



# NORTHERN ST'AT'IMC - DISTRICT OF LILLOOET - SQUAMISH LILLOOET REGIONAL DISTRICT

## LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR COLLABORATION



### PATHWAY OVERVIEW

*The District of Lillooet and Electoral Areas A and B of the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) are located within the territory of the northern St'át'imc communities of Sekw'el'wás, T'ít'q'et, Tsal'alh, Ts'kw'aylaxw, Xáxli'p and Xwísten. Recognizing that this region's economic development services had historically been uncoordinated and under-resourced, conversations about how to better collaborate began in the early 2000s.*

*A 2008 joint study identified economic development opportunities that could be implemented to benefit the broader area and help facilitate local economic collaboration among local area governments and Northern St'át'imc communities. In 2014, funding became available to explore how the governments and communities could work together to strengthen economic development.*

### PATHWAY ACTIVITIES

*The collaboration pathway activities undertaken by Northern St'át'imc, the District of Lillooet, and SLRD include the following.*



**Protocol and Communications Agreements**



**Relationship-Building and Leadership Forums**



**Coordinated Agricultural, Tourism, and Agritourism Planning**



**Land Use Planning and Development**

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

After approaching Northern St'át'imc to discuss the project, the SLRD were cautioned that improved organizational understanding and relationships between SLRD, District of Lillooet, and Northern St'át'imc communities were needed before effective economic development dialogue could move forward. This included key issues around colonization, title and rights, Indigenous perspectives on economic development, and greater understanding of participating organizations (jurisdictions, roles, responsibilities). Therefore, rather than forming a multi-party regional economic development committee, the governments formed a working group to organize a Leadership Forum where these issues

could be discussed. With additional Community to Community Forum funding pulled in to support the work, the event was successful in establishing foundational understanding between the governments and initiated the establishment of an Intergovernmental Relations Working Group (IRWG) in January 2016 tasked with further strengthening relationships, improving communication, and facilitating collaborative regional economic development.

Since 2016, the IRWG has met regularly and supported the undertaking of several important collaborative initiatives.

## OUTCOMES

Beyond the improved relationships and communication channels that were a direct outcome of the project, two other important outcomes were achieved.

The first was the support for coordinated economic development signaled by the 2016 CREATE Forum held at T'it'qet community hall with broad representation from across Northern St'át'imc territory and the northern SLRD. An action plan for regional development resulted from this gathering, supporting more coordinated regional economic development. The action plan, and resulting work included:

- An exploration of various options for an enhanced a regional approach to tourism (e.g., Destination Management Organization);
- Building towards better collaboration on agriculture and local food security through participation on the Lillooet Agriculture and Food Society (LAFS), which was established in 2016 with a mandate to improve coordination and communication around agricultural economic development across the region; and
- Additional direction for LAFS to develop a regional Agritourism Strategy.

The second key outcome was the creation of the *Protocol Agreement for Communication and Cooperation*, which was signed in 2018 by officials from the District of Lillooet, P'egp'íg'lha Council (T'it'q'et), and the SLRD. The six northern St'át'imc communities have also been invited to sign on



**PHOTO:** Lillooet Mayor Marg Lampman, Tribal Chief Shelley Leech of the P'egp'íg'lha Council (T'it'q'et) and SLRD Board Vice-Chair Tony Rainbow sign the Protocol Agreement. <https://www.lillooetnews.net/news/local-news/dol-slrld-and-p-egp-ig-lha-council-sign-protocol-agreement-1.23318743>

and can do so at any time. This Agreement provides a framework to “establish stronger relationships between the parties through improved communication and enhanced collaboration.” Written into the *Protocol Agreement* is a requirement that staff members of the participating governments meet quarterly, and leadership meet annually. The agenda is not necessarily set beforehand, but holding this space allows important topics to surface and be addressed.



Over the past few years, the Protocol agreement and IRWG have supported or contributed to other collaborative economic development initiatives including:

- Jointly hiring a regional economic development officer or forming a regional economic development service (ongoing);
- Continuing work on realizing the development of a St'át'imc Heritage and Learning Centre (ongoing); and
- Development of the 2017 *Lillooet and Region Agritourism Strategy*.



**PHOTO:** from the *Lillooet and Region Agritourism Strategy*, <https://lillooetagricultureandfoodsociety.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/final-lillooet-and-region-agri-tourism-strategy.pdf>

## LESSONS LEARNED AND KEYS TO SUCCESS

One of the biggest lessons that has emerged from this multi-year process is that in order for economic collaboration to succeed, strong relationships and mutual understanding must first be built. Other lessons and keys to success included:

- ✓ **Co-create the process.** Asking Northern St'át'imc leadership to help set the agenda for how to move forward, rather than designing a process and later inviting them, helped set the project on a good footing.
- ✓ **Start by listening.** Listening to each other's stories and building understanding around each other's organizational structures was critical not only to general relationship-building, but it also had the benefit of opening practical communication channels for project planning, development and implementation. This is especially important when multiple types of governments, each with their own processes and structure, are involved.
- ✓ **Stay open and be flexible.** This mindset helped recognize that the priority needed to be given to relationship-building before economic development. The IRWG found this was key to fostering true collaboration and inclusiveness, and that it was important to be comfortable with the fact that much of their work wouldn't immediately produce tangible benefits.
- ✓ **Relationship-building and collaboration takes time and resources.** Funding was required to maintain secretariat and facilitation support from an outside consultant, as participants had no extra capacity to run this initiative. Many meetings were held over the phone and online, which made it easier to gather multiple people spread widely across a large geographic area.



**PHOTO:** 2016 CREATE Forum at T'it'qet community hall.

“Signing this Protocol Agreement is an important step on the path to stronger relationships and it’s a great example of collaboration in action. The SLRD looks forward to ... continuing to listen to and learn from one another, and by taking concrete actions to improve the way we communicate, share information and work together for the benefit of all our communities.”

*Jack Crompton, Squamish-Lillooet Regional District*



## PATHWAYS TO COLLABORATION

Pathways to Collaboration is a joint initiative of the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), the Province of British Columbia, and the First Nations Summit with funding from the Indigenous Business & Investment Council (IBIC). The project aims to showcase the growing number of successful economic development collaborations and partnerships between First Nations and local governments, while highlighting lessons learned and key steps to success.

The pathways to collaboration communities take are unique, reflecting the context of the communities involved, and involve different activities. Common pathway activities include protocol and communications agreements; servicing agreements and shared infrastructure projects; collaborative land use planning and development projects; joint economic development initiatives; and shared tourism projects. Like signposts along a pathway, these pathway activities are identified in the case study series.

For more information on the project, please contact the communities profiled, or visit [www.ubcm.ca](http://www.ubcm.ca).



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