

Okanagan Indian Band forges ahead with a comprehensive community planning pilot project, including close relationships with local governments. **1**



Comox First Nation and the Comox Valley Economic Development Society collaborate on economic initiatives. **3**



The Northwest Tribal Treaty Nations are working closely with local governments. **4**



All over BC, MOUs and Protocols are establishing frameworks for good working relationships. **7**



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C2C connect

COMMUNITY to COMMUNITY

» Planning together in the North Okanagan

NORTH OKANAGAN > Located on seven reserves in the north Okanagan —between Kelowna, Vernon and Spallumcheen — the Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) is forging ahead with a comprehensive community planning pilot project predicated on close relationships with local governments.

Band Community Development Manager Bob Osborne has met all his counterparts in the region and is working closely with many of them.

The timing couldn't be better, Osborne explains. A booming real estate market and exploding suburban development puts tremendous pressure on planners from both groups. Growth must be sustainable now and into the future.

"The last few Band councils have taken shared planning very seriously," Osborne says. "We're working together to establish good working relationships in order to harmonize our approach to community planning."

"We're neighbours, after all," Osborne says.

Indeed. Both OKIB and Westbank First Nation (see article this issue) to the south have made collaborative liaison with local governments a priority. Good, two-way



Mt. McKenzie, proposed ski area near Revelstoke

communications helps each reach its planning objectives.

And, as Osborne explains, the OKIB have also applied and received Community to Community Forum funding to pursue formal government to government agreements with local governments in Revelstoke, District of Lake Country and Nakusp. The Community to Community Forum Program is jointly administered by the First Nations Summit and the Union of BC Municipalities and provides funding for meetings between elected officials from local governments and First Nations. For the OKIB, this process has already resulted in the signing of two agreements to date: one with Lumby and one with the District of Lake Country.

In 2002 the Band signed a similar agreement with the City

cont'd on next page

of Vernon. According to Osborne, the Band feels the good working relationship that has developed with the City is directly attributable to the signing of the 2002 agreement. Since then the two groups have signed a series of protocol agreements to foster community economic development. Each year Vernon and OKIB hold two special council to council meetings to discuss these agreements and



Chief Alexis signs Protocol Agreement with Mayor Simpson of Lumby; looking over plans for ski area proposal at Mt. McKenzie

planning matters of common interest.

Consider the Protocol with Lumby. As Robert Osborne explains, "it formalizes mutual objectives that include: effective, efficient communications, economic development, planning, regional growth, protection of cultural resources and archaeology, environmental stewardship and long-term sustainability."

And while the Protocol with the District of Lake Country sets out many of the same objectives, it also calls for the development of a new plan to assess, identify and map sensitive heritage sites within District boundaries. That's why planners from OKIB and District of Lake Country meet regularly to carefully review new development proposals, determining their short and long-term effects.

Reference to collaboratively establishing an action plan to address cultural resources is not often found in formal government to government agreements, and signals a real commitment from both parties to work together on what can be a difficult issue. Osborne gives credit to the new Lake Country Mayor, James Baker. A former anthropology professor, Mayor Baker is intent on charting a progressive course.

"Our lines of communication are open and active," notes Mayor Baker. "Anything we do in our planning, we make sure the Band knows about it first. It is my position that the Band be consulted right away. Then, we can work together on projects. This policy is very important to me," he explains.

Both groups have also instituted quarterly planning meetings. In a series of relaxed, informal sessions, OKIB

leaders can set out concerns while taking advantage of early planning processes, if they choose. If OKIB decides to approve a particular project it may work with the District to access services and roads on its own lands.

This makes good sense, explains Osborne. "Many of the proposed developments border reserve lands so it is

important to work together to resolve any difficulties that may arise."

The two groups will also develop and implement a new strategy to protect local fish and aquatic resources. In another related initiative, the OKIB and Lake Country are in the process of sharing digital planning information so that comprehensive mapping can be developed and lead to a more harmonized approach, saving time and money.

