First Nations include the following.

Archaeology / Heritage Conservation

Staff are working closely with involved First Nations to collaborate on heritage management and protection as related to archaeological sites across all CRD works, to support projects such as the planning and construction of water main upgrades throughout the region and ecological restoration, planning, infrastructure improvements and routine maintenance in Regional Parks and Electoral Area Community Parks.

External Presentations

CRD staff are being asked to present externally regarding the CRD's approach to reconciliation and related learnings. On April 12, 2024 the General Manager, Corporate Services presented to Metro Vancouver's Indigenous Relations Committee. On April 25, 2024 the Manager, First Nations Relations will present to the Indigenous Zero Waste Technical Advisory Group (IZWTAG) Conference. On June 11, 2024 the Manager, First Nations Relations will deliver a workshop at the Local Government Management Association of British Columbia's Communication & Engagement Professionals Forum.

First Nations Implications in CRD Staff Reports

A new First Nations Implications Guidance Document has been drafted and shared with the Board, that is intended to assist staff in identifying and addressing First Nations implications related to project planning, implementation and staff reports. It provides overarching principles to promote positive relations with First Nations, provides guidance for incorporating a First Nations lens, offers examples of how First Nations' implications can be addressed in staff reports, and provides relevant resources. Training will be provided to staff to support use of this guidance document.

Forum of All Councils

Planning is underway for a 2024 Forum of All Councils, in the fall, to bring together elected leadership from local governments and First Nations in the region. An invitation will be circulated once the date and venue is confirmed.

Government-to-Government Relationship Building Initiative

Government-to-Government leadership-level meetings are ongoing with multiple Nations. The CRD signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Pacheedaht First Nation in

January 2024, and continues to negotiate MOUs with other interested First Nations.

Inclusive Regional Governance

An extension has been granted by the province to all recipients of the Inclusive Regional Governance Study Grant, with a final report now due December 31, 2024. The purpose of the grant is to gather feedback from Nations on potential challenges and opportunities of joining regional district boards, with a focus on working towards legislative changes that would enable this for Nations without a modern treaty. CRD staff are collaborating with local First Nations to facilitate the gathering of feedback on this topic.

Island Rail Corridor

Ongoing engagement with First Nations, the province, and other regional districts regarding the future of the Island Rail Corridor.

Parks & Protected Areas

Recent activities include a site visit with the T'Sou-ke Nation to discuss protected areas management and collaboration opportunities, facilitating ongoing discussions with First Nations regarding interim management guidelines and future uses of the Royal Oak property, and supporting ongoing discussions with First Nations regarding updates to the Regional Parks Land Acquisition Strategy. Staff are beginning to explore the logistics of collaborative training and patrol opportunities between CRD Regional Parks Rangers and Indigenous Guardians.

Solid Waste Management

Staff are continuing to negotiate with the W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership Council to identify collaborative opportunities for economic, employment and environmental protection initiatives associated with the operations and future build out of the Hartland Landfill. Discussions are underway with the paaʔčiidʔatx (Pacheedaht) First Nation regarding solid waste management in Port Renfrew.

South Island Indigenous Business Directory

Continuing to partner with the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, City of Victoria, the South Island Prosperity Partnership and the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce to update the South Island Indigenous Business Directory, a resource to support enhanced procurement from Indigenous businesses. Over 90 businesses are now included, and the website is being updated to enable more efficient searching of the directory.

Supporting CRD Projects & Initiatives

The First Nations Relations Division provides support, guidance and advice to other CRD Divisions regarding First Nations engagement and considerations for project delivery. Projects recently supported include the Bowker Creek Blueprint, Water Supply Area Master Plan, environmental monitoring in the Watershed, Canada Goose Regional Working Group, Mount Work Regional Park Management Plan, HWMET'UTSUM Community Park Interim Management Approach, Healthy Waters Initiative, Transportation Governance Initiative, Long-term Management of Biosolids, Juan de Fuca Land Use Planning, Port Renfrew water and wastewater infrastructure feasibility study, Regional Housing initiatives, and considerations related to the Regional Growth Strategy.

Training & Educational Opportunities

Indigenous Cultural Perspectives training is offered as a foundational training for all new staff, delivered by Indigenous Perspectives Society and First Nations Relations Division staff.

Archaeology Policy and Process, Heritage Site Conservation, and Archaeological Chance Find Management training are offered to staff involved in land altering works, by the Manager of Archaeology. Heritage Site Conservation and Chance Find Management trainings have also been offered to CRD contractors, volunteer CRD Commissioners and volunteers doing invasive species removal and maintaining mountain bike trails in Regional Parks.

Indigenous Relations Coaching was offered to CRD Board Directors in 2023 and into 2024, through Porttris Consulting Group. So far one Director has participated. Two Board Directors and many Commissioners participated in a November 2023 gathering on Pender Island to learn from W̱SANEĆ elders and cultural workers.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities, Existing Plans & Strategies

Recent initiatives to build strong relationships with First Nations across CRD governance, planning and operations initiatives help implement the Board priorities of hearing more from First Nations, collaborating to build and strengthen new processes for decision-making and service delivery, inviting and incorporating Indigenous leadership and knowledge into CRD works, and supporting shared prosperity through economic opportunities. The work of the First Nations Relations Division supports the ability of the CRD across all divisions to engage with First Nations on existing and emerging plans and strategies and to implement the CRD's Statement of Reconciliation.

First Nations Reconciliation

First Nations are seeking a more respectful, reciprocal government-to-government relationship with the CRD and a role in decision-making related to CRD service delivery in their traditional territories. Through the initiatives summarized above, CRD staff are exploring new approaches to working collaboratively with First Nations.

CONCLUSION

The recent initiatives highlighted in this report illustrate the variety of ways in which the CRD is operationalizing Board commitments to reconciliation. The work of the First Nations Relations Division, in collaboration with other CRD Divisions, supports the Board priority of advancing strong relationships with First Nations.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

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