

# SNUNEYMUXW FIRST NATION – CITY OF NANAIMO

## RENEWED PROTOCOL AGREEMENT



### PATHWAY OVERVIEW

Located on Vancouver Island's east coast, the City of Nanaimo and Snuneymuxw First Nation are committed to moving forward with reconciliation as the shared objective. Recognition of the Snuneymuxw Treaty of 1854 with the Crown is essential to generating the change that both governments seek. In order to do this, government-to-government agreements have been used to develop a strong working relationship and coordinate decision-making for the betterment of the Nanaimo region. In May of 2019, the City of Nanaimo and Snuneymuxw First Nation renewed their Protocol Agreement – a framework to implement reconciliation including a collaborative process for working together – revising the original protocol agreement to include fundamental and critical steps to achieve a shared vision for Nanaimo that promotes prosperity for all.

### PATHWAY ACTIVITIES

The collaborative pathway activities undertaken by Snuneymuxw First Nation and the City of Nanaimo included the following.



**Protocol and  
Communications Agreements**



**Joint Economic  
Development Initiatives**



**Shared Tourism  
Projects**



**Servicing Agreements  
and Infrastructure**

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The City of Nanaimo and Snuneymuxw First Nation began to officially recognize their government-to-government relationship through a written agreement in the early 2000s. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in 2005 established the governments' duty to mutual respect and cooperation between each other and a commitment to a set of principles to guide the government to government relationship. Next, a Protocol Agreement signed in 2009 outlined the governments' responsibilities to work together and coordinate economic opportunities, service provision, land use planning, and established a joint decision-making process.

Nonetheless, communication challenges occurred between the governments. Tensions peaked in 2017 when

Snuneymuxw removed their flag from the Nanaimo city hall, symbolizing a breakdown in the relationship. Despite relationship challenges, this event was a catalyst for engagement and further discussions acknowledging their 2005 and 2009 commitments.

In early 2019, the governments prioritized the revision of the 2009 Protocol Agreement to focus more on deepening the understanding of each other including the Treaty of 1854, advancing reconciliation and commit to a shared vision for the Nanaimo region. Signed in May of 2019, the renewed Protocol Agreement affirms both governments' essential role in decision-making for the well-being of the Nanaimo region and promotes a shared vision of reconciliation and collaboration.



**PHOTO:** Representatives of the Snuneymuxw First Nation and the City of Nanaimo, including Chief Mike Wyse and Mayor Leonard Krog, at the protocol agreement signing at the Snuneymuxw Longhouse.

## OUTCOMES

In the early 2000s, the City of Nanaimo and Snuneymuxw First Nation began taking intentional steps towards strengthening their relationship as neighbours and provisioners to residents of the Nanaimo region. In addition to the two governments signing the MOU and protocol agreements, they have entered into a number of service agreements ensuring essential services are provided to the people of Snuneymuxw. As well, the governments' have partnered on the Saysutshun (Newcastle Island) Ferry Service and have collaborated on the development of a Saysutshun Business Plan that envisions Indigenous and tourism product development on Newcastle Island. The MOU and protocol

agreements have served as a critical pathway for the City of Nanaimo and Snuneymuxw First Nation to continue to work together on present, future and new economic and community development priorities that will pass to future leaders.

The two partners schedule regular Protocol Agreement working group meetings that enable both governments to raise opportunities and matters to be discussed between them. The renewed 2019 Protocol Agreement has strong language about recognition of rights, reconciliation and guiding principles, ensuring the highest probability of success. The parties agree to work in a "spirit of cooperation," good faith, and trust.



“The purpose of this Protocol Agreement is to provide a framework and timelines for reaching agreements on issues raised in the MOU, to set out policies, procedures, and processes for the way in which the City and Snuneymuxw will interact from time to time, and to identify areas in which the parties wish to develop further agreements.”

*Protocol Agreement 2005*

The City of Nanaimo and Snuneymuxw First Nation remain committed to a collaborative, respectful and cooperative government-to-government relationship through written agreements that recognize rights, interests, and mutual objectives. Since signing the 2019 Protocol Agreement, the governments have discussed returning the Snuneymuxw flag to the Nanaimo city hall as a symbol of friendship.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND KEYS TO SUCCESS

