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Co-published by the First Nations Summit and the Union of BC Municipalities, C2C Connect features stories on First Nations and local governments working together.

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# C2C connect

COMMUNITY to COMMUNITY

## » If You Build It, They Will Come: Kitselas First Nation Partners with Regional District to Build Fire Hall

**Kitselas First Nation** > When a fire breaks out, many British Columbians rely on the dedication of volunteer firefighters to keep their families safe. According to the Office of the Fire Commissioner, over 80 per cent of fire departments in British Columbia are operated by volunteers. Many of these departments face a common problem: how to attract and retain members.

In the mid-1990s, the volunteer fire department on the Kitselas Reserve, about 22 kilometers east of Terrace, was no exception. As Chief Glenn Bennett puts it, "It was always very difficult to have enough volunteers on hand, so it basically almost fell apart."

The nearby Thornhill Volunteer Fire Department across the Skeena River from Terrace, and managed by the Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine, was also struggling with membership. In 1997, when the Regional District announced the expansion of their protection area, the situation

became critical. In order to service the much larger area, which now included the Kitselas Reserve, the Thornhill Fire Department would need more members and a new fire hall. An opportunity presented itself and community leaders responded.

The Kitselas First Nation contacted the Regional District about a potential partnership. As Chief Bennett explains, "We proposed to both the Regional District and the Thornhill Volunteer Fire Department that we'd be interested and willing to have this facility constructed on the reserve... we'd allow the Thornhill Fire Department and the Regional District to manage it... and they accepted that."

Although the Kitselas First Nation, which has nine reserves, had experience with Regional District service delivery (fire protection and water) on their Kulsapai Reserve, this type of collaboration was new territory. They were proposing to build joint infrastructure on federal reserve land and to have it managed by an agency that was neither federal nor a First Nation.

Because this joint venture pushed jurisdictional boundaries, Chief Bennett says, "It took a lot of meetings to finally convince the Department of Indian Affairs (now



*Gitasu fire responders.*

*cont'd on next page*



*Left: Gitaus Fire Hall.*

*Below: Thornhill Volunteer Fire Department live burn exercise.*



*cont'd from page 1*

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) that this capital project was going to be extremely beneficial, not only to our people, but to the residents in the Thornhill area.”

At the time, there was a policy that the federal government would only fund new fire halls with a one-bay design. The Regional District felt that a two-bay design was required to provide an adequate level of service to outlying areas, so a two-bay design had to be presented. In the end, the federal government contributed with funding from the First Nations Infrastructure Fund. The Regional District then applied for a permit under the Indian Act to form a right of occupation, which would guarantee access to the hall.

Meanwhile, the Regional District and the Kitselas First Nation were working out operational details, such as how to provide service efficiently, the fire hall's location, and the roles and responsibilities of each party. According to Chief Bennett, consultant Chris Knight was instrumental in assisting with negotiations.

While discussions were taking place, the Thornhill Volunteer Fire Department encouraged Kitselas band members to attend practices. Fire Chief Wes Patterson explains, “It wasn't just a matter of building the building and having access to it - because of the area we're looking at, and the small population base, we actually need members.”

Following about a year of negotiations, band members were able to join the new, larger Thornhill Fire Department. “That also gave them a lot of opportunity to have input into the hall,” says Patterson. This solidified a sense of community amongst all volunteers.

The Gitaus Fire Hall opened in June 2004. Patterson says, “It's a beautiful hall and probably a nicer building than what the fire department would have gotten if we'd done it without the support of the band or the federal government.” Most importantly, he speaks of the elevated caliber of members that have joined because of the partnership, and a resulting improvement in fire protection.

When asked about the benefits to band members, Chief Bennett points to training opportunities such as first aid and air brakes certification that are more readily available through the fire department.

Perhaps the most positive benefit has been a heightened sense of unity in the tradition of brotherhood that is espoused by fire departments everywhere. The expanded department has a one key policy, where all members have access to all three halls. As Patterson says, “There's no division set up in any way at all.”