This digitized information will provide the raw data needed to develop a sub-regional growth strategy wherein all neighbouring jurisdictions will work together to plan the future of the North Okanagan. These and related planning efforts are designed to preserve and protect one of the most spectacular land and aquatic ecosystems in the world.

Other initiatives in the region are also ongoing. To the north, near Revelstoke, a major ski resort has been proposed. Osborne says OKIB is reviewing the proposal very carefully.

"With regard to the ski proposal, OKIB, the Revelstoke Community Forest Corp (RCFC) and the Ministry of Forests and Range are working cooperatively to ensure our concerns are addressed in the RCFC's Forest Stewardship Plan, which is the new planning tool for major forestry tenure holders under the Forest and Range Practices Act," Osborne explains. And in Nakusp, a backcountry recreation proposal is being reviewed carefully using the same criteria.

Meanwhile the Band itself operates a cultural camp near its reserve located on Upper Arrow Lake just southwest of Nakusp.

Effective collaborative planning is needed for all of these initiatives, and helps to preserve and protect the quality of life for all residents in the region.

Partnering on Economic Development in the Comox Valley

COMOX VALLEY > In the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island, two neighbours have rolled up their sleeves to collaborate on a series of economic development initiatives to benefit the regional economy and attract overseas investors.

The Comox First Nation and the Comox Valley Economic Development Society (CVEDS) — a non-profit society with funding from the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland, and the Comox Strathcona Regional District Areas A, B, C, and K — formalized this shared vision last year in a comprehensive Strategic Objectives and Implementation Plan.

One of first initiatives to reach fruition is collaboration on the “Comox Valley Heritage Experience” — a historic driving tour of the Comox Valley that shares information with visitors through well-placed signage, maps and directions. The tour starts at the I-Hos Gallery on the reserve and ends up at the First Nation’s Puntledge Campground and Interpretive Centre. Tours are scheduled to start later this spring.

Melinda Knox, Manager for the Comox First Nation, pays tribute to John Watson, Comox Economic Development Officer, for encouraging the First Nation to join the Comox Valley Heritage Experience. “I can still remember the day Melinda and I first talked on the phone,” Watson recalls. “There was no cultural dissonance at all. Right from the start, we got along very well. The heritage experience seemed a natural project for us to share.”

“Since then, the CVEDS and the First Nation have been working together to identify new business opportunities for local and foreign investment in the region,” Watson says.

Two years ago, the Comox First Nation applied to the Community Investment Support Program for funding to carry out research and business cases for specific opportunities that have been identified for the region.

While the next steps outlined in the Strategic Objectives and Implementation Plan are still a work in progress, other long-term collaborations include a proposed resort hotel with a conference centre, golf course and spa, a new marina and a botanical garden.

By working together, the First Nation and the CVEDS hope to attract investors by developing a comprehensive regional profile and backgrounder on economic opportunities in this fast-growing part of Vancouver Island.

The First Nation already has many successful initiatives off the ground and running, including a successful shellfish business, art gallery, cultural centre and a trailer park. Recently, they were

awarded two woodlots, and last year they opened a 43-site campground, bringing with it a replica of one of the area’s original totem poles.

The totem arrived from the Royal BC Museum in Victoria and has since been given pride of place in the Nim Nim Interpretive Centre. The Centre also features aboriginal art displays, and archival photographs of the area.

“We’re now sharing our culture with people from Germany, Asia and all over the world,” Knox says. “Of course people can also just visit the Interpretive Centre by itself but I’m confident the entire Comox Valley will benefit.”

“Our vision is to create new businesses in tourism, forestry, botanical forest products, marine and resort development. We need economic ventures that will bring us self-sufficiency now and in the future,” Knox says. Knox believes these new economic opportunities will directly benefit the First Nation as well as its non-aboriginal neighbours and business. They also hope to attract international tourists and investors.

“We both need each other’s support,” explains Knox. “By working closely with the CVEDS, we can share resources, save time and save money. Stay tuned. There’s more, much more, to come.”



