

Squamish-Lillooet Regional District Indigenous Relations

Truth & Reconciliation: *In Practice*

A Guide for Working in a Good Way



Acknowledgements

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Guide prepared for



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Territorial Acknowledgment and Statement of Reconciliation

The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) is found within the core traditional territories of the Lílwat Nation, Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) and St'át'imc Nation which includes the communities of N'Quatqua, Samahquam, Sekw'el'was, Skatin, T'it'q'et, Tsal'alh, Ts'kw'aylaxw, Xaxli'p, Xa'xtsa and Xwisten, all of which are independent and self-governing First Nations. Small parts of the SLRD also overlap with the traditional territories of the Stó:lō, Tsleil-Waututh, Nlaka'pamux, Tšilhqot'in, and Secwépemc Nations. While the SLRD does not provide direct services to the residents of the First Nations communities, the organization is committed to enhancing relations with the Indigenous communities and First Nations within whose territories the SLRD operates. The SLRD believes that positive working relationships with First Nations are essential to build a strong and resilient region for present and future generations.

The Lílwat, Skwxwú7mesh and St'át'imc Nations, and all First Nations upon whose territories the SLRD operates, are the original stewards and rights holders of their respective unceded territories. These Nations have inherent and constitutionally protected individual and collective rights, including the right to self-determination and the right to land or a territory, flowing from their status as the original peoples of Canada. These rights extend beyond the boundaries of First Nations Reserve Lands, which represent just a fraction of their lands.

The SLRD recognizes and respects the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples and First Nations and we are committed to moving together towards the full acknowledgement of these rights. We honour Indigenous Peoples' and First Nations' distinct cultures and practices; their laws and systems of governance; their unbreakable ties to these lands and waters; their histories of adversity, strength and resilience as well as their aspirations to protect their cultures, and regain their prosperity and sovereignty.

The work of reconciliation falls to all segments of Canadian society. The SLRD is committed to building meaningful, respectful and enduring relationships with Indigenous Peoples and First Nations as we continue to learn, unlearn, understand and navigate our responsibilities on this shared reconciliation journey. Our actions will be guided in part by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action, B.C.'s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and Canada's United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. We will also look to the First Nations upon whose territories we operate for their continued direction, guidance and collaboration.

Executive Summary

Since 2015, strengthening relationships with First Nations and Indigenous communities has been a strategic priority of the SLRD Board. We are committed to working alongside local First Nations as regional caretakers, acknowledging that we are uninvited guests on Indigenous land. In 2016, the Board resolved to be a Regional District of Reconciliation and to work towards turning these words into action, marking a significant step in this ongoing journey. While progress has been made in advancing reconciliation and relationship building efforts since 2016, the overarching Indigenous Relations, Truth & Reconciliation: *In Practice* (the Guide) will serve to guide the SLRD in achieving this transformative goal.

The development of the Guide was informed through the following:

- A review of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action Report;
- A review of relevant SLRD policies, plans, staff reports and reconciliation efforts to date, including an analysis of all recommendations received through leadership meetings held with Lilwat Nation and the St'át'imc Nation communities of N'Quatqua, Samahquam, Sekw'el'was, T'it'q'et, Tsal'alh, Ts'kw'aylaxw, Xaxli'p, and Xwisten;
- A review of relevant resources available through the Union of BC Municipalities, Local Government Management Association of BC, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Canadian Institute of Planners, the BC Law Institute as well as several other BC municipal and regional district governments;
- Three interviews with representatives from neighbouring First Nations governments;
- One survey to SLRD Board and staff members; and
- A series of workshops focused on fostering respectful relationships and conducting strategic planning for reconciliation.

This Guide outlines the SLRD's journey toward reconciliation, highlighting the key steps and responsibilities required for continued relationship building with First Nations. It also underscores the SLRD's commitment to adopting principles of legal pluralism, which recognizes the coexistence of Indigenous legal systems alongside provincial and Canadian law. This commitment is framed within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. This Guide serves as a way to develop collaborative and respectful partnerships that honour Indigenous protocols, processes, and values while advancing meaningful reconciliation efforts.

Designed as a living document that will evolve over time, this Guide encourages ongoing engagement from the SLRD Board and staff and reflects the SLRD's commitment to working collaboratively with Indigenous communities to drive legislative change, respect Indigenous rights and foster mutual understanding and cooperation in the service of building a thriving and resilient region. As part of this commitment, the SLRD shared the draft Guide with local First Nations, inviting their feedback and involvement in shaping next steps.

A Message from the SLRD Board Chair

On behalf of the SLRD Board of Directors, I am honoured to introduce the SLRD's guide to Indigenous Relations, Truth & Reconciliation: *In Practice*.

For generations, Indigenous peoples have been marginalized through colonization, with governments and other institutions building systems to oppress and erase in the pursuit of dominance. As a local government organization, we acknowledge this truth and we resolve to become a Regional District of Reconciliation. We have taken some steps in recent years, to understand our role in implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the framework for addressing the injustices faced by Indigenous communities and ensuring their participation in decision-making matters that affect them.

The SLRD acknowledges that the foundation of this work is set in the relationships that we build, that truth must come before reconciliation, and that reconciliation is not an end-point, but a journey. We understand that a commitment alone is not enough, and that thoughtful and consistent action is needed to demonstrate our resolve.

Our guide to Indigenous Relations, Truth & Reconciliation: *In Practice* speaks to this resolve – to decolonize and indigenize our organization, and it sets out the vision that will guide us in this work, while establishing the expectations for our organization, and the communities within which we serve.

We are humbled by the knowledge that has been shared with us through this process: stories, wisdom, information and perspectives that have helped to guide the development of this document that is but one step forward for us on this journey.

We are steadfast in our commitment to this important work, and we invite you to join us in our collective, collaborative and respectful walk on this path that we take together. We support the vision of this Guide not just because it is the right thing to do, but because if it is done well, we can see a more prosperous and just future for all—a region where everyone thrives.

The SLRD is committed to working with the Nations on equal footing to evolve this Guide, which will serve as a living document as we learn and adapt to change.

Jen Ford

Board Chair, Squamish-Lillooet Regional District

A Message from the SLRD CAO

At its core, the SLRD's Guide to Indigenous Relations, Truth & Reconciliation: *In Practice* affirms the SLRD's commitment to building strong, respectful and mutually beneficial relationships with the Indigenous peoples and First Nations upon whose territories the SLRD operates.

For some, this work is met with passionate support, while for others, it may trigger feelings of uncertainty and fear of the unknown. Neither reaction is wrong, and the work being done in the Truth and Reconciliation space at community and government levels includes approaching both inspiration and fear with curiosity and intention.

We operate within the constraints of a colonial system, bound by legislation and jurisdiction. To do this work well will be challenging, and at the same time we know that if we are to consider the needs of future generations and the nature around us which we so revere, we can't go on as we have in the past. We can do things differently, and we can do things better – even within the constraints by which we operate.

Truth and Reconciliation is not a moment of acknowledgment, but rather a lifelong journey of listening, learning, building new understanding and taking action to change. This Guide is intended to guide the organization as it works to develop more inclusive approaches that adopt principles of legal pluralism and respect while upholding the rights of First Nations and Indigenous Peoples.

Legal pluralism has been described as both reasons for hope and trepidation; a description to be taken to heart while we acknowledge its potential and consider how it can apply in local governance. For our part, in its infancy of concept at the SLRD, we will journey into the space using a sorting method. Through this lens, each action and challenge can be placed in one of three lanes:

The sticky lane - where current legislation does not allow for change or consideration of Indigenous laws, and, as a regional government, in these cases we advocate for clarity and change.

The grey lane - where there is room to challenge a system that undermines the rights of Indigenous Peoples and First Nations, and as regional government, we step up to the challenge.

The action lane – where, through good relations, inclusive regional governance and shared decision-making is possible if the extra effort is made.

I encourage everyone reading this document to consider the vision, feel the fear, take a breath and commit to doing your part the best way you can—with an open mind, an open heart and a willingness to learn and do things differently.

We are planting seeds for trees under whose shade future generations will sit.

