

TLA'AMIN NATION - CITY OF POWELL RIVER - qathet REGIONAL DISTRICT

COLLABORATION AND RECONCILIATION



PATHWAY OVERVIEW

Located north of Vancouver, on BC's Sunshine Coast, Tla'amin Nation, the City of Powell River, and qathet Regional District are leading the way in building and sustaining proactive and productive intergovernmental relationships. The three governments have successfully collaborated on a variety of projects over the past 15 plus years, both individually and working as three governments together. Tla'amin is a self-governing Nation with the fourth modern treaty to come into effect in British Columbia.

PATHWAY ACTIVITIES

The collaborative pathway activities undertaken by Tla'amin Nation, City of Powell River, and qathet Regional District include the following.



**Protocol and Communications
Agreements**



**Land Use Planning
and Development**



**Joint Economic
Development Initiatives**



**Shared Tourism
Projects**

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In 2002, a dispute arose between the City and Tla'amin Nation. The City did not share their plans to build a sea walk, and construction disturbed, destroyed, and buried significant Tla'amin cultural sites including petroglyphs and shell middens. Acknowledging the mistake, City leaders handed over the \$1.5 million contract to build the sea walk to Tla'amin Nation (then Sliammon First Nation). Through this, Tla'amin was able to protect cultural heritage sites, provide employment for their Nation, and participate in the regional economy.

Less than a year later, both communities set course to develop a partnership by signing the *Community Accord* in 2003. By signing this collaboration agreement, the two communities laid the groundwork for creating one of BC's most successful First Nation / municipal collaborative governance models. Discussing the strength of the *Accord*,

current hegus (Chief) Clint Williams said that it was written as a framework for reconciliation, "before reconciliation was a buzzword." In 2004, building on the work done developing the *Community Accord*, the *Protocol Agreement for Communication and Cooperation* was signed between Tla'amin Nation and the qathet Regional District (then Powell River Regional District).

After Tla'amin First Nation became self-governing in April 2016, the *Community Accord* was updated and reaffirmed between the City and Tla'amin. The *Protocol Agreement* continues to be used to define new working relationships between qathet and Tla'amin Nation and the two local governments are currently in conversation to update it.

Work on the regional district side began in 2007 when a dispute arose between the Regional District and the

Tla'amin Nation over treaty land selection in the region. In an effort to reconcile differences, the Province agreed to fund a *Land Use Harmonization Initiative*. This project was launched to identify opportunities for coordinating land use planning between the two governments. The project resulted in a list of 21 recommendations for the Regional District and Tla'amin to consider in future land use plans and developments in the region. Since that time, both governments have developed land use plans that used these harmonization recommendations to guide their work.

OUTCOMES

In 2014, during an update to the City's Official Community Plan, the City recognized two parcels of Treaty Settlement Land within municipal boundaries as specially designated lands in the new plan. In 2018, at the request of Tla'amin, the City provided consent to designate two parcels of land in the historic townsite area to Tla'amin. As with additional lands within the City, Tla'amin has full governance over the parcels, including planning, zoning, and property taxation. "This is a first for British Columbia," said Dave Formosa, mayor of Powell River at the time. "No other municipality has consented to having lands designated as Treaty Settlement Lands within their boundaries at the request of an Indigenous Nation." This was a key step in reconciling the relationship between these two communities.

In 2017, another step towards reconciliation took place when Elders from Tla'amin gifted the name qathet, (pronounced KA-thet) to the Regional District. Meaning "working together," the name was officially adopted by the Province in the summer of 2018. Speaking on the name change, regional district Chair Patrick Brabazon said, "We graciously accept this gift and give many thanks to the elders for the name itself and for their time, effort and research, truly an example of working together for the benefit of all."



PHOTO: Mayor Dave Formosa giving keys to Clint Williams, Elder Elsie Paul, and former Chief Negotiator Roy Francis three keys to the City of Powell River.

Over the years, qathet Regional District, Tla'amin Nation, and the City of Powell River have collaborated on a number of regional planning initiatives including a Sustainability Charter (2009), Regional Emergency Plan (2013), Regional Transportation Plan (2014), Regional Trails Plan (2016), and most recently a Regional Recreation Initiative (2018).

Over the past four years, all three governments have worked on a Regional Social Planning Program, which led to the creation of a Social Action and Planning Advisory Committee to work on regional initiatives that enhance social wellbeing, alleviate poverty, reduce income disparity, support early childhood development, and create suitable housing for all.

In 2019, qathet announced a flood mapping initiative for the region's coastlines. To be delivered over the coming year, the project seeks to map the impending coastal

Making it Official: Signing Agreements

By signing the **Community Accord and Protocol Agreement for Communication and Cooperation** all three governments laid out the foundations for:

- Collaborating on land use planning initiatives
- Economic diversification
- Protecting cultural and heritage resources
- Promoting positive community growth
- Increasing investment and employment
- Understanding and sharing reciprocal services
- Communicating property taxation issues



PHOTO: Q3 Forums are quarterly lunchtime gatherings between elected representatives and CAOs from Tla'amin Nation, the City of Powell River, and qathet Regional District.

impacts of climate change, sea level rise, and associated coastal flooding across the entire region, including the City and Tla'amin lands.

Also in 2019, the City and Tla'amin received funding from the Province for development of an airport master plan. Located adjacent to Tla'amin Lands, the two governments are hoping to realize the full potential of the airport as an economic driver for the city, qathet, and Tla'amin. "We've been wanting to expand our airport for decades and with it, attract new aviation investment, business travellers, increased tourism and job creation," said Powell River Mayor Dave Formosa at a press conference on the project.

