

SQUAMISH NATION - THE DISTRICT OF SQUAMISH

GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION



PATHWAY OVERVIEW

The District of Squamish is located on the unceded territory of the Squamish Nation, whose territory stretches from North Vancouver to Gibson's Landing to the north area of Howe Sound. Squamish Nation has seven reserves within the District of Squamish, and is a significant land owner within the District, with lands poised for economic development purposes and future member housing. In 2007, the District of Squamish and Squamish Nation formalized their commitments to a spirit of co-operation and government-to-government relationship by signing a Co-operation Protocol agreement. Based on the principles of co-operation outlined in the agreement, the Nation and the District established a working relationship that has allowed them to collaborate on several fronts. Today, the fruits of this collaborative relationship can be seen in an ongoing initiative to establish a jointly administered community forest.

PATHWAY ACTIVITIES

The collaborative pathway activities undertaken by the Squamish Nation and the District of Squamish included the following.



**Protocol and
Communications Agreements**



**Joint Economic
Development Initiatives**

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The District of Squamish and Squamish Nation have been working together in a spirit of collaboration for many years now. In 2007, a Co-operation Protocol was signed with the intention of establishing a government-to-government relationship. The purpose of the protocol was to formalize information sharing, improve communications, address specific issues of mutual interest, and raise awareness and understanding of Squamish First Nation title and rights.

The agreement formalized communication and co-operation protocols, including yearly meetings of the respective Councils and a permanent working level staff committee. The protocol also committed the two governments to moving

forward in a relationship based on "trust, respect, and mutual understanding." Since the signing of the Co-operation Protocol, the District of Squamish and Squamish Nation have moved forward together on several collaborative initiatives.

The Squamish communities are nestled in a beautiful natural area enjoyed by a wide range of people. The Squamish area is an internationally renowned destination for rock-climbing, mountain-biking, ski-touring, hiking, kite-boarding, and other outdoor activities. The forested lands surrounding Squamish are also a productive area for timber harvesting and natural resource development.

The District of Squamish and Squamish Nation have considered options for bringing areas of the forest under local control for several years. In 2018 this initiative was kicked into high gear, with the selection of a board of directors for their newly created oversight company, the Squamish Community Forest Corporation. The board has equal representation from leadership of the District and Squamish Nation. This is the first partnership agreement signed between the Nation and the District where the two governments will be co-managing a local asset.

With the creation of the Squamish Community Forest Corporation and selection of a board, about 10,000 hectares of forest will be brought under a formalized governance structure shared between the two governments. This will allow the Squamish Community Forest Corporation to directly oversee forestry operation and operate a business while retaining community values. Timber harvesting operations will be handled by Sqomish Forestry, a local company owned by Squamish Nation.