Heather Paul
CAO, Squamish-Lillooet Regional District

Foundation Documents and Legal Frameworks

Indigenous governance in British Columbia (BC) is rooted in laws and systems that predate colonization. Colonization disrupted these systems, leading to significant legal and social challenges. In recent years, various non-Indigenous commitments and legal frameworks have aimed to address these issues and promote reconciliation. The following section provides the context for non-Indigenous governments to better support Indigenous relations and reconciliation across BC. Specific legal implications and documents are outlined to provide an understanding of how non-Indigenous governments can alter their approaches to achieve reconciliation.

The foundation documents and legal frameworks that helped inform this work are:

[Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982](#)

[United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#)

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission \(TRC\) Calls to Action](#)

[Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act \(DRIPA\)](#)

[United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act \(UNDA\)](#)

[Existing SLRD Policy](#)

A Note About Language

In reconciliation work, the meanings and implications of language can vary significantly among different cultures and communities. The SLRD is committed to a Nation-led approach, recognizing that each Nation's unique identity, interests, and priorities guide the appropriate use of language. As such, the SLRD will defer to the preferences and guidance of each individual Nation to ensure that language reflects their distinct perspectives and fosters respectful and meaningful relationships.

For example, some Nations may choose to work from either an Indigenization or decolonization lens. These two terms may have different meanings to different people. See below for a brief definition of the terms.

Decolonization: “Decolonization once viewed as the formal process of handing over the instruments of government, is now recognized as a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power.”⁵ Decolonization offers a pathway to revitalize Indigenous cultures by supporting the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge that has been impacted by colonization.

Indigenization: Indigenization focuses on incorporating Indigenous perspectives, values, and practices into an organization, through promoting legal pluralism⁶ and fostering collaborative relationships. It emphasizes collaboration and the integration of Indigenous knowledge and practices.⁷ Indigenization aligns with the concept of Ethical Space, where distinct and equal governing bodies come together to create shared decisions fostered on mutual respect and understanding.

5 Linda Tuhiwai Smith. 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Page 98. Zed Books Ltd. London & New York.

6 According to Dr. Val Napoleon, “legal pluralism denotes a situation where two or more legal systems coexist in the same social field.” Legal pluralism recognizes that different groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, religious communities, or state institutions, may have distinct legal norms, rules, or practices that operate simultaneously. Applying legal pluralism supports parties in understanding each other's existing arrangement and provides an entry point for building and maintaining respectful relationships. This concept is especially relevant in postcolonial societies and areas with significant cultural or legal diversity.

7 Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. 2017. *A Brief Definition of Decolonization and Indigenization*. <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/a-brief-definition-of-decolonization-and-indigenization>

Indigenous Relations, Truth & Reconciliation Vision and Values

The Vision and Values noted below have been developed in collaboration with the SLRD Board and Senior Leadership Team. They are intended to align with the SLRD's overarching Mission, Vision, and Values.

Vision

SLRD staff, members of the Board, and our communities are knowledgeable, inspired and empowered to actively engage in relationship building, truth and reconciliation efforts. We are committed to building meaningful, respectful, and enduring relationships with Indigenous Peoples while upholding principles of reconciliation. Together, we strive towards a future rooted in mutual understanding, shared responsibility, and lasting harmony.



Values

Respect

Respect involves recognizing and valuing the dignity and worth of everyone. The SLRD will demonstrate respect by honouring the cultures, traditions and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples while striving to address the power imbalances inherent in colonial-based systems. The SLRD will be guided by respectful approaches to building relationships, with a commitment to listening and learning from Indigenous cultures, histories, and perspectives. We will approach our interactions with Indigenous communities with humility and an open mind, eager to learn and understand their ways of knowing.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is about mutual exchange and benefit. The SLRD will foster relationships with Indigenous Peoples based on mutual respect and shared benefits. We will ensure that our interactions and collaborations are balanced, where both parties contribute to and benefit from the relationship.

Responsibility

Responsibility involves being accountable for one's actions and their impacts. The SLRD recognizes that stewardship and care for the land and our communities is a shared responsibility. We understand the persistence of systemic inequalities and we accept responsibility to do our part to dismantle these systems and reimagine new ways of living together that honour both interdependence and autonomy. We aim to create an organizational culture that is culturally aware, trauma-informed, and anti-racist. We will be guided by Indigenous knowledge, worldviews, and expertise in the design, implementation, and evaluation of our programs, services, policies, and initiatives.

Courage

Courage is the ability to confront fear, uncertainty, and difficult situations. The SLRD will demonstrate courage by addressing historical and ongoing injustices faced by Indigenous Peoples. We will take bold actions to implement changes and rectify past wrongs, even when it is challenging.

Principles

Our work will be guided by a principled approach, offering clear direction on how to put our values and goals into action. The relationship between the SLRD and the First Nations upon whose territories we operate will be framed under the UNDRIP Articles and TRC Calls to Action listed in the Foundation Documents and Legal Frameworks Section.

SLRD Principles

1. Positive perceptions and attitudes between First Nations and the SLRD will be built by creating and maintaining respectful relationships, as well as through tangible commitments, such as agreements and protocols when appropriate.
2. Sufficient staff time and resources will be invested to support these ongoing relationships. We will strive to be flexible in our approach to ensure sufficient space and time for relationships to be built.
3. Reconciliation occurs through the development of government-to-government relationships based on the recognition of Indigenous rights and respect for the diversity of Indigenous knowledge, protocols, processes, laws and governance systems. Local governments have an important role to play in the work of reconciliation, but we recognize that some of this work is not within the jurisdiction of local government. We recognize and respect the sovereign-to-sovereign (Crown-to-Nation) relationships that exist between federal, provincial, and First Nations governments.
4. We are responsible for understanding the expectations of UNDRIP and the TRC Calls to Action and for integrating them into our work. We recognize that much work to align practices with these documents has been done by other BC municipalities, regional districts, and professional organizations of which the SLRD or members of its staff belong. We will keep up to date on best practices in this evolving area, and we will follow the policy guidance of our professional organizations unless it conflicts with the guidance received from our First Nations partners.
5. Plans and strategies for the implementation of UNDRIP and the TRC Calls to Action will be ‘co-created’ with Líl’wat Nation, Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) and interested member communities of the St’át’imc Nation through the development of meaningful engagement and collaboration processes, including ‘Community to Community Forums’.
6. We will be transparent, accountable, and consistent in our actions, ensuring they align with our words. We will communicate openly and honestly with Indigenous communities, sharing information and intentions without hidden agendas. We will work to create culturally safe and inclusive spaces and opportunities that respect and honour the rights and contributions of Indigenous communities.

7. Collaboration and cooperation with First Nations will guide how we communicate and engage on land use, economic, and other policy matters. We will take direction from Indigenous leaders to ensure engagements are conducted appropriately. We will adopt a “nothing about us without us” approach, ensuring Indigenous communities are engaged before any actions affecting their rights are undertaken.
8. Relationships are built at the speed of trust; they take time. As does exploring what mutual commitment to reconciliation means. We will engage neighbouring First Nation communities to build those relationships around shared interests and common concerns.
9. Systemic racism exists and there are many ways of understanding the world, including diverse legal traditions that predate Canada. The SLRD will question assumptions, remain open to different ways of knowing, and make efforts to adapt our methods and processes to respect and incorporate these legal traditions.
10. The SLRD is committed to engaging and collaborating with Indigenous Peoples and organizations in ways that are meaningful and that will lead to mutual benefit. We will engage in open and transparent communication regarding our actions and we will demonstrate awareness and respect for Indigenous communities, cultural protocols and practices, local knowledge and decision-making systems.

Roles and Responsibilities

To be successful as an organization, every employee must be moving in the same direction. There are many different plans and frameworks that provide us with guidance on how we interact with the public and others. When we look at them together, they provide direction on how we advance reconciliation in everything we do. We will uphold our principles as set out in this Guide through the below listed roles and responsibilities.