One of the area’s first collaborative initiatives was to include the region’s rich First Nations history in the “Comox Valley Heritage Experience,” a historic driving tour of the Comox Valley

“I can still remember the day Melinda and I first talked on the phone... there was no cultural dissonance at all... The heritage experience seemed a natural project for us to share.”

*John Watson,
Comox Economic Development Officer*

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: ihosgallery.com**

Regional Associations **Come Together** in Northwest BC

In a province such as BC where the urban-rural divide amounts to a giant chasm, collective organizations are an important mechanism for ensuring the concerns of northern or remote communities are heard.

Two groups — one representing the collective voice of local governments and the other many First Nations in Northern BC — are recognizing the importance of working together in an effort to shape the region's economic development and lobby for and promote significant projects and investment in the area.

The Northwest Tribal Treaty Nations (NWTN) comprises First Nations from across northern British Columbia, from Haida Gwaii to the west, to past Prince George in the east and as far as Dease Lake in the north - similar territory to that of the North Central Municipal Association (NCMA).

The NCMA is an organization that advocates at the provincial and federal level on behalf of municipalities and regional districts in the largely rural north. It is an effective vehicle for building support for regional economic development initiatives and addressing issues affecting northern communities.

The resource based economy in the northern half of the province continues to diversify as industry turns its eye northward in terms of mineral exploration, port development and new forestry opportunities for aboriginal groups. As this occurs, the coming together of First Nations communities and local governments will prove critical to ensuring that all northerners can prosper from increased economic growth in the area.

Signing a Protocol Agreement

The two groups made their willingness to work together official in May of 2003 by signing a Protocol Agreement. The Protocol Agreement commits the parties to meeting twice yearly to ensure that each association is aware of the work of the other and to identify issues of mutual concern.

"At the NWTN we felt that one of the ways to assist the development of the First Nations community was to establish more formal lines of communication with, in this case, municipalities," says Gerald Wesley, one of three Executive Chairs for the organization. "We realized that they too were looking at similar initiatives and desires surrounding issues with local government and First Nations."

Former Skeena MLA Roger Harris says the signing of the Protocol between the two groups was an important step toward broader economic prosperity in the area.

"We realized that they too were looking at similar initiatives and desires surrounding issues with local government and First Nations."

**- Gerald Wesley, Executive Chair,
Northwest Tribal Treaty Nations**

Hosting Joint Region-wide Economic Development Forums

In 2004, the NWTN and the NCMA took the partnership to the next level. The NWTN applied for funding through UBCM's Community to Community Forum Program (which supports local meetings between local governments and First Nations) and other avenues to host two sessions on creating partnerships to realize northern economic opportunities. These sessions were the first time aboriginals and non-aboriginals in the region came together to jointly discuss economic development in the north. A follow-up conference on attracting and accessing investment capital in northern BC was also held.

These sessions were part of a large multi-year economic strategy project being undertaken by the NWTN to plan and develop an integrated and coordinated approach to northern economic development for member First Nations. One of the key objectives of the project was to facilitate working relationships with all levels of government, including municipalities, and to develop mechanisms that would enable First Nations, business and local government leaders to work more effectively together in achieving economic results. The project was successful in meeting this objective — not only did it provide an important networking opportunity for key stakeholders, but it also laid the foundation for individual local government-First Nation relationships to take root and flourish.

Some specific conclusions that emerged through the sessions and follow-up conference were:

- > considerable work, effort and goodwill is needed to create mechanisms for economic growth in the north;
- > trust among the parties is required to help each other;
- > collaboration and an agreed upon vision or objective for the north is essential;



Pictures from Regional Economic Development Forum in Prince George: Sophie Pierre, Tsimshian Xpitsuundt Dancers, Chief Steve Wilson

- > formal mechanisms to truly work together and build the economy of the north need to be developed; and
- > seeking solutions proactively and collaboratively at the regional level is better than waiting for senior levels of government to take the lead.

