

For immediate release
September 16, 2016

**SLRD AGRICULTURAL PLAN IN FINALS FOR 2016 LAND AWARDS,
WINNER TO BE ANNOUNCED AT OCTOBER 21 GALA**

Squamish-Lillooet Regional District Electoral Area B, District of Lillooet and St'át'imc Agricultural Plan *recognized as a leading public-sector initiative in creating more resilient, healthy communities and natural environments*

Lillooet BC/Northern St'át'imc territory – The SLRD was recognized for its work in collaborative agricultural planning yesterday by the Real Estate Foundation of BC, a philanthropic organization that helps advance sustainable land use in British Columbia.

A finalist in the public sector category, the *Squamish-Lillooet Regional District Electoral Area B, District of Lillooet and St'át'imc Agricultural Plan* (“Ag Plan”) is one of nine initiatives in the running for the 2016 Land Awards for demonstrating leadership, innovation and collaboration regarding sustainable land use in BC.

The recognition comes almost 2 years after the adoption of the plan by the SLRD Board, during BC Farmers Appreciation Week, as place-making conversations take place in Vancouver amongst the world's best planners – an indication that regional opportunity and global trends are dove-tailing nicely for the residents, growers and potential investors of the Northern St'át'imc territory, the District of Lillooet and the surrounding Electoral Area B of the SLRD (Seton Portage/Shalalth, the Yalakom Valley, Bridge River/West Pavilion, Pavilion Lake, Fountain, Texas Creek/Highway 12 and the Duffey Lake Corridor.)

Unique among agricultural plans in BC, the *SLRD Electoral Area B, District of Lillooet & St'át'imc Agricultural Plan* enabled collaboration with St'át'imc community members during the 18 month consultation process. This willingness to adopt alternative methods to work around jurisdictional silos and create a long-term vision for agriculture in the Lillooet region was built on the common realization of the chiefs and elected officials in the Ag Plan's communities that agriculture is essential to the greater Lillooet area's food security and economic development.

Kevin Whitney, chief of T'it'q'et, one of the six St'át'imc communities invited to participate in the process, says exploring agriculture's economic development and employment opportunities got him interested in collaborating. Unemployment is high within St'át'imc communities. “We will use this experience, and the relationships we built with the regional district, to continue to pursue our goals of economic development and governance in the St'át'imc territory,” says Whitney.

“Land use planning across jurisdictions is complicated and requires more innovative approaches, but food is an excellent common ground,” says District of Lillooet Mayor Marg

Lampman. "It's very rewarding for all the participants to see this effort to grow a more regional mindset achieve recognition at a provincial level."

Another unique outcome of the Ag Plan is the creation of a not-for-profit society, tasked with implementing many of the on-the-ground practical tactics recommended in it.

The Lillooet Agriculture and Food Society (LAFS) was established in November 2015. LAFS has since hired Curtis Cook as Executive Director, completed brand building work, launched the Lillooet Grown Food Hub initiative, and is developing an Agritourism Strategy and exploring the acquisition of food system infrastructure for storage, transportation, and processing equipment.

"The Agricultural Plan process has been a great opportunity to connect across communities and dream big for the future of food production," said SLRD Area B Director Mickey Macri. "This plan is a true collaborative effort. We're especially pleased by the involvement and support of the northern St'at'imc communities. We would like to sincerely thank everyone who gave their time, expertise and passion for agriculture and for the region to help shape this plan."

For a list of all the finalists, visit <http://www.refbc.com/land-awards/finalists-0>

- 30 -

About the *Squamish-Lillooet Regional District Electoral Area B, District of Lillooet and St'at'imc Agricultural Plan*

The Agricultural Plan process was initiated in April 2013 with significant input and in-kind support provided by the Agricultural Plan Working Group, composed of the Area B Agricultural Advisory Committee, as well as representatives from the SLRD, the District of Lillooet and St'at'imc communities. Throughout the planning process, valuable feedback from local citizens and agricultural stakeholders was gathered through extensive community engagement which included public open houses, surveys, technical workshops and face-to-face interviews. The resulting plan identified regionally-appropriate solutions for farmland access, food market viability, sustainable agricultural practices, co-operation and collaboration within the agricultural community, and food security. It was adopted by the SLRD Board in October 2014.

<http://www.slrd.bc.ca/inside-slrd/current-projects-initiatives/area-b-district-lillooet-st%C3%A1timc-agricultural-plan>

About the Lillooet Agriculture and Food Society (LAFS)

The Lillooet Agriculture and Food Society (LAFS) is a non-profit society charged with advancing agricultural economic development in the Lillooet area. Leading the grassroots implementation of *Squamish-Lillooet Regional District's (SLRD) Electoral Area B, District of Lillooet and St'at'imc Agricultural Plan*, LAFS supports local farmers, ranchers, growers and other passionate individuals who are building a sustainable food system to serve local communities, B.C, and beyond, by collaborating on research, education and awareness initiatives that foster responsible growth of the agriculture and food system in the region; opening up new opportunities and markets for local products and services; and identifying effective ways to get healthy, delicious fresh local food to the world. <https://lillooetagricultureandfood.org/>

About the Real Estate Foundation of BC: The Real Estate Foundation of BC is a philanthropic organization that helps advance sustainable land use in British Columbia. It provides grants to non-profit organizations working to improve B.C. communities and natural

environments through responsible and informed land use, conservation and real estate practices. Its funding programs support research, education, and law and policy reform. Since 1988, the Foundation has approved more than \$74 million in grants. The Foundation also conducts research and special projects to support collaboration and knowledge-sharing around land use. Learn more at www.refbc.com.

For more information, please contact:

Jeannette Nadon
Communications & Grants Coordinator
Squamish-Lillooet Regional District
Telephone: (604) 894-6371 ext. 239
Email: jnadon@slrd.bc.ca