Although both Bennett and Patterson agree that the Nation and the District have long had good relations, this has been strengthened by their working relationship. Patterson mentions a growing sense of acceptance from the Kitselas community, evidenced by his invitation to their official ceremonies such as a pole raising and the unveiling of the Kitselas land code.

As the leaders of both communities have come together, the fire department now has more members and the wider public is increasingly supportive of the joint service. Patterson points out, “It's not a simple matter of just keeping the municipal counsellors happy, but the community has to be satisfied with what the fire department's doing.” To that end, he and Chief Bennett keep each other informed of issues arising out of the community or the membership that can affect decisions about how to provide service.

Both men feel confident that their example can, and should be, replicated across the province. Chief Bennett mentions that Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is reviewing partnerships to build ambulance services infrastructure in other areas of the province.

For both communities, the Gitaus Fire Hall symbolizes the community benefits that come from patience, openness, practicality, and most of all, leaders with a cooperative spirit.

**connect : kitselas.bc.ca**  
**: thornhillfire.ca**  
**: rdks.bc.ca**

# Leadership Academy for Local Government and First Nations Leaders

In 2005, the Union of BC Municipalities used its 100th anniversary as an opportunity for self-reflection, and to examine available training and educational resources for local elected officials. Concluding that too few resources existed, the seed for the Local Government Leadership Academy (LGLA) was sowed.

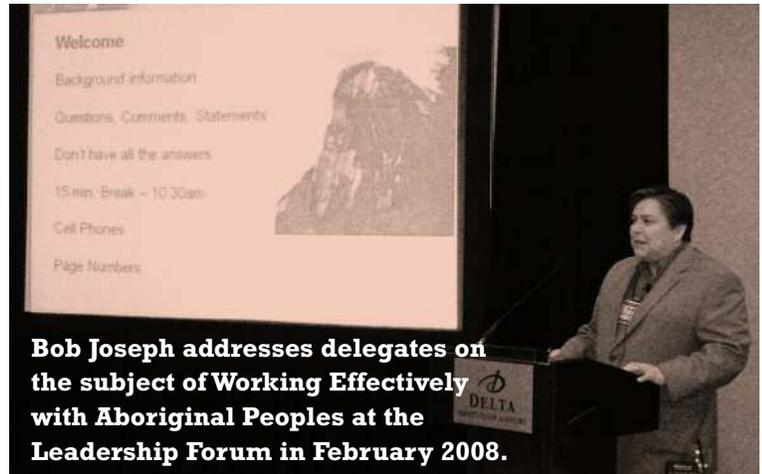
The Province of BC provided seed funding to establish an organization to promote leadership skills and development at the local level. The Local Government Leadership Academy (LGLA) is a leadership development initiative serving local government and First Nations elected officials and senior administrators throughout the Province of British Columbia by improving the competencies needed to effectively manage and lead BC's communities.

"Local governance is an ever-changing, demanding area for people. You need ongoing training," says Allison Habkirk, the Academy's Program Manager and a former elected official.

"In addition to offering regular training programs, a main goal of the LGLA Board of Directors is to create an online learning environment with self-directed work modules," says Habkirk. "These modules will allow leaders to work through the course material an hour or two at a time, at their convenience."

The LGLA Board has First Nations representation. Currently, Grand Chief Doug Kelly, a representative of the First Nations Summit, is on the LGLA board.

Now in its first full year of programming, the LGLA has held two workshops that have included First Nations representatives and content. Future LGLA plans include creating events to follow the three-year municipal election cycle. Following the November 2008 general local government elections, six workshops will be offered around the province to help orient newly-elected officials and provide additional training to returning officials. Habkirk refers to these as "foundation training."



**Bob Joseph addresses delegates on the subject of Working Effectively with Aboriginal Peoples at the Leadership Forum in February 2008.**

In the second year, a province-wide event will be held in the Lower Mainland and in the third, a similar event will take place in a different area of the Province. There are also plans to host smaller events in the five Area Association regions.

Habkirk says the LGLA Board is interested in exploring the needs of First Nation leaders and developing opportunities for mutually beneficial experiences. When it comes to local governance, Habkirk points out, "There's been a lot of research done and we understand the environment really well." She acknowledges the differences between First Nations and local governments but suggests, "[We] have a long history of experience in governance training, which we feel we can share with First Nations."