There are two distinct levels of responsibility within this Guide: those for individual staff and Board members and those for the organization as a whole. At the individual level, staff are encouraged to reflect on how they show up for Indigenous communities. Maintaining the Values set out in this Guide are critical to showing up with an open heart and an open mind. Participating in training opportunities to continue this learning journey is an important step. At the organization level, responsibility means a commitment to fundamental changes in organizational structure, decision-making, and relationship building. This includes embedding reconciliation principles into every aspect of our operations, from ensuring staff have the appropriate training and resources, to revising policies and procedures, to ensuring Indigenous perspectives are integral to our strategic planning and governance. The SLRD will also prioritize building and sustaining genuine partnerships with Indigenous governments, creating pathways for meaningful collaboration and ensuring that our organizational culture supports reconciliation at all levels.

As the SLRD commits to the journey of reconciliation, five roles frame the behaviours that each staff and Board member must embody to support our goals. The five roles are: supporter, partner, listener, aligner, and connector. The ways in which we embody the five roles in our daily work activities will vary significantly. These roles are not intended to be prescriptive; rather, they serve as a guide for how each of us can contribute to fostering healthy relationships with the Indigenous Peoples of this land.

The Five Roles

Supporter

Respect Indigenous Protocols

Recognize and respect Indigenous protocols, practices, knowledge, and priorities.

Honour Indigenous Lands

Treat Indigenous lands and resources with care and reverence, acknowledging their cultural significance.

Partner

Inclusion in Decision-Making

Ensure that Indigenous voices are heard and included in decision-making processes.

Collaborative Projects

Work together with Indigenous communities on shared projects and initiatives.

Listener

Active Listening

Listen attentively and value the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous communities.

Continuous Learning

Engage in ongoing learning about the truth of colonization and its impacts, Indigenous histories, cultures, and current issues, and seek to understand the Indigenous context and history of the region.

Aligner

Champion Indigenous Rights and Perspectives

Actively promote and uphold the rights, voices, and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples in all decision-making processes.

Promote Systemic Change

Work to address and dismantle systemic barriers that impact Indigenous communities, advocating for policies and practices that support equity, inclusion and justice.

Connector

Build Relationships

Build and maintain relationships based on mutual respect, trust, and understanding.

Amplify Indigenous Voices

Support and amplify the voices of Indigenous governments to advance their efforts across various initiatives and jurisdictions.

Commitments

The SLRD's commitment to cultural awareness, reconciliation, and education will be guided by an iterative Theory of Change. This encourages continuous cycles of learning, engaging, implementing, reviewing, and reassessing. We acknowledge that the work of reconciliation will evolve as the SLRD learns from its experiences and deepens its relationships with First Nations.

Our commitments articulate how the SLRD strives to honour and enact the Guide through its policies, programs, and services. These commitments are framed under our principles to support reconciliation from a broader context. Our strategic goal is to achieve the UNDRIP principles and the TRC Calls to Action. To accomplish this, we must commit to the following:

1. ENHANCE ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS AND BUILD RELATIONAL CAPACITY

We will build an organizational culture that is equipped to advance reconciliation. We envision a future where the SLRD's policies, processes, and relationships reflect a deep understanding of Indigenous governance. By continually enhancing internal capacity and relational knowledge, we aim to create a resilient, responsive, and culturally safe and competent organization. This capacity will foster meaningful partnerships with First Nations and help us to effectively navigate evolving provincial and national contexts.

Objectives

1. **Create Indigenous Relations Training and Resources:** Provide specialized training and resources for staff and elected officials on how to engage respectfully and in a culturally safe and inclusive way with Indigenous communities, ensuring alignment with cultural protocols, laws and governance structures. Compile resources and develop training materials to support awareness and learning regarding Nation-specific cultures, governance structures, laws, protocols, policies, priorities and plans. Explore opportunities to develop and / or support public education, dialogue and cross-cultural events to build trust, increase understanding, bridge divides, and strengthen relations across communities.
2. **Support Capacity Development for Mutual Participation:** Collaborate with local First Nations to support their capacity development in areas that enable meaningful and mutually beneficial participation in SLRD processes. Simultaneously, build the SLRD's capacity to participate in Indigenous governance processes, ensuring reciprocal relationships and joint decision-making. Work to minimize demands on First Nations' governments and community members' time and resources.
3. **Align SLRD Processes and Documents with Regional First Nations Knowledge and Perspectives:** Establish a process to review and revise SLRD policies, bylaws, processes, plans, and programs that conflict with regional First Nation governance. Particularly, those that rely on outdated concepts of sovereignty.
4. **Revise SLRD Organizational Structure and Accountability Metrics:** Conduct a comprehensive review of the SLRD's organizational structure and job descriptions to align with principles of reconciliation. Promote the recognition and integration of multiple legal systems, including Indigenous laws and governance structures.

2. SUPPORT ONGOING CULTURAL AWARENESS, LEARNING, AND EDUCATION

Our vision is to cultivate a deeply informed and culturally aware organization that actively engages with all neighbouring communities. We aim to be a leader in transparent communication and mutual understanding between our member municipalities, the Board, and the broader community. By prioritizing continuous learning and meaningful engagement, we will uphold our commitments to reconciliation and respect for Indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

Objectives

1. **Expand Educational Programs:** Develop learning resources and implement regular training and workshops for staff and Board members, and the community to deepen their understanding of Indigenous histories, rights, and modern-day impacts of colonialism. Include learning events related to the TRC Calls to Action, UNDRIP, DRIPA, and UNDA, specifically with respect to the implications on local government in adopting UNDRIP as the framework for reconciliation. Explore opportunities to develop and / or support public education, dialogue and cross-cultural events to build trust, increase understanding, bridge divides, and strengthen relations across communities.
2. **Facilitate Intercultural Exchanges:** Organize cross-cultural learning events, including site visits to First Nations communities, to foster direct engagement and mutual understanding between SLRD representatives and Indigenous Peoples. Include opportunities to learn about the specific histories, laws, governance structures and priorities of each First Nation.
3. **Increase Visibility of Indigenous Presence:** Collaborate with Indigenous communities to enhance the visibility of their historical and contemporary presence on the landscape.
4. **Support Indigenous Language Revitalization:** Advocate for and support initiatives to retain and revitalize Indigenous languages within the SLRD. This includes incorporating Indigenous languages into public signage and documentation and restoring traditional place names.

3. STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH EFFECTIVE AND MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND COLLABORATION

Our vision is to create strong, trust-based relationships between the SLRD and regional First Nations through open, respectful communication and active collaboration. We aim to foster mutual understanding by consistently listening, learning, and acting with integrity. By celebrating shared successes and deepening our connections, we seek to build a foundation of respect that enables long-term, meaningful engagement across all of our operations.

Objectives

1. **Enhance Early and Ongoing Communication:** Establish protocols for early communication on matters of mutual interest, and First Nations priority, ensuring First Nations are informed and engaged at the outset of decision-making processes.

2. **Create Joint Advocacy Opportunities:** Collaborate with Indigenous communities to identify and advocate shared interests at the provincial and federal levels, striving for a united voice on key issues. Continue to build upon this relationship to jointly determine visions for the future.
3. **Foster Continuous Dialogue Platforms:** Work with the First Nations to develop engagement processes that work for them, including regular community-to-community forums where the SLRD and Indigenous Nations can share knowledge, discuss challenges, and celebrate successes together.
4. **Integrate Legal Pluralism into Decision-Making:** Create opportunities for Indigenous knowledge holders to contribute to policy-making and planning processes within the SLRD. Promote the recognition and integration of multiple legal systems, including Indigenous governance structures. Advocate internally and with the province to ensure these systems are respected in regional decision-making.
5. **Host Regular Gatherings with Indigenous Governments:** Continue to organize and facilitate regular Gatherings in collaboration with relevant member municipalities and interested Indigenous governments within the SLRD to foster ongoing dialogue and collaboration.
6. **Fund Indigenous Participation:** Provide financial support to Indigenous governments to ensure their meaningful participation in reconciliation initiatives, minimizing resource burdens and promoting equitable engagement.

4. COMMIT TO SUSTAINED EFFORTS

Our commitment is to create a culture of accountability in the SLRD's reconciliation journey. We will ensure that our Guide remains a living document through regular review, ongoing adaptation, and the development of accountability measures. We commit to tracking our initiatives and moving from commitment to action with clear, measurable outcomes. This effort will allow us to uphold respect for Indigenous knowledge, and create a foundation of trust.

