

REPORT TO GOVERNANCE AND FIRST NATIONS RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2025

SUBJECT **CRD Support for Sc'ianew First Nation to Host Tribal Journeys**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To provide a summary of the Tribal Journeys event hosted by SC'IANEW First Nation at East Sooke Regional Park on July 30, 2025 and the CRD support for this event.

BACKGROUND

On February 24, 2025 the CRD was contacted by a representative of SC'IANEW First Nation's Canoe Family, which organizes the annual Tribal Journeys event for the Nation, to ask about using Aylard Farm at East Sooke Regional Park for a stop along the route.

CRD Regional Parks and First Nations Relations staff met with SC'IANEW event organizers (Canoe Family skippers, community members and elected leadership) to better understand the request, and then to collaborate on event planning and logistics. Given that East Sooke Regional Park is shared territory with T'Sou-ke Nation, staff also reached out to T'Sou-ke Nation, who expressed their full support for this event.

Tribal Journeys is a significant cultural event involving several First Nations across British Columbia and the US. This year Lower Elwha Tribe in Washington state was the final host for the event and SC'IANEW First Nation hosted the last stop on Vancouver Island before crossing the Strait of Juan de Fuca to conclude the Journey. On July 30th, canoe families from the west coast and east coast of Vancouver Island converged at Aylard Farm and were welcomed by SC'IANEW First Nation. The presentation attached as Appendix A provides some visuals from the day.

18 traditional canoes landed at East Sooke Regional Park, having travelled that day from T'Sou-ke Nation to the west, where they were hosted by T'Sou-ke Nation, and Fort Rodd Hill to the east, where they were hosted by x^wsepsum (Kosapsum) Nation. Each canoe, with on average 16-18 paddlers representing that canoe family, were welcomed ashore by SC'IANEW First Nation Chief Russ Chipps. The public was invited to witness. Over 750 people attended, including paddlers, canoe family support teams and members of the public.

Canoe families from First Nations on the west and east coast of Vancouver Island were then hosted at a cultural protocol event at the SC'IANEW longhouse, with dinner and cultural sharing from each canoe family and the host Nation. Key CRD staff organizers and Directors were invited to join this private event.

In the lead up and during this event, SC'IANEW staff and leadership have consistently recognized and appreciated the way that CRD responded to the request for support. Being invited into the longhouse to witness cultural sharing is a real honour, and a tangible recognition of the appreciation for the role of the CRD in this culturally significant gathering.

CRD involvement was led by Regional Parks with support from First Nations Relations. CRD support included the following:

- Participating in planning and organizing meetings with SC'IANEW representatives and supporting with overall coordination.
- Temporarily removing fencing and building a ramp so elders could access the beach and so that the large canoes could be carried up off the beach for overnight storage.
- Working closely with SC'IANEW to prepare and implement plans for parking, traffic control, overnight security, and public communications including on-site signage and day-of public relations.
- Providing extra garbage cans and a dumpster to remove the waste.
- Providing tents and additional picnic tables for elders, paddlers, and first aid.
- Pumping out pit toilets prior to event.
- Reserving parking areas for emergency vehicles, elders, and canoe family support vehicles.
- Providing a water truck and hydration station for potable water, and a water truck for fire suppression.
- Renting and setting up AV equipment to be used for welcoming the canoe families.
- Photography of the event and sharing these photos with the Nation afterwards.
- Clean-up after the event, as the SC'IANEW organizers were paddling across the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

The CRD Board Chair and Vice-Chair attended the event, along with the CRD CAO, Acting General Manager of Parks Recreation and Environmental Services, and staff from Regional Parks and First Nations Relations. Witnessing the arrival of the canoes, the cultural protocol for welcoming the canoe families, and the cultural sharing in the longhouse was an opportunity for staff and Directors to learn about SC'IANEW culture as well as the broader significance of Tribal Journeys in supporting culture and cultural revitalization for Nations from across the region and beyond.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Board Priorities & Existing Strategies

CRD involvement in the Tribal Journeys event at East Sooke Regional Park was in response to a direct request from a First Nation for support, which aligns with Board Priority 4a, to hear from First Nation governments as to how they would like the CRD to approach reconciliation. This event is also aligned with Board Priority 4b and 4c, by collaborating with First Nations on new approaches to service delivery that uplift Indigenous self-determination and incorporating Indigenous leadership to enhance initiatives. This collaboration also aligns with the reconciliation-related objectives of the Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan.

Financial Implications

The cost of renting AV equipment and providing a dumpster was covered within the annual Regional Parks operating budget. All other CRD contributions were in-kind staff time, utilizing existing staff resources. There are no additional financial implications of this event.

First Nations Implications

First Nations in the region often say that parks don't feel culturally safe. SC'IANEW leadership reflected that the Tribal Journeys event was a good beginning for supporting community members to be visible and present in the park. When inviting paddlers to come ashore, SC'IANEW Chief Chipps spoke about the significance of doing ceremony on that beach for the first time in many,

many years.

Tribal Journeys is a culturally significant event that First Nations throughout the CRD region are involved in each year. Canoe families from other First Nations will have witnessed the support that CRD provided to SC'IANEW for this event. It is possible that other First Nations may request CRD involvement in future Tribal Journeys events or request other collaborative initiatives within Regional Parks. SC'IANEW has already informally raised the idea of hosting at Aylard Farm again next year.

Service Delivery Implications

East Sooke Regional Park remained open to the public for the duration of the event. CRD Regional Parks staff were on hand to answer questions and support with parking and traffic control and well as public safety throughout the event.

CONCLUSION

In response to a request from SC'IANEW First Nation, the CRD supported the Nation to welcome Canoe Families from west coast and east coast Vancouver Island First Nations at Aylard Farm in East Sooke Regional Park on July 30, 2025, as the penultimate stop of Tribal Journeys 2025.

RECOMMENDATION

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

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ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: A Visual Story: Tribal Journeys 2025