Habkirk hopes First Nations representatives will attend the province-wide and regional events to "build on the success of the Community to Community Forum Program, where people are brought together."

Ms. Habkirk invites further suggestions on LGLA programming, and can be contacted at [lgla@shaw.ca](mailto:lgla@shaw.ca), or 250-652-9955.

**connect : [lgla.ca](http://lgla.ca)**

## » First Nation Infrastructure Fund

Inspired by the relationship that built the Gitau's fire hall? Want to know more about infrastructure partnerships between First Nations and local governments? Then you may want to look into the First Nation Infrastructure Fund. Through this program, funding is available to First Nations for infrastructure-related projects, and partnerships between First Nations and local governments are encouraged.

The Fund's mission is to improve, "public infrastructure on reserves, Crown Land, land set aside for the use and benefit of a First Nation, or off-reserve in the case of cost-shared projects with non-First Nation partners such as neighbouring municipalities."

Funding is available for projects in the following categories:

- > planning and skills development (community or capital/infrastructure planning)
- > solid waste management
- > roads and bridges
- > energy systems

The Fund was established to run from 2007 until 2011. Of a total \$17.1 million allocated for BC First Nations, \$5.2 million is available for new applications this year. First Nations are eligible for funding and are invited to apply in September of each year. First Nation communities can submit applications to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada for review by a regional committee of First Nations and INAC representatives.

**connect : [inac.gc.ca/bc](http://inac.gc.ca/bc)**

# The City of Nanaimo and the Snuneymuxw First Nation: A

**Nanaimo** > September 19, 2007 was an historic day in Nanaimo when the Snuneymuxw First Nation, the City of Nanaimo and the Province signed a joint management agreement regarding Newcastle Island Marine Provincial Park, a culturally and ecologically rich piece of land in the Nanaimo Harbour. The same day also saw the Snuneymuxw celebrate repatriation of part of a historic village site, known as the Foundry site—a deal brokered between the City, the local Port Authority and the Snuneymuxw.

To the City of Nanaimo and the Snuneymuxw, the agreements symbolize a cooperative spirit that—as recently as five years ago—could not have been predicted.

Dave Mannix, the Economic Development Officer for Snuneymuxw First Nation, remembers the adversarial relationship between local governments and his Nation just a few short years ago. He believes the friction was caused by a commonly held notion that local land issues should be handled through the treaty process, and not through direct discussions with local governments.

“There were a lot of things we didn’t understand about how municipal governments work and regional districts work... as they didn’t know about our traditional ways of life or culture or governance,” says Mannix. “Every time they went to develop or do something on... part of our territory that was important to us, we ended up clashing on it.”

The City of Nanaimo’s Director of Legislative Services and main liaison with the Snuneymuxw, Ian Howat, cites Newcastle Island as a prime example. The City sold Newcastle Island to the Province over 50 years ago, with an agreement to return the island to the City if the Province ceased to operate it as a park. During treaty negotiations, the Snuneymuxw claimed the island as part of their traditional territory. When their claim became public, there was an outcry. At this point, Howat believes relations between the City and the Snuneymuxw were at their

*Right: Signing ceremony for Newcastle Island Collaborative Management Agreement. Left to right: Honourable Barry Penner, Minister of Environment, Chief Viola Wyse, Snuneymuxw First Nation, Mayor Gary Korpan, City of Nanaimo.*

*Below: Two views of Nanaimo Harbour*



worst and suggests, “Maybe conflict is what it takes for two communities to realize they have to make a change.”

With a professional facilitator, the City and the Snuneymuxw drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was signed in April 2005. The MOU had two requirements: the creation of a joint working group and a timeline to draft a more substantial protocol agreement. Both were accomplished within six months of signing the MOU.

Mannix feels that the success of the MOU and protocol agreement is due to the pragmatic approach of the Parties. Both Parties agreed, “This thing has to be more than just another piece of paper hanging on the wall.”

The Parties then tested the agreements by working through three challenges. The first challenge was the return of a \$50,000 deposit that the Snuneymuxw had given to the City for a development that had not transpired. This was a relatively simple exercise in rebuilding trust.