Objectives

1. **Establish Accountability Measures:** Review and update performance metrics and create a dashboard to track and publicize the progress of reconciliation initiatives, ensuring transparency and regular updates on key milestones.
2. **Review and Update the Guide:** Design an engagement process to share the draft Guide with local First Nations to request their feedback and continued participation. Implement a structured process for periodically reviewing and updating the Guide, ensuring it remains a living document that reflects ongoing learning and engagement.
3. **Move from Commitment to Action:** Translate the goals of the Guide into concrete actions by developing a detailed implementation plan, ensuring commitments are backed by measurable outcomes. Host workshops to action the UNDRIP principles and TRC Calls to Action adopted in the Guide.
4. **Conduct Joint Ongoing Planning:** Ensure all regional government planning supports First Nations strategic community, economic and environmental priorities and plans.

Conclusion

The SLRD Indigenous Relations, Truth & Reconciliation: *In Practice* Guide (The Guide) represents a significant advancement in our ongoing relationship with Indigenous communities. Implementing this comprehensive approach requires a concerted effort from all levels of the SLRD, including department-level teams and our executive leadership. Each department will be responsible for bringing the Guide to life within their respective areas through the creation and execution of action plans. This will ensure that the principles of the Guide are integrated into the daily operations and culture of the SLRD.

The SLRD is committed to advancing this Guide through meaningful collaboration with Indigenous communities. This includes establishing clear timelines and accountability measures, ensuring ongoing education and training for SLRD staff and officials on Indigenous history and cultural competencies, and prioritizing the integration of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into all decision-making processes and policies. Regular reviews and updates of the Guide will be conducted to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.

To foster ongoing dialogue and collaboration, the SLRD will continue to work in partnership with relevant member municipalities and First Nations to host regular Gatherings. These Gatherings will provide opportunities to review progress, celebrate collective successes, and identify areas for improvement in our relationships with First Nations. Through these efforts, the SLRD will maintain open and transparent dialogue. We will ensure our actions reflect our commitment to reconciliation and the meaningful integration of Indigenous perspectives.

Appendix 1 – List of References

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Appendix 2 – Foundation Documents and Legal Frameworks in Detail

Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982

[Section 35](#) recognizes and affirms the existing Indigenous and treaty rights of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, which includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. This section provides constitutional protection to these rights and serves as a tool for Indigenous groups to enforce their rights in court when infringed by government actions. It plays a significant role in acknowledging the historical and ongoing rights of Indigenous peoples within the Canadian legal framework.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007, UNDRIP establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous Peoples. It contains 46 articles, which convey a range of both individual and collective rights for Indigenous Peoples, related to self-determination, cultural preservation, and land. UNDRIP is based on four key pillars of Indigenous rights: 1) the right to self-determination, 2) the right to be recognized as distinct Peoples, 3) the right to free, prior, and informed consent, and 4) the right to be free from discrimination.¹ Canada officially endorsed UNDRIP on May 10, 2016, after initially refusing to sign the document. Although UNDRIP itself is a non-legally binding declaration, Canada's formal adoption has had profound effects on reconciliation efforts. This includes the recent commitments in Bill C-15 that the Government of Canada “must take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the UNDRIP”.

All of the UNDRIP Articles are important to focus on in our journey to reconciliation. However, orienting to several specific articles can help realize measurable actions as achievements to the fulsome implementation of UNDRIP. The SLRD will align its reconciliation work with several articles which have both relevance and actionability within local governance. These articles are listed below. Focus on these articles does not mean that other articles are irrelevant but that within the realm of local governance they guide our work.

Article 3:

Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Article 4:

Indigenous Peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.

¹ Federation of Canadian Municipalities. 2024. *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: A Guide for Municipalities*. Page 6. <https://media.fcm.ca/documents/resources/guide/UNDRIP-Guide-for-Municipalities-FCM.pdf>

Article 5:

Indigenous Peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social, and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the State.

Article 11.1:

Indigenous Peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect, and develop the past, present, and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artifacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies, and visual and performing arts and literature.

Article 12.1:

Indigenous Peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.

Article 13.1 and 2:

1. Indigenous Peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop, and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems, and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places, and persons.
2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected, and also to ensure that Indigenous Peoples can understand and be understood in political, legal, and administrative proceedings, where necessary through the provision of interpretation or by other appropriate means.

Article 15.1

Indigenous Peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.

Article 15.2

States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all segments of society

Article 18:

Indigenous Peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own Indigenous decision-making institutions.

Article 19:

States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous Peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior, and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

Article 20.1:

Indigenous Peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic, and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.

Article 23:

Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, Indigenous Peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing, and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

Article 25:

Indigenous Peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters, and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

Article 26.1, 2, and 3:

1. Indigenous Peoples have the right to the lands, territories, and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied, or otherwise used or acquired.
2. Indigenous Peoples have the right to own, use, develop, and control the lands, territories, and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.
3. States shall give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories, and resources. Such recognition shall be conducted with due respect to the customs, traditions, and land tenure systems of the Indigenous Peoples concerned.

Article 28.1:

Indigenous Peoples have the right to redress, by means that can include restitution or, when this is not possible, just, fair, and equitable compensation, for the lands, territories, and resources which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used, or damaged without their free, prior, and informed consent.

Article 29.1 and 2:

1. Indigenous Peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for Indigenous Peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.
2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that no storage or disposal of hazardous materials shall take place in the lands or territories of Indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.

Article 31.1

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of flora and fauna, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.

Article 31.2

In conjunction with indigenous peoples, States shall take effective measures to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights.

Article 32.1 and 2:

1. Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.
2. States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous Peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior, and informed consent before the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action

The TRC was established in 2008 as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Its final report in 2015 includes 94 Calls to Action, addressing the ongoing impacts of residential schools and calling for systemic changes to achieve reconciliation. To complete this work, the TRC spent six years travelling Canada to hear first hand accounts from survivors, collecting nearly five million archives. The reports provide historical records of close to 7,000 residential school survivors. The TRC reports were foundational in defining reconciliation in a Canadian context, and committing to healing with the land. To the TRC, “reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. In order for that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.”²

Of the 94 Calls to Action, 16 focus on local and/or all orders of government. The following 10 Calls were highlighted as being most relevant to local government in the 2023 Women Transforming Cities report: The TRC Calls to Action in BC Municipalities. **The Calls in bold were endorsed or adopted by the Board in 2016.**

² Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation*. National Center for Truth and Reconciliation. https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Principles_English_Web.pdf

Call to Action #17:

We call upon all levels of government to enable residential school survivors and their families to reclaim names changed by the residential school system by waiving administrative costs for a period of five years for the name-change process and the revision of official identity documents, such as birth certificates, passports, driver's licenses, health cards, status cards, and social insurance numbers.

Call to Action #23:

We call upon all levels of government to:

1. Increase the number of Aboriginal professionals working in the health-care field.
2. Ensure the retention of Aboriginal health-care providers in Aboriginal communities.
3. Provide cultural competency training for all health-care professionals.

Call to Action #40:

We call on all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal people, to create adequately funded and accessible Aboriginal-specific victim programs and services with appropriate evaluation mechanisms.

Call to Action #43 (Endorsed):

We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation.

Call to Action #47 (Adopted):

We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, and to reform those laws, government policies, and litigation strategies that continue to rely on such concepts.

Call to Action #57 (Adopted):

We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

Call to Action #75 (Adopted):

We call upon the federal government to work with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, churches, Aboriginal communities, former residential school students, and current landowners to develop and implement strategies and procedures for the ongoing identification, documentation, maintenance, commemoration, and protection of residential school cemeteries or other sites at which residential school children were buried. This is to include the provision of appropriate memorial ceremonies and commemorative markers, and reburial in accordance with the wishes of family members or Aboriginal communities.

Call to Action #77 (Adopted):

We call upon provincial, territorial, municipal, and community archives to work collaboratively with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to

identify and collect copies of all records relevant to the history and legacy of the residential school system, and to provide these to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

Call to Action #87:

We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.

