



TK'EMLÚPS TE SECWÉPEMC – THE CITY OF KAMLOOPS

GROWING INDIGENOUS/LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS



PATHWAY OVERVIEW

The City of Kamloops and the First Nation of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc are two communities located in the southern interior of British Columbia. In recent years, the communities have moved forward on a new approach to relationship building and reconciliation. Starting with a series of Community-to-Community forums that began over a decade ago, Kamloops has taken steps to recognize Tk'emlúps culture, values, and history through agreements, physical projects, and plans. The pathway that the communities have started on has branched in several directions and included collaboration on projects ranging from transit service to park trails to plans for a new cultural centre on the site of a former elementary school.

PATHWAY ACTIVITIES

The collaborative pathway activities undertaken by Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and the City of Kamloops included the following.



Protocol and Communications Agreements



Relationship-Building and Leadership Forums



Land Use Planning and Development



Servicing Agreements and Infrastructure

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Relationship-building and collaboration between the communities has proceeded along multiple fronts over the past several years. Community-to-Community forums launched over a decade ago opened a line of communication that allowed community concerns to be raised on issues like transit service and cultural recognition. Once or twice every year, the two governments have met for the Community-to-Community forums. The forums have created opportunities for the two governments to discuss shared interests and concerns and have established an avenue for inter-governmental co-ordination.

Based on the relationships and trust built during the Community-to-Community forums, projects covering a range of topics were initiated. These projects included the opening of Xget'tem' Trail in 2018, the formalization of a Community Transit Partnership Agreement in 2018, the signing of a Letter of Understanding on Secwépemc values and Tk'emlúps cultural heritage resources in 2019, design work on a collaborative cultural centre, new directions in the City's Strategic Plan and upcoming Social Plan, and the creation of a Joint Culture and Heritage Committee.

OUTCOMES

The strengthened relationship between the communities has resulted in a number of projects, initiatives, and agreements.

For years, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc had issues with transit service within their community. After Tk'emlúps leadership raised these concerns and suggested the creation of a transit agreement at a Community-to-Community forum in March 2017, staff were directed to begin working on a solution. A formalized Community Transit Partnership Agreement was signed in June 2018, and by September of 2018, a new route had been established that delivered transit service to Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, providing around 3,000 hours of conventional bus service to Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc lands.

In November 2018, a 1.7-kilometre multi-use pathway in Kamloops was named Xget'tem' Trail – meaning “deep valley” in Secwepemctsin – in recognition of the area’s traditional place name. The trail also included signage about the importance of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc tradition and culture.

Design consultants were engaged in 2019 to work on a project to create a cultural centre at the site of a heritage-listed former elementary school. The City and Tk'emlúps have committed to collaborating on the site to express a joint vision of cultural heritage and education. As of September 2019, work is ongoing between the City and Tk'emlúps on the development of a joint operating agreement for the project.

In 2019 a Letter of Understanding (LOU) was signed between Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and Kamloops. The LOU



PHOTO: City of Kamloops Mayor Ken Christian and former acting Tk'emlúps Chief Eagle Casimir at the signing of the transit service agreement in June 2017. Photo credit: Simone Paul Photography/City of Kamloops

committed the communities to preserving and promoting Secwépemc values, including the protection of Tk'emlúps' cultural heritage resources. The LOU is intended to serve as a stepping stone towards a future cultural heritage agreement.

Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Joint Culture and Heritage Committee was created to “assist in the mutual development of a process which ensures [...] the protection of cultural heritage resources and the promotion of awareness and understanding of the rich history and culture of Tk'emlúps and the City of Kamloops.”



In 2019, funding was approved for a new social plan for the City of Kamloops. According to Mayor Ken Christian, the previous plan did not pay enough attention to the Indigenous population of the city, which numbers around 7,000. The new social plan is to include more content on reconciliation. “It’s time for a rewrite,” Mayor Christian told a local newspaper.

Finally, the 2019-2022 City of Kamloops Strategic Plan includes direction to strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities. This direction reflects the City’s priority to improve the relationship with Tk’emlúps, and is an example of how collaboration has continued through changes in elected leaders from both communities.



PHOTO: Opening of the Xget'tem' Trail.
Photo credit: Jessica Wallace and Kamloops This Week

LESSONS LEARNED AND KEYS TO SUCCESS

The City of Kamloops External Relations Manager acknowledged that there have been some bumps along the way in building and stewarding Kamloops’ relationship with Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc, but is quick to point out that because of the enhanced level of trust between the two governments, that the bumps did not become roadblocks. Other important lessons learned include:

- ✓ **Learn about your partners.** City staff should take Indigenous awareness training and look for ways to keep the learning ongoing by inviting Indigenous governments to make presentations to Council and staff on a variety of topics.
- ✓ **Be open, transparent, and honest.** Local governments need to be open in their approaches to their Indigenous neighbours. Even if past relationships have not been positive, don’t be afraid to acknowledge that, even if you were not part of the organization when the relationship was formed.
- ✓ **Make time for each other.** The Community-to-Community forums created time for relationship building, cultural learnings, and shared understandings of the issues and concerns of each community.

“The City has been inviting Tk’emlúps Council and staff to give presentations at our meetings, which really contributes to our ongoing education.”

Tammy Robertson, External Relations Manager for the City of Kamloops





“We have a rich history of communities, villages, hunting and fishing grounds — and innumerable oral stories in this region. We are so pleased the City of Kamloops is working with us to create awareness and preservation of our cultural heritage.”

Tk'emlúps Chief Rosanne Casimir

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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