The next two challenges became directives within the protocol agreement. One was to extend city water service to the Snuneymuxw Reserve (IR#2). This was successfully negotiated



# A New Spirit of Cooperation

and the Snuneymuxw is now working with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to fund the necessary infrastructure.

The other directive was to resolve the management of Newcastle Island. All involved expected that sorting out legal title would be onerous. Howat outlines the three sets of interests at play: the City favoured economic development and wished to ensure the island's accessibility to all; the Snuneymuxw sought acknowledgment of their hereditary rights; and the Province was mandated to protect the Coastal Douglas Fir habitat. The spirit of the agreement, according to Howat, was to, "try and accommodate the emotional aspects of ownership, and set aside the legal ownership."

The Newcastle Island agreement created a joint management board with representatives from all three Parties to manage operations on the island and explore economic opportunities, while preserving natural and cultural resources.

With the protocol agreement directives accomplished, the relationship between Nanaimo and the Snuneymuxw strengthened. When the local Port Authority wanted to exercise a 1988 agreement and transfer Lot 100, a former Snuneymuxw village site known as the Foundry, to the City for a dollar in lieu of a previous land swap, the City notified the Snuneymuxw as per the protocol agreement. This step, according to Mannix, avoided a potential conflict, bringing all Parties directly into productive negotiations. Because the Snuneymuxw preferred land acquisition to a cash settlement, they accepted a portion of Lot 100 from the City and an adjacent lot from the Port Authority.

Dave Mannix stresses that the Foundry land transfer was made possible by the scope of the protocol agreement. "Our protocol agreement was at a high enough level with enough depth or detail... to deal with all issues, be it burial sites, be it development sites, be it jurisdictional, authority, all of those things."

Mannix and Howat continue to stay in touch, maintaining informal communications between the Snuneymuxw and the City. Formal discussions occur through regular protocol working group meetings and annual council-to-council dinner meetings.

Snuneymuxw Chief Viola Wyse reflects, "We now have a protocol agreement with the Port Authority, and other

outside interests want to sign protocol agreements because they see the positive work that is happening. Probably the best thing that this Nation has ever done was start to work on a better relationship with the people outside—the City, the Port Authority—because we've all come to an agreement that we're not going anywhere. We're all going to stay here and it's better if we work together for the benefit of all."

**connect :** [snuneymuxw.ca](http://snuneymuxw.ca)  
**:** [nanaimo.ca](http://nanaimo.ca)  
**:** [npa.ca](http://npa.ca)  
**:** [newcastleisland.ca](http://newcastleisland.ca)

## Emergency Planning Funding Program Gets a Boost



**REGIONAL DISTRICT  
of Fraser-Fort George**

**The Regional District of Fraser-Fort George (RDFFG) and Lheidli T'enneh Band have established the first integrated approach to emergency planning in their region around Prince George. In 2007, RDFFG received funding to undertake a regional study on behalf of the regional district, member municipalities and Lheidli T'enneh. The funding for the study came from the Integrated Emergency Planning Grant Program administered by the UBCM on behalf of the Provincial Emergency Program.**

**"The study was to determine the feasibility of a region-wide approach to emergency planning, response, and recovery, that could serve all communities including First Nations in the regional district," said Manager of Public Safety for the RDFFG, Donna Munt.**

**A working group, with representatives from local government and Lheidli T'enneh, is now reviewing the study. The working group will present recommendations to the regional district board and area municipal councils.**

**"I think without the funding from UBCM, it would have been difficult to bring all the partners together," says Munt. "The funding enabled the District to pull all these plans together to understand everyone's needs."**

**Munt points out that individual parties with their limited budgets could not have paid for this study on their own. This funding enabled the municipalities, regional district, and Lheidli T'enneh to learn more about each other's emergency needs and begin to build a better relationship to help each other in times of crisis.**

**connect :** [rdffg.bc.ca](http://rdffg.bc.ca)  
**:** [lheidli.ca](http://lheidli.ca)

# Blue Mountain Dream: Katzie and Maple Ridge Work Towards Joint Stewardship and Sustainability

**B**lue Mountain's forested ridge rises from the eastern shore of Alouette Lake, northeast of Maple Ridge. Its slopes are host to many –often conflicting- user groups.

