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## REPORT TO FIRST NATIONS RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2023

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**SUBJECT**    **First Nations Relations Operational Update**

### **ISSUE SUMMARY**

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

### **BACKGROUND**

#### *Forum of All Councils*

On October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 the CRD will be hosting a Forum of All Councils to bring together First Nations' leadership with local government elected representatives to build relationships and explore ways to work together. This year's Forum's theme is Indigenous self-determination in the context of relationships with local governments. Guest speakers include KWAST-en-ayu (Maynard Harry) the former elected Chief of the Tla'amin Nation and Stewart Alsgard, former Mayor of Powell River, who will share their experience negotiating and implementing the Community Accord, an example of intergovernmental relationship building. Participants will also hear from local First Nations and will have the opportunity to witness and learn from the Lək'wəŋən Traditional Dancers. There will be opportunities for informal networking over breakfast and lunch. First Nations, Mayors and Councillors, and Electoral Area Directors are all invited and are requested to RSVP if they intend to participate.

#### *Indigenous Relations Coaching Program for Board Directors*

A consultant has been retained to offer optional, one-on-one coaching for Directors who would like support navigating difficult conversations or other aspects of First Nations relations. As directed by the CRD Board in September 2022, this coaching is part of broader Indigenous intercultural skills training to support CRD Directors in building positive, respectful and reciprocal relationships with First Nations participating in CRD Board committees and commissions as well as in direct government-to-government relationships.

Staff will circulate an invitation to Board Directors. Directors interested in the coaching will be asked to fill out a questionnaire to guide the consultant in tailoring the coaching to meet the learning objectives of each Director.

#### *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation*

September 30<sup>th</sup>, formerly known as Orange Shirt Day, is now the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. For the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row, the CRD is honoured to fly the Xe Xe Smun' Eem "Our Sacred Children" flag, loaned to the CRD by Eddy Charlie and Kristin Spray of Orange Shirt Day Victoria. The Xe Xe Smun' Eem flag will fly outside the Fisgard Street CRD office from September 26<sup>th</sup> to October 4<sup>th</sup>. The CRD will also have a Truth and Reconciliation Day display outside the Fisgard Street building and will put out a public statement about the ongoing legacy of harm done by the forceable removal of Indigenous children into Canada's residential schools. Panorama Recreation has sourced orange shirts for staff who would like to wear one during regular shifts on September 30<sup>th</sup> and October 2<sup>nd</sup>. All CRD staff will be encouraged to wear orange shirts on Friday September 29<sup>th</sup> and will be provided resources to reflect on the importance of the day.

This September, Panorama Recreation is partnering with the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, The Art of Reconciliation and Indigenous artist Dahlila Charlie to host a community mosaic project inspired by Orange Shirt Day and National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. The resulting art piece will be celebrated and unveiled at an event on September 26<sup>th</sup>. In addition, the CRD has provided sponsorship to the South Island Powwow and the annual Orange Shirt Day Wrap feature in Black Press newspapers.

#### *Government-to-Government Relationship Building Initiative*

A letter from Chair Plant sent on April 21, 2023 invited First Nations to engage with the CRD to co-create mechanisms that support long-term, respectful, reciprocal engagement at both the leadership and operational levels. Through focused dialogue, we hope to learn how to work collaboratively and strengthen our government-to-government relationship with First Nations. An offer of up to \$25,000 in capacity funding to support this initiative has been offered to BOKEĆEN (Pauquachin) First Nation, P'a:chi:da?aht (Pacheedaht) First Nation, SĀAUTW (Tsawout) First Nation, Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay) First Nation, Songhees Nation, T'Sou-ke Nation, x<sup>w</sup>sepsəm (Esquimalt Nation), and WJOŁEŁP (Tsartlip) and WSIKEM (Tseycum) First Nations through the WSÁNEĆ Leadership Council.

