



**For immediate release
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NORTHERN ST'ÁT'IMC, DISTRICT OF LILLOOET AND SQUAMISH-LILLOOET REGIONAL DISTRICT TAKE STEPS TOWARD STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS

Lillooet, BC – On Thursday, January 21 and Friday, January 22, the Chiefs and several councillors from the six northern St'át'imc communities met for a Community to Community (C2C) Forum with several directors of the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) Board and the District of Lillooet Mayor and Council to share learning and explore ways that the organizations might work more collaboratively. Each of the organizations contributed staff resources to plan and deliver the event, with partial funding being provided through a C2C grant from the Union of BC Municipalities and the balance of the costs being contributed by the SLRD. The Forum, which was facilitated by EcoPlan International, took place in the St'át'imc community of Xwísten, near Lillooet.

The Forum opened on Thursday evening with a presentation by St'át'imc member and doctoral candidate Cathy Narcisse, who shared her understanding of the history of the legal context and mechanisms of colonial oppression of Indigenous people in Canada, and specifically in B.C. The presentation was framed to provide the St'át'imc perspective of Aboriginal Title and jurisdiction requirements established by the Canadian legal system in order to lend context for further discussions about reconciliation and renewed relationships.

"It is important that people understand our history and our connection to our Territory when it comes to economic development or any project that seeks to use our natural resources," says Chief Michelle Edwards, Chair of the Lillooet Tribal Council. "The world is coming to understand that our Title to our Territory is very much alive and needs to be a part of these discussions. We appreciate that both the SLRD and District of Lillooet took the time to hear how we think about these things."

The Friday meeting began with small-group dialogue sessions where St'át'imc speakers shared information about a number of topics including: the Doctrine of Discovery, the impact of residential schools, the Tsilhqot'in Decision, St'át'imc business development, and the recent BC Hydro Agreement and what it means for the St'át'imc. The Regional District then provided a general overview of the SLRD, including its governance, mandate, structure, services and financial allocations. The Forum concluded with another small-group dialogue session where participants identified areas of common interest and concern and brainstormed ideas for how the organizations could improve communication and work together more collaboratively.

"The C2C Forum was a great step on the path to stronger relationships," says Jack Crompton, SLRD Board Chair. "We appreciate the St'át'imc's willingness to share their history, perspectives and vision with us; we recognize we have much more to learn, but we are committed to continuing the dialogue, and to doing our part to promote reconciliation within our organization and in the communities we serve."

“The St’át’imc’s ongoing efforts towards community economic development make a significant and positive contribution to the Lillooet region’s economy,” says Margaret Lampman, Mayor of Lillooet. “We are all here together and our best opportunity to create a thriving and resilient future is to work together in a spirit of goodwill and mutual respect.”

Moving forward, the Lillooet Tribal Council, northern St’át’imc communities, District of Lillooet and SLRD will consider next steps and continue to identify opportunities to improve communication and work more collaboratively. One upcoming session is planned which will help expand this discussion to a broader audience. On Saturday March 12th key not-for-profit organizations will be invited to participate in a workshop titled "Building Respectful and Effective Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Relationships", hosted by the Lillooet Area Library Association, the Lillooet Tribal Council and the District of Lillooet. Contact Toby Mueller at the Lillooet Public Library for more information at tmueller@lillooet.bclibrary.ca or by phone at 250-256-7944.

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