Call to Action #88:

We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel.

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)

In 2019, BC became the first government to enact UNDRIP into legislation through Bill 41: The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA). DRIPA commits the province to align its laws with UNDRIP. Through DRIPA, an associated Action Plan was implemented in 2022. The Action Plan includes collectively identified goals and outcomes that form the long-term vision for implementing UNDRIP in BC.³ This provincial mandate forms the platform for how local and regional governments could proceed to engage in reconciliation efforts across the province.

Two actions in the current DRIPA Action Plan apply specifically to local government:

1.11 Support inclusive regional governance by advancing First Nations participation in regional district Boards (*Ministry of Municipal Affairs*)

4.27 Review the principles and processes that guide the naming of municipalities and regional districts, and evolve practices to foster reconciliation in local processes. (*Ministry of Municipal Affairs*)

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDA)

Enacted in 2021, UNDA “marks a significant milestone in Canada’s collective journey of reconciliation—one rooted in the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership.”⁴ This legislation advances the implementation of UNDRIP through providing a framework to establish federal-Indigenous relationships. The purpose of UNDA is to affirm the Declaration as an international human rights instrument that can help interpret and apply Canadian law. It also provides a framework to advance implementation of the Declaration at the federal level. Canada has prepared an Action Plan for the implementation of UNDA from 2023-2028.

3 Province of BC. 2024. *Declaration Act Action Plan*. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/indigenous-people/new-relationship/united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples/implementation>

4 Department of Justice Canada. 2023. *Second annual progress report on implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/declaration/report-rapport/2023/docs/2023-unda-ar-final_en.pdf

Existing SLRD Policy

Regional Growth Strategy

The [SLRD Regional Growth Strategy](#) (RGS) was adopted by the SLRD Board in 2010 with a major review and update completed in 2019. The RGS presents a 20-year vision for the livability of the region and supports collaboration out to 2038 and beyond. The SLRD's commitments to Indigenous Relations, Truth and Reconciliation relate directly to two goals and related policy directions in the RGS:

Goal # 8: [Enhance Relations with Indigenous Communities and First Nations](#)

(see pages 43-45)

Goal #9: [Improve Collaboration among Jurisdictions](#) (see page 46)

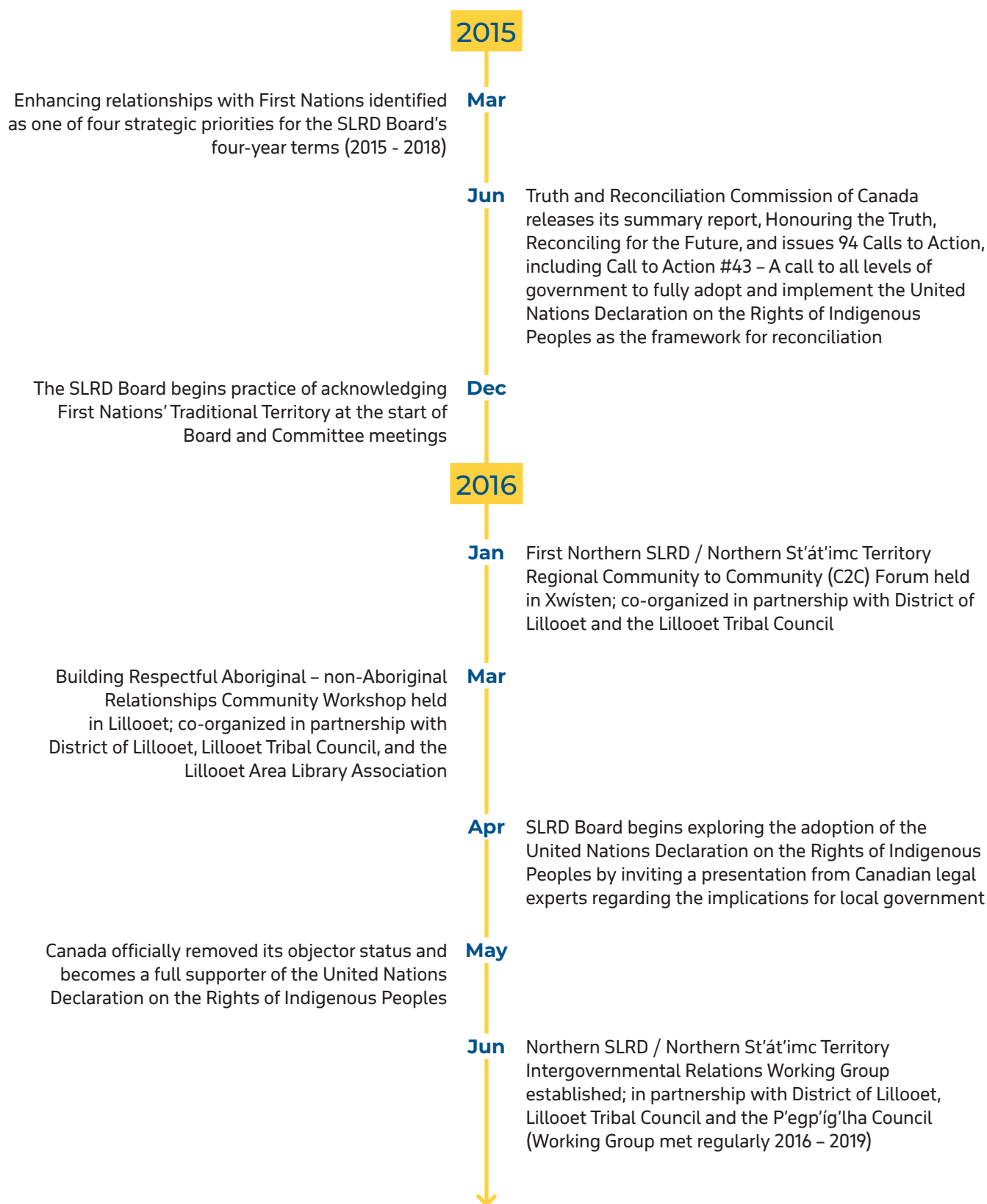
Strategic Priorities

Strengthening relationships with First Nations has been a strategic priority of the SLRD Board since 2015.

The current [Strategic Plan \(2024 – 2024\)](#) identifies Truth, Reconciliation and Relationships as one of six Strategic Priority Areas, along with Community Well-being and Livability, Emergency Planning, Response and Recovery, Climate Action and Sustainability, Responsible Governance and Service Excellence and Advocacy, all of which will benefit from stronger relationships.

In addition, multiple documents have been developed to support local governments in their reconciliation efforts and much important work has already been done by other BC municipalities and regional districts. Please refer to Appendix 1 for a list of documents which were referenced in the development of this Guide. Together, these documents and legal frameworks form the foundation for reconciliation action in BC. They highlight the importance of recognizing Indigenous rights, respecting traditional governance, and making meaningful changes to support Indigenous communities.

