

DATE: October 21, 2021

FILE: 0400-70

TO: Chair and Directors
Regional District Board

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. Dyson

RE: Indigenous Relations

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update the Regional District Board on the Comox Valley Regional Districts (CVRD) Indigenous relations.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

None.

Executive Summary

- CVRD works with an [Indigenous Relations framework](#) and a [Statement of Reconciliation](#)
- CVRD enjoys a very strong relationship with the K'ómoks First Nation – evidenced through monthly leadership meetings and several agreements on major initiatives
- Board has set Indigenous relations as one of its four strategic drivers [Strategic Driver - Indigenous Relations | Comox Valley Regional District \(comoxvalleyrd.ca\)](#)
- Recent events across the country have illustrated how important it is to work with Indigenous nations and recognize our shared histories, now more than ever
- CVRD Board set a goal in early 2021 to develop an action plan for improving Indigenous relations
- CVRD hired Dillon Consulting Limited to undertake an awareness assessment and develop mid and longer term actions to advance reconciliation; this work is one step along path of reconciliation.
- CVRD Board meeting on Oct 26 will include an update from consultants and opportunity for dialogue and input to the final report (Appendix A)
- The aim of the meeting is for the Dillon team to report on the work completed to date and to present and discuss key themes and considerations with respect to reconciliation strategies, as well as potential recommendations for mid- and long-term actions that may be included in the assessment report.

Prepared by:

J. Warren

James Warren
Deputy Chief Administrative
Officer

Government Partners and Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

City of Courtenay	✓
Town of Comox	✓
Village of Cumberland	✓
K'ómoks First Nation	✓
Wachiay Friendship Centre	✓

Attachments: Appendix A – Project update Memo

Memo

To: James Warren, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Comox Valley Regional District

From: Caroline Wrobel, Project Manager, Dillon Consulting Limited

Date: October 20, 2021

Subject: CVRD Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Assessment Project – Phase 1 Summary and Draft Table of Contents for the Assessment Report

Our File: 21-2645

Dillon Consulting Limited (Dillon) is pleased to provide the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) with this memo summarizing the key activities and outcomes of Phase 1 of the Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Assessment Project (the Project). The key objectives of Phase 1 were to:

- Listen and learn about how the CVRD has approached Indigenous relations and Reconciliation to date;
- Explore and identify actions and best practices employed by other local governments in terms of Indigenous relations and Reconciliation that may lend support to the assessment;
- Identify key themes and considerations that can be used to inform the mid- and long-term strategies and actions to support Indigenous relations and Reconciliation; and
- Develop a draft table of contents for the Assessment Report, which will be completed in Phase 2.

The following memo provides a summary of the activities completed to date, the themes and considerations that will inform the recommendations for potential mid- and long-term actions, some of the of preliminary recommendations we have identified, and the next steps. These summaries are followed by the proposed table of contents for the Assessment Report.

Activities Completed to Date

As part of Phase 1 of the Project, the CVRD and Dillon teams have completed the following activities:

1) Project kick-off meeting with CVRD staff and Dillon

Dillon team representatives met virtually with CVRD team representatives on September 2, 2021, to review and discuss the work plan, including task timelines and the approach to engagement with CVRD staff and Indigenous communities and groups, and to enable the Dillon team to learn more about the CVRD's efforts to date in terms of Indigenous relations and Reconciliation.

2) Collect and review relevant background and reference materials

The Dillon team collected and reviewed potentially relevant and publically reference materials, as well as background documents provided by the CVRD, through September and October. The intent of the review was twofold: to develop an understanding of the CVRD's approach to building Indigenous

relations and addressing Reconciliation in a meaningful way, and to complete a 'jurisdictional scan' to explore and identify actions and best practices employed by other local governments in terms of Indigenous relations and Reconciliation that may lend support to the assessment.

3) Communication and Engagement Plan

Dillon prepared a brief communication and engagement plan in mid-September. The plan outlined the approach to engagement with CVRD staff and Indigenous communities and groups, including rationale, anticipated participants, roles and responsibilities, and timelines. The plan was developed based on the discussion during the project kick-off meeting and subsequent communications. It was determined that engagement with Indigenous communities and groups would be limited at this point in time to enable the CVRD to first focus on building a stronger organizational understanding of potential pathways to Reconciliation. It is expected that the Assessment Report will lay the foundation for future engagement with Indigenous communities and groups with respect to Reconciliation planning and implementation.