Exploring New Opportunities

It was also recognized that positive relationships and a common vision for moving forward creates confidence in outside investors. As Roger Harris notes, “by working together, local governments and First Nations gain the ability to market themselves more effectively to new industries and new investments that could benefit everyone.”

Terrace City Councillor Carol Leclerc echoes this sentiment. “If you have an opportunity to work together with First Nations you have certainty for industry that wants to develop in the northwest. Certainty is probably the biggest issue — it will give you long-term stability.” Leclerc continued, “if we have agreements to work together that means also that First Nations people have employment opportunities,” adding that means economic spin-offs for other communities in the region.

New developments for some northern First Nations communities are evidence of the growing working relationship between aboriginal groups, industry and other levels of government in the area of economic development.

In 2004, the Kitselas and Kitsumkalum bands — both NWTN members — signed an agreement with the provincial government, which entitles them to \$2.79 million over five years from forestry revenues. More importantly, it has enabled the creation of First Nations-owned forestry companies such as Kalum Ventures, a company wholly owned by the Kitsumkalum band. The

company works closely with subcontractors from Terrace and other towns in the region, creating an economic spin-off in the greater community.

Tourism is also another industry where aboriginal and non-aboriginal groups are recognizing potential for economic development. In Prince Rupert the growing cruise ship market is presenting business opportunities across the board. Both First Nations groups and private enterprises are benefiting from the potential that this industry presents.

Terrace City Council is also encouraged by plans presented by the Terrace Nisga’a Society to create a First Nations tourism centre based in Terrace. The centre would highlight cultural sightseeing opportunities and link visitors with First Nations-based activities and opportunities throughout the region. While it remains a vision for the future, it is an example of the possibilities that can be achieved when striving for a common goal.

Next Steps

Gerald Wesley notes that the relationship between the NWTN and the NCMA has come a long way since the Protocol signing in 2003. “I think that the Protocol accomplished what we wanted it to do as an initial step. NWTN and NCMA recognize that more can be done and we are looking at identifying more significant issues common among us.”

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: ncma.enorthernbc.com**

From Dialogue to Collaboration in the Central Okanagan

WESTBANK >The Westbank First Nation (WFN) and the Regional District of Central Okanagan have built a successful relationship and developed a collaborative approach to land use and community planning.

The Westbank First Nation, situated along the shores of Okanagan Lake in the beautiful Okanagan Valley of British Columbia's Southern Interior, is in one of the fastest growing areas of the province. A First Nation of 650 members, Westbank has a strong economy, with significant commercial and business developments on its lands, including more than 100 businesses, as well as a thriving forestry development.

Initiatives on the Go

WFN has worked closely with the regional district in an important series of collaborations. These collaborations have furthered economic development in the entire region, both on and off reserve lands, and resulted in a great degree of integration between Westbank's land and the surrounding communities.

Currently, the WFN and the regional district have two protocol agreements: a general protocol regarding their working relationship and a second regarding economic development.

“Do not make assumptions. And don't be afraid to pick up the phone”

- Jim Montain, WFN Administrator and Director of Operations

There are also two servicing agreements between the parties: one for sewer and one for general municipal services. Both agreements are nearing the end of their 15-year term. The municipal services agreement addresses all municipal services except sewer, water and fire. WFN had a service agreement with the Westside Fire Improvement

District, which has recently been assumed by the regional district. As a result, the fire agreement is now between the WFN and the regional district.

In past years, both parties have worked jointly on sewer trunk lines (pursuant to the sewer agreement), securing grant money from provincial and federal governments to help finance the capital costs both on and off WFN lands. By working collaboratively, WFN and the regional district were able to secure \$3.5 million in grants towards a project with capital costs totaling \$5.3 million — a testament to the degree of cooperation between the two parties.

Several years ago, WFN added the “Gallagher Canyon Lands” to their Indian Reserve lands. WFN worked with the

City of Kelowna, the regional district and two water suppliers to develop a comprehensive agreement concerning the future use of those lands. Reaching this level of agreement and understanding prior to reserve status being granted is a great accomplishment in itself.