Appendix 3 – SLRD Reconciliation Journey



2016

Sept

The SLRD Board resolved to be a Regional District of Reconciliation and to work towards turning these words into actions. In conjunction with this, the Board passed several resolutions in support of reconciliation including:

- Endorsed Call to Action #43 of the TRC Summary Report – A call for all levels of government to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation
- Adopted Call to Action #47 – a call for all levels of government to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous Peoples
- Adopted Call to Action #57 – A call for all levels of government to provide Indigenous training and education to public servants
- Adopted Call to Action #75 – A call for the federal government to work with municipal governments to identify and commemorate Indigenous cemeteries
- Adopted Call to Action #77 – A call for all levels of government and community archives to share any information on residential schools with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- Proclaimed September 30 as Orange Shirt Day in the SLRD

Oct

CREATE (Community and Regional Economic Development – Together for Everyone) Forum held in Lillooet; in collaboration with T'it'q'et Economic Development Authority, Xwísten, Tsal'alh Development Corporation, Bridge River Valley Community Association, Lillooet Area Library Association, and Lillooet Agriculture and Food Society

2017

Mar

First Nukw7ántwal Regional Gathering (i.e. Community to Community Forum); in collaboration with Lílwat Nation, Lower Stl'atl'imx Tribal Council, N'Quatqua, Samahquam and Village of Pemberton

May
&
Sept

Delivered two full-day cultural awareness workshops, Building Bridges Through Understanding the Village, to staff, Board and Council members, in partnership with Village of Pemberton

2017

Nukw7ántwał Intergovernmental Relations Committee established; in collaboration with Village of Pemberton, Lílwat Nation and N'Quatqua (N'Quatqua has not participated since 2019)

Jul

Nov

Second Northern SLRD / Northern St'át'imc Territory C2C Forum; in collaboration with District of Lillooet, Lillooet Tribal Council and P'egp'íg'lha Council

2018

Second Nukw7ántwał Regional Gathering; in collaboration with Village of Pemberton, Lílwat Nation, Lower Stl'atl'imx Tribal Council, N'Quatqua

Feb

May

Signed a Protocol Agreement for Communication and Cooperation with the District of Lillooet and P'egp'íg'lha Council

2019

SLRD Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1562, initially adopted in 2010 updated, including Goal #8: Enhance Relations with Indigenous Communities and First Nations and Goal #9: Improve Collaboration among Jurisdictions

Oct

Nov

Third Northern SLRD / Northern St'át'imc Territory C2C Forum; in collaboration with District of Lillooet, Lillooet Tribal Council and P'egp'íg'lha Council

The Legislative Assembly of B.C. unanimously adopts the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act 2019, becoming the first jurisdiction in Canada to enshrine the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into law.

2021

Jun

Canada adopts Bill C-15, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

2022

Third Nukw7ántwał Regional Gathering; in collaboration with Lílwat Nation and the Village of Pemberton

Sept

Oct

Memorandum of Understanding signed between SLRD, Lillooet Tribal Council and District of Lillooet regarding the construction of a St'át'imc Cultural Centre (P'egp'íg'lha Council signed on in 2024)



2023

SLRD staff and Board participate in two half-day Indigenous Awareness trainings

May

Nov

SLRD establishes Indigenous Relations Advisor position (0.5 FTE)

2024

Truth, Reconciliation & Relationships identified as one of six Strategic Priorities in the SLRD's 2024 – 2026 Strategic Plan

Mar

Apr

Gwen Bridge Consulting hired to support the SLRD to: (1) assess the SLRD's readiness to undertake reconciliation work, (2) conduct training workshops with SLRD Board and staff to support learning and understanding, and (3) draft an organizational Guide to Indigenous Relations, Truth & Reconciliation

Fourth Nukw7ántwal Regional Gathering held; in collaboration with Lílwat Nation and the Village of Pemberton

May

Sept

Fourth Northern SLRD / Northern St'at'imc Territory C2C Forum held; in collaboration with District of Lillooet, Lillooet Tribal Council and P'egp'íg'lha Council

Preliminary draft Guide to Indigenous Relations, Truth & Reconciliation Framework presented to SLRD Board; next steps will include conducting engagements with local First Nations to seek feedback and direction on next steps

Oct

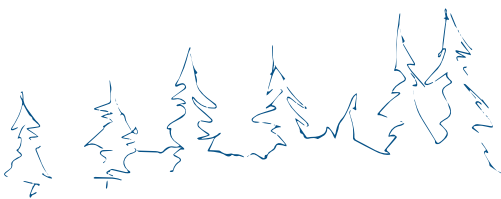
2025

Fifth Northern SLRD / Northern St'at'imc Territory C2C Forum held; agreement in principle to establish an Intergovernmental Leadership Table

May

Sept

Revised draft Guide to Indigenous Relations, Truth & Reconciliation with feedback from engagements incorporated approved by SLRD Board; next steps will include action planning with interested local First Nations



Appendix 4 – Process

Since 2015, strengthening relationships with First Nations and Indigenous communities has been a strategic priority of the SLRD Board. In 2016, the Board resolved to be a Regional District of Reconciliation and to work towards turning these words into action, marking a significant commitment to this journey. The Board passed several resolutions in support of reconciliation, notably:

1. The SLRD endorsed in principle Call to Action #43 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Summary of the Final Report, Reconciling for the Future (TRC Report) - a call for municipal governments to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People as the framework for reconciliation.
2. Adopted Specific Calls to Action:
 - Call to Action #47: Repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous Peoples;
 - Call to Action #57: Provide Indigenous training and education to public servants;
 - Call to Action #75: Identify and commemorate Indigenous cemeteries; and
 - Call to Action #77: Share information on residential schools with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Following these commitments, in 2017 the SLRD offered two full-day experiential cultural awareness training sessions to staff and members of the Board. In 2018, the organization signed a Protocol Agreement for Communication and Cooperation with the District of Lillooet and P'egp'ig'lha Council.

In 2019 the SLRD updated the Regional Growth Strategy. The Regional Growth Strategy underscores the importance of building strong, respectful, and effective working relationships with Indigenous communities and First Nations. It includes two goals related to reconciliation:

- Goal #8: Enhance relations with Indigenous communities and First Nations; and
- Goal #9: Improve collaboration among jurisdictions.

Within this Strategy, the SLRD states:

“Building strong, respectful and effective working relationships with Indigenous communities and First Nations is especially important given the many growth pressures and challenges in the region and the complexity of issues facing all levels of government. While the Skwxwú7mesh, Lil'wat and St'át'imc are not signatories to a [Regional Growth Strategy] under the Local Government Act, there are benefits in improved communication, information sharing and coordinated planning and servicing in areas of mutual interest. Engagement with Indigenous communities and First Nations will be pursued in the spirit of enhancing relationships and exploring opportunities for cooperation, collaboration and learning. The strategic direction under the RGS does not prejudice or affect any inherent Aboriginal Title, right or interest, recognizing that the legal context within which Aboriginal Title, rights and interests exist continues to evolve and change, thus impacting the ways in which Title, rights and interests are exercised.”

In October 2022 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between SLRD, Lillooet Tribal Council and District of Lillooet regarding the construction of a St'át'imc Cultural Centre (P'egp'ig'lha Council signed on in 2024).

To continue their reconciliation journey, the SLRD staff and Board participated in two half-day Indigenous Awareness trainings in 2023. In addition, the SLRD established an Indigenous Relations Advisor position (0.5 FTE) to support their continued efforts.

The SLRD's Strategic Plan for 2024-2026 builds upon this work to highlight key values such as courage, integrity, respect, honesty, and responsibility. It identifies "Truth, Reconciliation, and Relationships" as one of six key priority areas. These values and priorities have laid the foundation for the development of the SLRD's Indigenous Relations, Truth & Reconciliation Framework (the Guide), reflecting a deep commitment to fostering meaningful and respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

Since 2016, the SLRD has partnered with the District of Lillooet, Lillooet Tribal Council, and P'egp'ig'lha Council, with funding support from UBCM. Together, they have held four Community to Community Gatherings. These events brought together leaders from the northern SLRD and northern St'át'imc Territory to build relationships, improve communication, and explore ways to collaborate. The Gatherings resulted in an Intergovernmental Relations Working Group (2016 - 2019) and a Protocol Agreement for Communication and Cooperation being signed in 2018. During the same period, the SLRD partnered with Lílwat Nation and the Village of Pemberton to host four Nukw7ántwał Regional Gatherings. The focus was on bringing together leaders from the Pemberton area, southern Stl'atl'imx, and Lílwat Nation. These gatherings also received funding support from UBCM's Community to Community Program. The Gatherings are an opportunity for southern Stl'atl'imx and local governments to come together to explore more deeply the meaning of "Nukw7ántwał wi ku st'ák-menlhkahl", which is an Ucwalmícwts phrase meaning, "we help each other to find the way". Summary reports were developed after each Gathering, showcasing the themes discussed. Findings from these Gatherings provide a foundation for continued relationship building, and support the development of the Guide. Refer to Appendix 2 for a summary of all Gathering recommendations.