4) Introduce the Project to K'omoks First Nation

The CVRD introduced the Project to K'omoks First Nation (KFN) during the September Chief and Council meeting. Based on these preliminary discussions about the Project, it was agreed on that while there is general interest from KFN in the Project, the CVRD will undertake the Project internally for now to put in the upfront work rather than placing burden on KFN to identify how to reconcile. The Assessment Report will serve as a starting point to a reconciliation plan and set the stage and inform future engagement with KFN on relations and Reconciliation.

5) CVRD staff survey

The Dillon team prepared a brief survey to be shared with all CVRD staff. The intent of the survey is:

- To support the CVRD in assessing the level of Indigenous awareness among staff and the level of interest in learning; and
- Inform the preliminary Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Assessment in terms of potential actions and strategies to improve Indigenous awareness among staff.

The survey went live in early October and will close on October 27, 2021.

6) Focus Group with CVRD Executive Team and Senior Managers

Dillon representatives prepared and facilitated an interactive focus group with the CVRD's executive management team and senior managers on October, 12, 2021. The purpose of the focus group was:

- To gauge the general level of awareness, understanding, and interest with respect to Indigenous Peoples, relationships and Reconciliation among leaders in the organization; and
- Identify potential opportunities and constraints to increasing learning and awareness among the wider team at the CVRD.

Themes and Considerations

Key themes and considerations with respect to Indigenous relations and Reconciliation have been identified through background and reference material review and engagement with the CVRD. These are intended to set the stage for and inform the nature of potential mid- and long-term actions and strategies to support Indigenous relations and Reconciliation that will be included in the Assessment Report.

Key themes and considerations identified through our review of background materials for the CVRD and engagement with CVRD staff undertaken to date include:

- The CVRD leadership team has a good level of awareness and understanding of Indigenous issues, relations and the benefits of these, and Reconciliation, which provides a strong foundation for building awareness throughout the organization.
- The CVRD leadership team recognizes that Reconciliation is an ongoing commitment and Reconciliation planning undertaken by the CVRD should be adaptable and evolving based on relationships, needs, and opportunities and constraints on the part of both the CVRD and Indigenous communities and groups.
- The CVRD is keen in pursuing opportunities that support Reconciliation through the provision of services and the development of other initiatives, when time and resources allow.
- Learning and awareness building in terms of Indigenous Peoples and Reconciliation throughout the organization is important for Reconciliation and outreach and education to build this at the CVRD is a priority.
- There are challenges and constraints to relationship building and Reconciliation for the CVRD, including legislative and capacity constraints, which require an ongoing commitment to identify opportunities and solutions to overcome these and adapt over time.
- Reciprocal relationships between Indigenous communities and groups and the CVRD require sufficient time to establish and ongoing meaningful actions to grow.

Key themes and considerations identified through our review of relevant reference materials and 'jurisdictional scan', as well as the experience and expertise of the Dillon team, include:

- Acknowledging and understanding the past and work done in the area of Reconciliation (e.g., TRCs Calls to Action and UNDRIP) is foundational to understanding Reconciliation and exploring potential actions that support Reconciliation.
- Training that is dynamic and varied and is facilitated through a variety of perspectives, experiences, and worldviews supports a strong foundation of awareness and understanding amongst staff in an organization.
- Approaching the relationship with Indigenous communities and groups at the government-to-government level supports the incorporation and recognition of Indigenous perspectives in the provision of services and local government initiatives.

- Working collaboratively with Indigenous communities and groups to identify and address common issues can enable collective action to meeting respective community needs (i.e., mutual benefits) and broaden the capacity to do so.
- Continuous learning and relationship building between local governments and Indigenous communities and groups are supported through an incremental approach to collaboration that is based upon common interests, aspirations, and respective capacities.
- Flexibility and adaptability in engagement and collaboration timelines established by local governments when working with Indigenous communities and groups is important to enable engagement and collaboration that is culturally appropriate and respectful.
- Recognizing capacity constraints for both local governments and Indigenous communities and groups and allowing sufficient time for the progression of relationships as interest and capacity allows is essential to success.
- Working in collaboration with Indigenous communities and groups when developing policy can support a strong foundation for reciprocal government-to-government relations.
- Recognizing Reconciliation documents as stepping stones to important conversations about relationships and Reconciliation is important for a holistic approach that can be sustained and evolve over time.
- Building relationships at the local government level can support and/or initiate change at the provincial and federal levels.