Another initiative for which WFN is seeking regional district support is the creation of a cultural centre. The idea behind the centre is to promote and display First Nation artifacts and history. The proposal is in its early stages but the regional district has undertaken to work with the WFN on this new and exciting venture.

Influence of Westbank Self-Government

Pivotal to Westbank's success has been assuming jurisdiction over areas such as land management, resources, language and culture through the Westbank First Nation Self-Government Agreement signed in October 2003 and enacted on April 1, 2005 through Order-in-Council.

The enactment of the Self-Government Agreement is a milestone for the community, following more than a decade of community consultation and negotiations with the federal government. The First Nation is now fully bound by the provisions of the Agreement and the WFN Constitution as developed by the community.

Jim Montain, WFN Administrator and Director of Operations, notes that “under the Self-Government Agreement, the people of the Westbank First Nation now have the ability to control their own destiny.” Montain also notes that self-government has been instrumental in fostering and promoting relationship building on a government to government basis with the regional district.

Today, communications between WFN Council and RD Directors are positive and ongoing with the parties meeting quarterly to address matters of mutual concern. “This is a healthy, respectful two-way relationship,” Montain says. “We're convinced that the regional district respects our culture and way of life.”

Montain offers some useful advice for planners and officials, aboriginal and non-aboriginal. “The best thing that can happen is for people to meet, sit down and talk about issues,” he explains. “Do not make assumptions. And don't be afraid to pick up the phone.”

**connect : wfn.ca
: regionaldistrict.com**

Local Governments and First Nations Continue to Sign Formal Government to Government Agreements

As relationships between local governments and First Nations throughout BC continue to evolve and develop, more of them are turning to formal government to government agreements to establish the framework for their working relationship.

In February of 2005, UBCM and the Lower Mainland Treaty Advisory Committee produced a compendium of agreements between local governments and First Nations. One year later, the number of agreements continues to grow. The sidebar on the right highlights 11 agreements signed within the last year.

“Both parties bring much to the table and the joint commitment to work together will allow both of the communities to move forward together in areas where it might not be possible to do so otherwise.”

- Chief Wesley of the Snuneymuxw First Nation on the Nanaimo/Snuneymuxw Protocol Signing

All of the agreements are primarily political in nature. They do not represent legal contracts such as servicing agreements, but rather a commitment from the parties to further build relations and establish semi-formal or formal lines of communication.

While the majority of agreements focus primarily on opening up the lines of communication, some agreements, like the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the Garden City Lands, define an action plan on a specific area of mutual interest or concern.

There are a number of elements common to formal government to government agreements. Most articulate the objective for initiating dialogue, dispute resolution mechanisms, and renewal terms and processes. Three other important questions that are often addressed in formal government to government agreements are:

- > Where are our areas of mutual interest?
- > How do we intend to communicate?
- > How do we intend to achieve our objectives?

Where are our areas of mutual interest?

Many agreements list a number of areas of mutual interest that the parties wish to explore over the coming months and years, such as: economic development, servicing, planning, cultural and heritage protection, capacity building, and parks and recreation.

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» Who is Signing Protocols & MOUs?

- » **Memorandum of Understanding and Protocol Agreement, Yale First Nation and the Fraser Valley Regional District, Jan 24, 2006**
- » **Memorandum of Understanding, City of Williams Lake and the Xats'ull First Nation, Jul 14, 2005**
- » **Memorandum of Understanding and Protocol Agreement, In-SHUCK-ch Nation and the Fraser Valley Regional District, Jun 15, 2005**
- » **Memorandum of Understanding, City of Nanaimo and Snuneymuxw First Nation, Apr 20, 2005**
- » **Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Garden City Property, Musqueam Indian Band, City of Richmond, Canada Lands Company CLC Limited, Mar 18, 2005**
- » **Protocol Agreement Respecting a Local Government to Government Working Relationship, Okanagan Indian Band and the District of Lake Country, Nov 29, 2005**
- » **Memorandum of Understanding, Ktunaxa Nation and Kootenay Region Local Governments, Nov 4, 2005**
- » **Protocol Agreement, City of Nanaimo and Snuneymuxw First Nation, Oct 15, 2005**
- » **Protocol Agreement Respecting a Local Government to Government Working Relationship, Okanagan Indian Band and the Village of Lumby, Oct 3, 2005**
- » **Protocol Agreement, City of Williams Lake and the Cariboo Tribal Council Treaty Society, Sept 20, 2005**
- » **Protocol on Intergovernmental Relations, Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District and Huu-ay-aht First Nations, Toquaht First Nation, Uchucklesaht Tribe and Ucluelet First Nation, Feb 15, 2005**