In 2024, a series of workshops was hosted by Gwen Bridge Consulting (GBC) to support SLRD learning and understanding of building respectful relationships with Indigenous Peoples. The workshops included: 1) Ethical Space Foundations, 2) Engagement Planning, and 3) Organizational Readiness. The purpose of Ethical Space Foundations was to provide SLRD staff and Board members with an understanding of Ethical Space and how it can be a tool to respectfully engage Indigenous Peoples. The Engagement Planning workshop built upon Ethical Space Foundations to consider how the SLRD would do this work in practice. Finally, the Organizational Readiness workshop took SLRD board and staff members through a strategic planning session, which included a self assessment of their current willingness and ability to change their practices and various reflections that supported the development of the Guide. This is known as the Rapid Reconciliation Readiness Assessment (RRRA), developed by Gwen Bridge. See Figure 1 below for the self assessment following the RRRA workshop. The RRRA confirmed that a reconciliation vision, mission and set of principles needed to be developed to guide reconciliation efforts at the SLRD. Further to this, it confirmed that the SLRD is at the point where strategic objectives for reconciliation need to be developed.

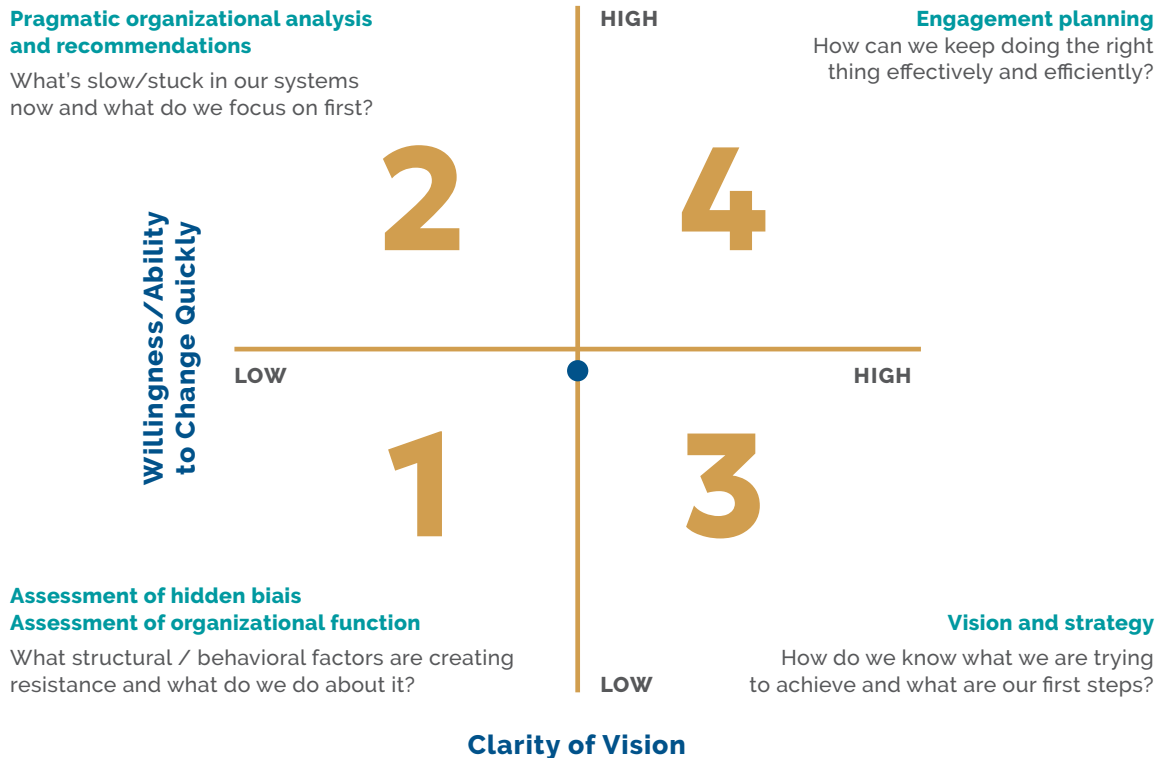


Figure 1. Rapid Reconciliation Readiness Assessment. Blue dot outlines the SLRD Board's assessment, which took place on July 18, 2024.

Between June and July 2024, GBC conducted three interviews with various Indigenous government representatives. In addition, a survey was conducted with SLRD board and staff members. Nine responses were received. The aim of the survey and interviews was to inform the development of the Framework. Key informants for both data collection pieces had expertise and experience in SLRD government, Indigenous governments, and relationship building on a government-to-government level. The survey and interviews aimed to explore the current situation between SLRD and the First Nations upon whose territories the SLRD operates. Through a situational analysis, gaps in understanding and opportunities for improvement were identified and used to inform the Framework. See Appendices 3 and 4 for more details on the survey and interview analysis.

It is important to note that not all recommendations from Appendices 3, 4, and 5 are explicitly outlined in the Framework Commitments. In developing the Framework, focus was placed on outlining strategic Commitments as opposed to specific actions. The SLRD is advised to review the full set of recommendations to develop measurable actions during implementation planning.

The SLRD's reconciliation journey is rooted in a series of deliberate actions and commitments to integrate Indigenous perspectives and foster collaborative relationships. The SLRD seeks to create a practical and inclusive path forward, recognizing the shared responsibility to address the impacts of colonization and work towards a more equitable future. The Framework was developed as a culmination of the work done by SLRD to date and the Rapid Reconciliation Readiness Assessment which diagnosed the state of reconciliation readiness for the SLRD. The Framework is intended to be the guiding document that addresses and completes the vision, mission, principles and strategic objectives. These are framed in the overarching set of commitments.

Appendix 5 – Gathering Analysis

Appendix 3 provides an overview of all Gatherings held by the SLRD and neighbouring First Nations between 2016 to 2024. It includes a brief synopsis of themes discussed and a list of recommendations for SLRD to advance reconciliation efforts.

Overview

Since 2016 the SLRD, in partnership with the District of Lillooet, Lillooet Tribal Council and P'egp'ig'ha Council, and with funding support from UBCM, have convened four Community to Community Gatherings to bring community leaders from the northern SLRD / northern St'át'imc Territory together to build relationships, improve communication and explore ways to work more collaboratively. In the same timeframe and with the same objectives, the SLRD partnered with Lílwat Nation and the Village of Pemberton to convene four Nukw7ántwał Regional Gatherings, to bring community leaders from the Pemberton area / southern Stl'atl'imx and Lílwat Nation together. The Nukw7ántwał Regional Gatherings were also funded in part through UBCM's Community to Community Program.

Key themes across the Gatherings include reconciliation, relationship building, shared understanding, and addressing mutual concerns such as land, environment, infrastructure, and economic development. These events provided platforms for elected officials and staff to engage in cultural sharing, storytelling, and deeper discussions on topics like intergenerational trauma, self-awareness, and governance. The Nukw7ántwał Gatherings emphasized the importance of helping each other and strengthening intergovernmental relations, while the Community to Community (C2C) Forums and other events in northern St'át'imc Territory focused on addressing specific regional challenges, including hospital closures and land management. Through these Gatherings, participants consistently reaffirmed the need for ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and trust-building to advance reconciliation and foster resilient, thriving communities.

Recommendations

1. **Cultural and Historical Learning Opportunities:** Provide space for storytelling, cultural practices, and ceremonies to build understanding and recognize Indigenous governance structures and histories.
2. **Cultural Awareness Training:** Continue training for SLRD and local government staff and boards/councils on Indigenous culture, history, and hidden biases, employing local experts whenever possible.
3. **Protocol Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs):** Collaborate on Protocol Agreements or MOUs for specific sectors like communication, emergency preparedness, land-use planning, and tourism to formalize commitments.
4. **Regular Leadership Meetings:** Hold regular leadership meetings to strengthen intergovernmental relations, build trust, and collaboratively set short- and mid-term goals.