Horseback riders, woodlot licensees, First Nation communities, conservationists, ATV riders and others all enjoy the forest's bounty. Jurisdictionally Blue Mountain Forest is a tangle as well. Provincially owned land inside the municipal boundary of the District of Maple Ridge, it is also part of the traditional territories of both the Kwantlen and the Katzie First Nations.

The Katzie dream of untangling this confusion of interests, and creating a community forest: an area managed sustainably for all users, balancing recreational use with economic development and ecological concerns.



According to Debbie Miller of the Katzie First Nation, the concept of the Blue Mountain Provincial Forest grew out of the Ministry of Forests Blue Mountain recreation planning process. As Katzie Chief Negotiator, she has been involved in public planning for Blue Mountain since 2004. Over forty stakeholder groups with varied interests attended the first meeting. "We were all talking about our hopes, wishes, and dreams for Blue Mountain," she remembers.

Out of this process came the Blue Mountain Recreation Plan and an ad-hoc stakeholders group led by the Katzie. All user groups were encouraged to share their codes of conduct for Blue Mountain so they could be harmonized. This exercise highlighted the need to develop a comprehensive sustainability plan for Blue Mountain.

Another source of pressure came from the concurrent Katzie treaty negotiations now at Stage Four (Agreement-in-Principle). "We're looking towards how we can have either treaty settlement lands, management, and/or jurisdiction of areas within the territory," says Miller. She points out that as part of Katzie territory, Blue Mountain's contributions to the ecosystem need to be considered.

In 2004, as treaty talks progressed, the provincial government invited the Katzie to apply for a non-renewable forest license (volume-based tenure) on Blue Mountain. However, Miller says, "Very clearly throughout all of our negotiations, the only item that Katzie was willing to talk about was a Community Forest license, which is an area-based tenure."

Miller explains the difference between the two licenses. "Volume-based means I must cut my volume in a very specific timeframe. The area-based tenure [Community Forest license] means I have more of an opportunity to cut my volume in different stages [over] a longer timeframe. So we may not be actually cutting volume. We may see that there's more opportunity to have economic ventures related to non-timber forest products or recreation or such."

According to Miller, "Community Forest Agreements are generally outside of the box of the mandate from current... forest and range opportunities, but that does not prevent Katzie from saying we have a dream and we're going to follow it."

Miller says, "One of the ways of ensuring that we see our dream come to success is to bring as many supportive organizations to the table as possible." She believes that the support of Maple Ridge, Kwantlen First Nation, and other stakeholders in the area will strengthen the Katzie application for a Community Forest Agreement. To that end, the Katzie contacted the District of Maple Ridge.

Ten years ago, the District of Maple Ridge had approached the Katzie First Nation about supporting a community forest application that Maple Ridge was putting forth. At that time, the Katzie did not support the application, which was eventually denied. Debbie Miller suggests, "It's been an educational and capacity-building exercise. Previously we did not have the capacity to understand what they were meaning in terms of this community forest."

The political will to create a community forest still existed at the district level, and in 2006 the two parties met to discuss their mutual interests on Blue Mountain and to negotiate a

**“If you really have an idea that you strongly believe in, no matter how long it takes, continue to follow it through. We have a dream and we’re going to move forward with it. We think it’s in the best interest of our Nation and in the best interest of the environment. It’s also in the best interest of [our] relationship [with] the District of Maple Ridge and other parties who have yet to be involved.”**

**- Debbie Miller, Chief Negotiator, Katzie First Nation**

memorandum of understanding (MOU). Miller describes the process of crafting the MOU as “endless dialogue.” “Nobody wants to step on anybody’s toes, but, at the same time, everybody wants to make sure that their own individual interests are well represented.” From Murray’s point of view the main challenge in creating the MOU was, “trying to determine what

each other’s needs were, expressing those clearly, and making room for them within the agreement.”

The MOU, signed in September 2007, outlined the creation of the Blue Mountain Stewardship Technical Team, which will develop sustainability objectives and performance measures for each of several stewardship elements identified.