Pictured at top:

MOU Signing, Ktunaxa Nation and Kootenay Region Local Governments, November 4, 2005

How will we communicate?

Most of the agreements listed above, at a very minimum, set a framework for communication, including a set of principles that will guide their working relationship. These principles often include mutual recognition and respect for each party's mandate, policies and jurisdictions, as well as acknowledgement that good relations between neighbours are required for all citizens to benefit. Other agreements also list how often the parties will meet and who will be the primary staff and political contact for this interaction.

How will we meet our objectives and where do we go from here?

A common mechanism to address implementation is the establishment of a joint working group to further the objectives and intent of the original agreement. This was the approach utilized by the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District and Maa-nulth First Nations in their Protocol on Intergovernmental Relations.

Another implementation option is to establish a second, more detailed agreement to define and set out a process on how the objectives of the original agreement will be met. The Protocol between the City of Nanaimo and Snuneymuxw First Nation is exactly this type of agreement – it represents the implementation component of an MOU signed by the parties in April 2005. As such, it is one of the more detailed agreements listed. Not only does

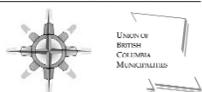
it set out who will be on the joint working group, but it also identifies what specific actions will be pursued to move discussions on planning, servicing and economic development forward.

A different mechanism for implementation is found in the Okanagan First Nation and District of Lake Country Protocol Agreement. This Agreement calls for the development of a Terms of Reference within eight months of signing, to define in greater detail how the objectives will be met. This agreement also commits the parties to developing action plans on areas of most significance to them. Other unique aspects to all of the Okanagan agreements are the inclusion of a media contact policy and clauses on public statements.

UBCM is developing a comprehensive collection of these types of agreements online. If you have recently signed an agreement with a neighbouring local government or First Nation, please forward it to Joanne Gauci at the UBCM office (jgauci@civicnet.bc.ca).

All of the agreements listed in the sidebar of this article are available on the UBCM website: www.civicnet.bc.ca (see Featured Policy Topics/Relationship Building and Dispute Resolution).

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Your comments and story ideas are critical to our success.

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Greater Vancouver Regional District Endorses Comprehensive Strategy

VANCOUVER > The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) is engaged in a proactive approach to building relations with First Nations. The Regional District Board endorsed a comprehensive First Nations Strategy in September 2005 which has five main objectives:

- > developing better relationships with First Nations through offering ambassador, liaison committee and Community to Community Forum initiatives to selected First Nations as pilot projects;
- > developing better informational exchanges with other governments through the pursuit of sub-regional and regional MP/MLA/GVRD caucuses and regular briefing sessions at the Ministerial and Deputy Ministerial levels;
- > developing communications materials to

assist in creating a better understanding of GVRD interests by First Nations, other governments, and the broader community where appropriate;

- > continuing efforts to reach pragmatic solutions to specific aboriginal-related GVRD issues; and
- > emphasizing the importance of a global servicing approach.



The GVRD also recently formed an Aboriginal Relations Committee, which is a standing committee of the GVRD Board and will be the primary vehicle for providing advice to the GVRD, Greater Vancouver Sewerage and Drainage District, and the Greater Vancouver Water District Boards on aboriginal issues.

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