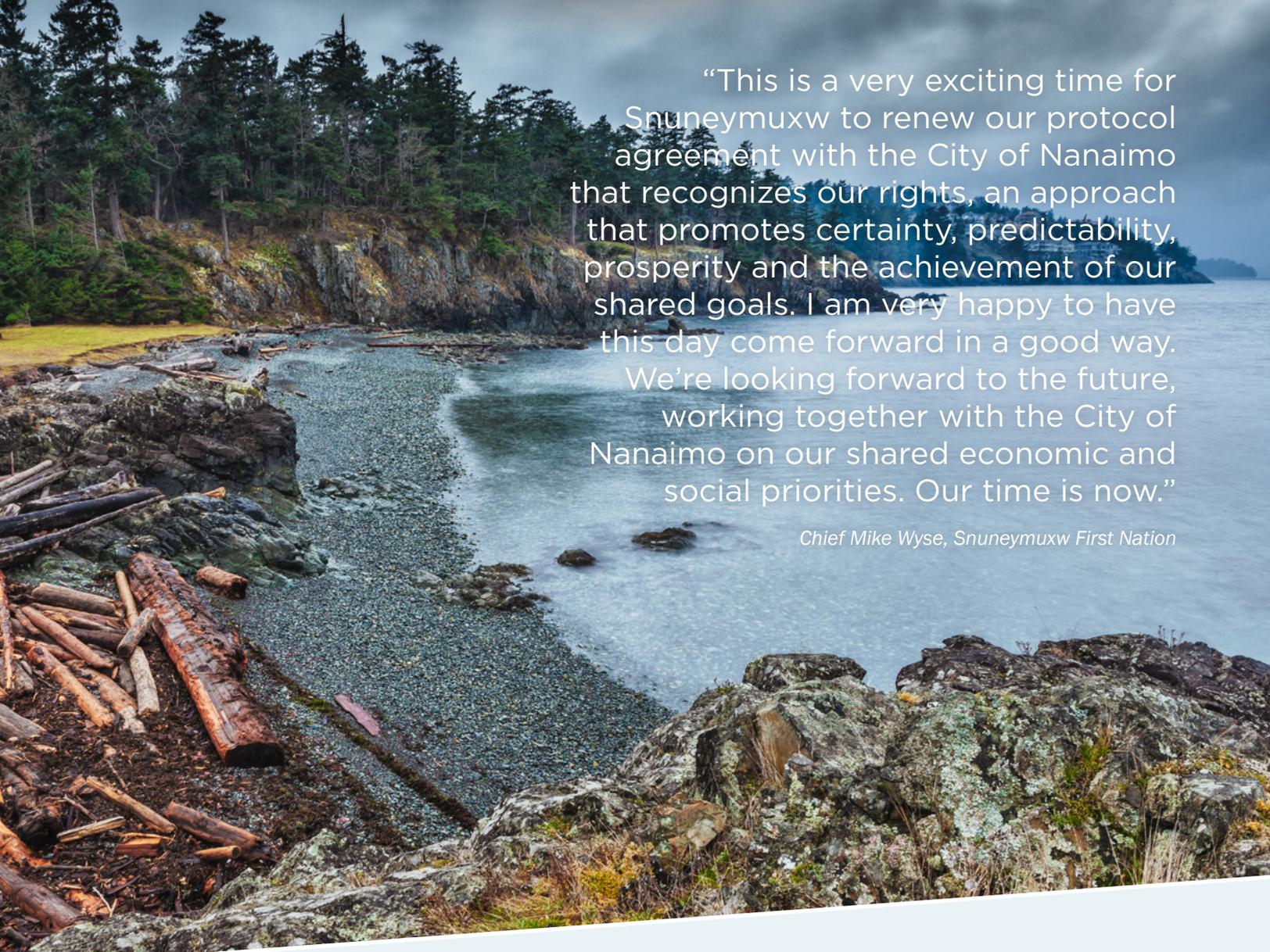
Dedication to reconciliation through the recognition of Snuneymuxw rights protected under s.35 of the Canadian constitution was key to the success of the renewed Protocol Agreement. Other lessons and keys include:

- ✓ **Build trust.** A strong working relationship founded on trust, transparency and respectful government-to-government relationship is key to future planning and development successes.
- ✓ **Prioritize relationships.** Municipal governments should understand that for First Nations governments, community healing processes may take priority and underlie the effectiveness of long-term planning and decision-making objectives.
- ✓ **Revision is progression.** Relationships are a learning process. The 2019 Protocol Agreement is a living breathing document.
- ✓ **Recognition.** Respectful recognition of First Nations rights are key to a meaningful, successful and longlasting government-to-government relationship for the benefit of all involved

“The purpose of this protocol is to deepen the government-to-government relationship between the parties and establish a collaborative process that will meaningfully advance reconciliation and lead to a resolution of shared opportunities, agreements and mutual benefits”

*Protocol Agreement 2019*





“This is a very exciting time for Snuneymuxw to renew our protocol agreement with the City of Nanaimo that recognizes our rights, an approach that promotes certainty, predictability, prosperity and the achievement of our shared goals. I am very happy to have this day come forward in a good way. We’re looking forward to the future, working together with the City of Nanaimo on our shared economic and social priorities. Our time is now.”

*Chief Mike Wyse, Snuneymuxw First Nation*

## 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)



**Indigenous Business and Investment Council**  
*Sharing Success*