When asked about the opportunities offered by collaborative stewardship, Murray explains, “The collective knowledge is much greater than the individual knowledge, and with knowledge you can do more, make better choices.”

Katzie First Nation and the District of Maple Ridge have been fortunate to have a good relationship over the years. Miller attributes this to their commitment to relationship building. She says, “The most important thing about developing relationships is that you get together to know each other. You don’t get together to address the issues. The issues will always be there.”

Katzie has also made a conscious effort to participate in local events and planning committees. Miller explains that when elected officials hear about First Nation involvement in local events, it creates an understanding that both parties are equal participants in the greater community. This understanding facilitates higher-level discussions and negotiations.

Her final piece of advice is to practice persistence.

“If you really have an idea that you strongly believe in, no matter how long it takes, continue to follow it through. We have a dream and we’re going to move forward with it. We think it’s in the best interest of our Nation and in the best interest of the environment. It’s also in the best interest of [our] relationship [with] the District of Maple Ridge and other parties who have yet to be involved.”



*Mayor Gordy Robson of Maple Ridge and former Chief Diane Bailey of Katzie First Nation attend the signing of their Memorandum of Understanding. The agreement has been designed to maintain or enhance the cultural, environmental, economic and social opportunities on Blue Mountain.*

# Learning to Work Together: Helpful Resources

Are you impressed by the partnerships in this issue of C2C Connect? Want to develop a better relationship between your community and your neighbouring First Nation or local government?

These resources may help.

## C2C connect



Your comments and story ideas are critical to our success.

Please send them to:

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## Come Together in a Community to Community Forum

Community to Community forums give local governments and First Nations an opportunity to come together to build relationships or to address specific issues that affect the whole community. Funding for these forums is available through the UBCM.

For information about the program see: [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca) (under Programs and Services) [www.fns.bc.ca](http://www.fns.bc.ca)

Remember to download a copy of the *Guide to Community to Community Forums in BC*.

## Educate Yourself: Dispute Resolution Resources

Learn about alternative dispute resolution.

**Communities in Cooperation: A Guide to Alternative Dispute Resolution for First Nations and Local Governments in BC** | Published by UBCM and First Nations Summit.

[www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca) (under Featured Policy Topics/ First Nations Relations/Relationship Building & Dispute Resolution)

**A Guide to Mediation in BC** | An online guide to mediation as a process for resolving disputes published by the Dispute Resolution Office, Ministry of the Attorney General.

[www.ag.gov.bc.ca/dro/mediation-in-bc/index.htm](http://www.ag.gov.bc.ca/dro/mediation-in-bc/index.htm)

**Union of BC Municipalities** | Resources on relationship building and dispute resolution for First Nations and local governments.

[www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca) (under Featured Policy Topics/ First Nations Relations/Relationship Building & Dispute Resolution)

**The BC Mediator Roster Society** | List of mediators working in BC, and information on the mediation process, resources, and training opportunities.

[www.mediator-roster.bc.ca](http://www.mediator-roster.bc.ca)

**The Dispute Resolution Series** | A four-volume book series published by the provincial Dispute Resolution Office.

For information, and to order the series: [www.ag.gov.bc.ca/dro/policy-design/series.htm](http://www.ag.gov.bc.ca/dro/policy-design/series.htm)

## Educate Yourself: Dispute Resolution Training

Alternative dispute resolution training opportunities.

**The Justice Institute of British Columbia, Centre for Conflict Resolution & Centre for Leadership** | Certificate programs in negotiation, mediation, and leadership and conflict resolution.

[www.jibc.ca/ccrcl/aboutus/index.htm](http://www.jibc.ca/ccrcl/aboutus/index.htm)

**Royal Roads University, School of Peace and Conflict Management** | Graduate diploma and Master of Arts program in conflict analysis and management.

[www.royalroads.ca/programs/faculties-schools-centres](http://www.royalroads.ca/programs/faculties-schools-centres)

**University of Victoria, Institute for Dispute Resolution** | Master of Arts program in dispute resolution.

<http://dispute.resolution.uvic.ca/>