Preliminary Recommendations

The Dillon team has identified some preliminary recommendations for foundational actions that can support all three of the ‘action areas’ identified by the CVRD in the Indigenous Relations Framework (i.e., develop policy, strengthen relationships, and support learning), as follows:

1) Use the Assessment Report to engage Indigenous communities and groups on the CVRD’s path to Reconciliation

We recommend that the forthcoming Assessment Report is framed as preliminary in nature and intended to serve as a starting point for discussions with Indigenous communities and groups about the CVRD’s Reconciliation efforts. Discussions should include if and how Indigenous communities and groups want to be engaged by the CVRD moving forward with respect to Reconciliation planning and implementation.

2) Consider establishing a Reconciliation Working Group or Advisory Committee

While it is important for the CVRD to take on initial planning work for Reconciliation, it is equally important to include Indigenous communities and groups and their perspectives in decision-making processes related to Reconciliation moving forward. We recommend that a Reconciliation Working Group or Advisory Committee with representation from the CVRD and Indigenous communities and groups (e.g., KFN, Wachiay Friendship Centre) is established, assuming there is support for this from all

sides. The group or committee can serve to provide input and advice on issues relating to Reconciliation and matters that may impact Indigenous Peoples, and can signal a long-term commitment toward Reconciliation. The group or committee may also serve to explore solutions to constraints or barriers to Reconciliation.

3) Develop a Reconciliation Action or Implementation Plan

Reconciliation Action or Implementation Plans are commonly developed by local governments and Indigenous communities in Australia, and they are increasingly on the radar as a useful tool to support Reconciliation by local governments in Canada. The plan can be developed by or with the participation of the Reconciliation Working Group or Advisory Committee, enabling the direct involvement of Indigenous community and group representatives in the planning process. In doing so, the development of the plan enables a collaborative approach to Reconciliation and can also serve to strengthen relationship building. The Assessment Report can serve as a starting point to the plan – the potential action and strategies identified in the Assessment Report can be validated, refined and/or built on based on the needs, values, aspirations and perspectives of Indigenous communities and groups.

The Assessment Report that will be developed in Phase 2 of the Project will include a suite of recommendations with respect to potential mid- and long-term strategies and actions within each of the three action areas. The following table provides examples of the types of recommendations that may be included in the Assessment Report.

Action Area	Potential Recommendations for Actions and Strategies
Develop Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Truth and Reconciliation Committee's Calls to Action to identify actions of relevance to local governments like the CVRD and to inform areas for policy development and/or refinement through the lens of Reconciliation.
Strengthen Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop initiatives to celebrate the upcoming UN 2022-2023 Decade of Indigenous languages (e.g., incorporating Indigenous language into an official greeting or producing a postcard that acts as a resource to help learn about reconciliation and basic Indigenous vocabulary).
Support Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local Indigenous communities and groups to identify experiential and reciprocal learning opportunities for CVRD staff while also providing a platform for local Indigenous voices and perspectives.

Next Steps

The Dillon team will present on the outcomes of Phase 1 at the upcoming CVRD Board meeting on October 26, 2021. This will conclude Phase 1 of the Project.

Phase 2 of the Project will involve the development of Draft and Final Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Assessment Reports, to be completed by November 3 and 30, 2021, respectively. A preliminary Table of Contents for the Assessment Report is provided below.

Draft Table of Contents

1. Introduction & Purpose
 - 1.1 Organization
2. Legislative and Policy Framework for Reconciliation
3. Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Principles & Challenges
4. Overview of CVRD Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Efforts to Date
5. Jurisdictional Scan – What are other Local Governments doing for Reconciliation?
 - 5.1 Tla’amin Nation, the City of Powell River & qathet Regional District
 - 5.2 Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District and the City of Port Alberni
 - 5.3 Capital Regional District
 - 5.4 Nanaimo Regional District
 - 5.5 Squamish-Lillooet Regional District
 - 5.6 District of Saanich
 - 5.7 District of Ucluelet
 - 5.8 Islands Trust
 - 5.9 City of Vancouver
 - 5.10 City of Ottawa
 - 5.11 City of Lethbridge
 - 5.12 Municipality of Sioux Lookout
 - 5.13 City of Yellowknife
 - 5.14 Local Governments in Australia
 - 5.15 Planning Considerations for Reconciliation
6. Inputs from CVRD Staff Engagement
 - 6.1 Staff Survey
 - 6.2 Focus Group
 - 6.3 Planning Considerations for Reconciliation
7. Recommendations for Potential Mid- and Long-Term Strategies
 - 7.1 Foundational Strategies
 - 7.2 Developing Policy
 - 7.3 Strengthening Relationships
 - 7.4 Supporting Learning
8. References