To date, staff and the Board Chair have met with the leadership from two Nations, have a date scheduled to meet with one more, and are in the process of scheduling with other First Nations. Operationally there are numerous points of contact between the CRD and each Nation, and feedback from the Nations is that capacity funding is a critical aspect of enabling their engagement with the CRD.

#### *Inclusive Regional Governance Study Grant*

The province has committed to support inclusive regional governance by advancing First Nations participation on regional district boards in the implementation Action Plan that supports the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. As shared with the Board for information in May 2023, the CRD has received a \$60,000 grant from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to support engagement with First Nations to build a stronger understanding of key themes and interests, questions, and barriers that will need to be explored in the development of legislation to enable First Nations to have full voting representation on regional district board.

Implementation of the Inclusive Regional Governance Study Grant is underway. Staff are retaining a consultant to support First Nations engagement on this initiative in a coordinated manner in conjunction with the Government-to-Government Relationship Building Initiative. Staff are preparing a backgrounder summarizing the specific questions being posed by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs around regional district structure and governance, which will be used to frame the discussions. We are offering Nations \$5,000 of capacity funding to support their participation on this initiative. Interests related to participation on the regional district Board are already being compiled; feedback is heard frequently from First Nations in government-to-government meetings as well as engagement on topics related to specific service delivery.

#### *South Island Indigenous Business Directory*

CRD worked with regional partners to develop and launch a new Indigenous business directory to support Indigenous economic reconciliation by building new relationships and connections. The South Island Indigenous Business Directory provides new opportunities for relationships, growth

and partnership between community members and the many Indigenous-owned businesses across the region.

From graphic design, art and web design to engineering, project management and catering, the directory features more than 50 Indigenous businesses, making it easy for users to find and connect with a wide range of Indigenous-operated services in Greater Victoria. Indigenous businesses and organizations are encouraged to register for the directory, which will continue to grow over time.

The directory was developed in partnership with the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, the South Island Prosperity Partnership, the City of Victoria, the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce, Animikii and the Capital Regional District. For more information about the South Island Indigenous Business Directory, visit [indigenousbusinessdirectoryvi.com](https://indigenousbusinessdirectoryvi.com).

The launch event at the Songhees Wellness Center on June 7, 2023 brought together Indigenous businesses with representatives from local governments and the wider business community.

Staff will continue to work with partners to maintain and update the directory.

#### *Indigenous Intercultural Skills Training for Board Directors*

On May 31, 2023, 24 Board Directors and Alternate Directors participated in a 3-hour Indigenous intercultural skills training, hosted by Indigenous Perspectives Society (IPS). IPS Executive Director Rachelle Dallaire and Songhees Elder Butch Dick generously spoke about their own experiences and led the interactive workshop, sharing Indigenous cultural perspectives and approaches to building relationships with Indigenous communities.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

#### *Alignment with Board Priorities, Existing Plans & Strategies*

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. By providing an accessible location for anyone doing procurement to find local Indigenous businesses, the South Island Indigenous Business Directory supports the Board Priority to enhance economic opportunities in partnership with First Nations.

#### *First Nations Reconciliation & Intergovernmental Implications*

Principles of engagement, mechanisms for engagement and relationships strengthened through the government-to-government initiative, inclusive governance study grant and Forum of All Councils will help facilitate respectful intergovernmental engagement with First Nations. Participation in intercultural skills training and coaching for CRD Board Directors demonstrates a commitment to ongoing learning that is critical component to building government-to-government relationships. Recognizing that truth must come before reconciliation, publicly acknowledging and honouring the intergenerational trauma and ongoing legacy of Canada's residential schools is a core component of marking the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

### **CONCLUSION**

Recent and ongoing initiatives of the First Nations Relations Division include the Government-to-Government Relationship Building Initiative, the Inclusive Regional Governance Study Grant, Indigenous Intercultural Skills Training for Board Directors and the launch of the South Island

Indigenous Business Directory. Upcoming initiatives include the Forum of All Councils, Indigenous Relations Coaching for Board Directors and marking the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The work of the First Nations Relations Division 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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