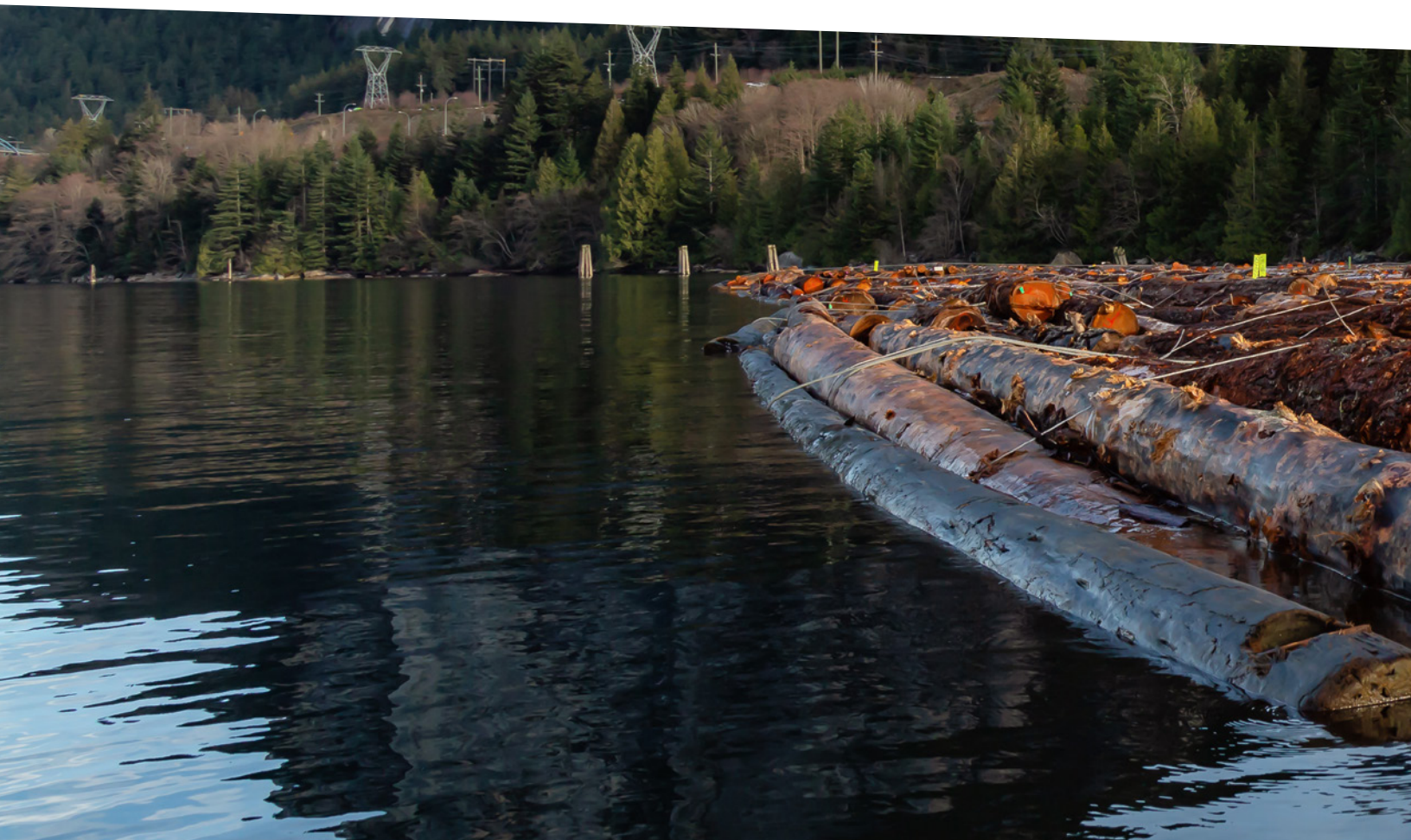
Community forests can bring many benefits to local communities. Community forests are different from forests that are under provincial management. Under the province, forestry contracts are awarded through BC Timber Sales and contracts are generally awarded to the highest bidder. Community forest governance also allows the District and the Nation to share in a portion of the profits from the forestry activity.



PHOTO: Log sort in Squamish

Community Forest Agreements

Community Forest Agreements are long-term, area-based land tenures. They are designed to encourage community involvement in the management of local forests while expanding economic opportunities and opening doors for local job creation. Of the Community Forests in BC, nearly half are operated by First Nations or by partnerships between First Nations and neighbouring non-Indigenous communities.



OUTCOMES

The formal creation of the community forest is still ongoing as of October 2019, with initial harvesting scheduled for 2020. Community consultation was launched in the spring of 2019, where local residents and community groups shared their visions for local economic benefits and access to recreational areas. A significant amount of well-used recreational assets (i.e. trails) run through the proposed area of the community forest. As the vision for the community forest moves forward, balancing the needs of all users and stakeholders will be necessary for the long-term success of the project.

By allowing the District of Squamish and Squamish Nation to make their own rules for the management of their local forest resources, the creation of the community forest should make it possible to balance the needs of all those who use and benefit from the forest. The community forest will bring local level decision making into place for management decisions regarding cultural and spiritual sites. It will also open up opportunities for education and greater community awareness of forest management. The University of British Columbia (UBC) Faculty of Forestry has already expressed interest in using the forest for educational purposes. The area would be the closest community forest to UBC's Vancouver campus, and it would be an ideal site for students to learn and conduct research on the sustainable management of community forests.

LESSONS LEARNED AND KEYS TO SUCCESS

One of the main takeaways from the project was for the partners to build on and strengthen their existing relationship. Other lessons learned and keys included:

- ✓ **Incremental steps.** Years before collaborating on the community forest agreement, the District and the Nation of Squamish signed a Co-operation Protocol that established the level of mutual trust and respect needed for bigger projects.
- ✓ **Put your values up front.** Agreeing upon shared values can open the door to finding new partnerships and opportunities for collaboration.

“This agreement is a pivotal step forward in our community history as our two governments work together to manage and protect these forest lands for future generations.”

Mayor Karen Elliott, District of Squamish



“The Squamish Nation welcomes opportunities to work together with other governments on shared priorities. We’re appreciative of the relationship we have built with the District of Squamish on the management and protection of our territory.”

Khelsilem (Dustin Rivers), Squamish Nation Spokesperson



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



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