Building and Maintaining Partnerships

In order for these communities to maintain strong relationships and collaborate on governance initiatives in the region, these key tools are utilized:

- **C3 Forums** – quarterly lunch meetings between officials and CAOs from all three governments to discuss regional planning and governance
- **Protocol Agreements** set out guiding principles for cooperation and are used as a tool to outline key areas of interest
- **Monthly CAO Meetings** – where all three CAO's from each government meet to discuss topics of shared interest

LESSONS LEARNED AND KEYS TO SUCCESS

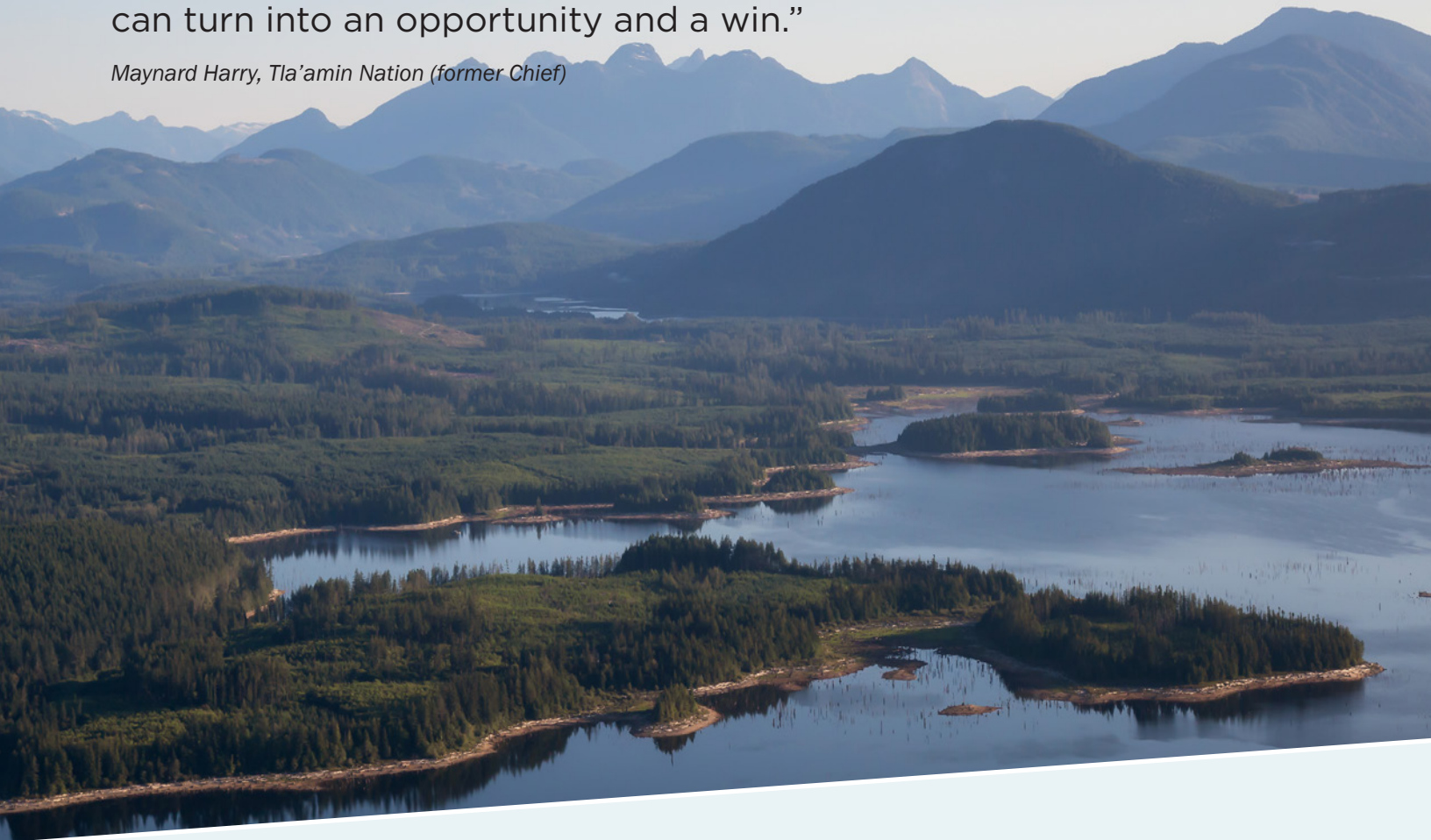
The collaborative relationships, and its outcomes, are deeply valued by all three partners. Some of the lessons learned along their pathways to collaboration include the following.

- ✓ **Establish protocols, agreements, or guiding principles up front.** The protocols and agreements developed, and reaffirmed over the years, provided the framework and foundation to move forward on more specific collaborative projects.
- ✓ **Establish and maintain regular meetings.** Consistent and ongoing government-to-government discussions, meetings between leadership and staff, and numerous cross-cultural workshops provided opportunities to build the trust, understanding, and communications necessary for the projects undertaken.
- ✓ **Support each other.** All three governments have provided letters of support for various initiatives. Support may tip the balance in favour of approval for funding and projects.
- ✓ **Share and celebrate success.** From events marking Indigenous Day to participation in community festivals, and celebrating each others' accomplishments, sharing and celebrating success has helped build relationships and improve communications across communities.
- ✓ **Involve and inform others.** The three governments have involved and engaged community members and organizations, other levels of government, business and the media in most of the projects profiled in this case study.



“Consistency, leadership, and taking the time to get to know each other on a personal level are important. Identify a project significant enough where you can accomplish things – it may appear to be a negative situation, but don’t be afraid of it. If it can be negotiated, it can turn into an opportunity and a win.”

Maynard Harry, Tla’amin Nation (former Chief)



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.



Indigenous Business and Investment Council
Sharing Success