5. **Emergency Preparedness and Joint Projects:** Work together on emergency preparedness and explore projects like signage and shared facilities to solidify partnerships.
6. **Community Events and Celebrations:** Look for ways to broaden efforts to involve our communities. Organize cross-cultural celebrations and events that involve both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, including reconciliation-focused Gatherings and other opportunities for learning and sharing.
7. **Reconciliation Framework:** Draft a Reconciliation Framework that integrates Indigenous land use plans with regional plans, emphasizing practical actions and ongoing dialogue.
8. **Governance Participation:** Increase Indigenous community involvement in SLRD decision-making processes, including planning, elections, and other civic activities.
9. **Improving Information Exchange:** Develop strategies to improve communication and collaboration between local governments and Indigenous communities, including informal tools like community calendars as well as more formal processes like joint working groups. Share information about local government processes with First Nations and vice versa.
10. **Emergency and Healthcare Planning:** Jointly address health care and emergency planning concerns, including coordination on wildfire preparedness and recovery.
11. **Visitor Gateway and Cultural Centre:** Advance the Visitor Gateway and Cultural Centre project by securing leadership commitments, establishing a steering committee, and exploring a destination management organization (northern SLRD / northern St'át'imc Territory)
12. **Youth Leadership and Governance Engagement:** Provide funding for Indigenous youth to learn about governance processes, establish a Youth Leadership Table, and create opportunities for youth and Elders to connect across generations.
13. **Land-Based Healing and Engagement:** Offer land-based healing opportunities and cultural engagement for Nation members.
14. **Economic Development Collaboration:** Form working groups to pursue shared economic development opportunities, including food security, agriculture, and housing initiatives.
15. **Ongoing Review and Implementation:** Continue reviewing and implementing recommendations from past Gatherings, maintaining a commitment to action and keeping organizing committees intact to lead future efforts.

Appendix 6 – Survey Analysis

The following Appendix provides an overview of the survey responses received from SLRD Board and staff. It includes overarching themes and a list of possible recommendations to support staff in their reconciliation efforts. These findings can be taken into engagement and action planning efforts.

Overview

The SLRD survey, which had nine participants, revealed a strong appreciation for relationships with First Nations in the region. Participants recognized the importance of these relationships in regional collaboration and supported the continuation of programs promoting First Nations engagement. One-third of participants reported regular, positive interactions with the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), Lílwat Nation, or other St’át’imc Nation communities. However, half of the participants had limited to no interaction with these Nations, despite some having positive personal relationships with Nation members.

Several participants noted effective individual-level relationships between SLRD and Nation staff but highlighted that these relationships do not extend to the organizational level. They identified gaps in cross-departmental understanding, a lack of council-to-council meetings, and minimal community-level collaboration. Additionally, participants expressed concerns about the lack of formal organization-level direction, commitment, and resources for building relationships with First Nations. Many also voiced frustration that while reconciliation was frequently discussed, meaningful engagement was often lacking.

In-person meetings were highlighted as a preferred method for deepening these relationships. Looking ahead, all participants expressed hopes for positive relationships with First Nations over the next five years, emphasizing principles of respect, honesty, and collaboration. However, the majority also expressed concerns about their capacity to engage meaningfully, underscoring the need for stronger organizational support and resources to build lasting, trust-based relationships.

Recommendations

1. **Increase Organizational Commitment and Resources:** Develop formal organization-wide policies and allocate resources specifically dedicated to building and sustaining relationships with First Nations. Ensure that reconciliation and relationship-building efforts are prioritized at all levels within the SLRD, including staff and Board.
2. **Enhance Cross-Departmental Collaboration:** Implement regular cross-departmental meetings and training sessions to ensure a consistent understanding of First Nations protocols and relationship-building strategies across the entire organization. Foster a culture of shared responsibility for maintaining strong relationships with First Nations.

3. **Facilitate More Council-to-Council Engagement:** Organize regular council-to-council meetings between the SLRD and First Nations leadership to foster direct, high-level communication and collaboration. This will help ensure that relationships are built not just at the staff level but also at the leadership level.
4. **Prioritize In-Person Engagement:** Increase the frequency of in-person meetings and informal gatherings with First Nations staff to strengthen personal and professional connections. This will help build trust and facilitate effective collaboration on shared goals.
5. **Strengthen Formal Relationships with First Nations:** Establish formal agreements or memoranda of understanding (MOUs) that outline clear commitments to ongoing collaboration and relationship-building. These agreements should be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure they remain relevant and effective.
6. **Address Capacity Concerns:** Provide additional support and resources to staff to ensure they have the time, training, and capacity needed to engage meaningfully with First Nations. This could include hiring dedicated relationship coordinators or creating specialized roles focused on Indigenous engagement.
7. **Develop Clear Reconciliation Action Plans:** Move beyond discussions about reconciliation by creating concrete action plans that outline specific steps the organization will take to engage with First Nations, support Indigenous-led initiatives, and foster long-term relationships. Ensure that these plans are monitored and regularly assessed for progress.

Appendix 7 – Interview Analysis

The following Appendix provides an overview of the interviews conducted with Indigenous community members. It includes overarching themes and a list of possible recommendations for improving relationships between the SLRD and First Nation governments. These findings can be taken into engagement and action planning efforts.

Overview

Three individuals from Indigenous Nations connected to the SLRD were interviewed: two Chiefs and one Councillor. Each interview participant was asked roughly the same 9 questions about their respective Nation's relationships with the SLRD. Despite variations in perspectives, common themes emerged. All participants emphasized the value of their relationship with the SLRD, whether due to shared goals or past instances where the SLRD facilitated land redistribution. However, participants expressed a strong desire for more frequent and deeper engagement, particularly in-person meetings that focus on relationship building rather than transactions or navigating legislation. These discussions were seen as key to resolving misunderstandings and fostering mutual understanding.

Participants also highlighted concerns with the consultation process. Instances were cited where decisions affecting their Nations were made without adequate consultation, such as the construction of infrastructure at Anderson Lake near N'Quatqua and regional development around Líl'wat Nation. These examples illustrated the need for more inclusive and meaningful consultation processes that allow Nations to fully consider and benefit from regional developments. Additionally, participants expressed a desire to revisit and amend existing agreements between the SLRD and their Nations to foster more inclusive economic opportunities and stronger partnerships.

Despite these challenges, participants were eager to advance the relationship with SLRD. They envision a future with increased engagement, goal-setting, and a deeper understanding of each Nation's values, culture, history, and governance. Concerns were raised about the continuity of relationships due to the short terms of representatives, and the need for frameworks or memoranda of understanding to ensure progress is sustained over time. Additionally, participants noted the administrative roadblocks they face in land use planning and hoped for SLRD's support in navigating or removing these obstacles.

Recommendations

1. **Increase Frequency and Depth of Engagement:** Facilitate more regular in-person meetings with Indigenous Nations to foster relationship building beyond transactional discussions. Prioritize relationship-focused dialogues that enable mutual understanding and address existing misunderstandings.
2. **Enhance the Decision-Making Process:** Ensure meaningful collaboration with Indigenous Nations on regional developments, particularly before decisions are made. Establish protocols that allow Nations adequate time to consider the

impacts of proposed developments and ensure they benefit from these projects.

3. **Revisit and Amend Existing Agreements:** Review existing agreements and permit processes with Nations. Consider pausing or revising agreements and processes that may hinder Nations from fully participating in regional prosperity.
4. **Establish Long-Term Relationship Frameworks:** Develop frameworks or memoranda of understanding that guide the relationship between SLRD and Indigenous Nations beyond the terms of individual representatives. These frameworks should ensure that progress continues across electoral cycles.
5. **Support Indigenous Land Use Planning:** Provide assistance to Nations in navigating red tape and administrative challenges related to land use planning. Work to remove policies that restrict Nations from using their land in alignment with their values and goals. This may include providing land parcels through fee simple or supporting Nations to acquire land.
6. **Deepen Cultural Understanding and Knowledge:** Commit to deepening the SLRD's understanding of each Nation's values, culture, history, and governance structures through ongoing education and engagement efforts.
7. **Facilitate Economic Opportunities for Nations:** Work with Nations to identify and implement opportunities to receive economic benefits from industries and businesses operating on their lands. This could include revenue-sharing agreements, partnerships, and co-management opportunities.
8. **Collaborate on Tourism Development:** Partner on tourism initiatives that promote Nations' cultural heritage and land stewardship. Co-create tourism strategies that highlight Indigenous culture, ensuring that Nations benefit directly from tourism activities and that these initiatives align with their vision for sustainable development.