

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee
From: Kate Fenton, Planner I, Indigenous Relations

Date: 2024-07-11
File No: 3400-01

Subject: FVRD Strategic Plan update on Indigenous Relations initiatives

INTENT

This report is intended to advise the Fraser Valley Regional District Board of information pertaining to **the Fraser Valley Regional District's progress towards reconciliation, a priority in the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.** Staff is not looking for a recommendation and has forwarded this information should members want more clarification or to discuss the item further.

BACKGROUND

The Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) 2023-2026 Strategic Plan affirms that **the organization "will invest the time and resources necessary to nurture relationships with Indigenous governments and communities based on the principles of reconciliation, and the pursuit of shared goals."** The strategic plan identifies fostering relationships and education as key priorities for advancing reconciliation and achieving this overarching goal. It details specific actions to be taken, including utilizing Community-to-Community (C2C) forums to build both formal and informal relationships, providing training for **staff and elected officials, and developing an Indigenous Relations Framework, to guide the FVRD's future reconciliation efforts.**

DISCUSSION

The Indigenous Relations priorities and actions outlined in the strategic plan build upon existing efforts at the FVRD (**Appendix I**). **The FVRD's relationships** with Indigenous communities are dynamic, guided and influenced by two central documents¹:

- » **The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) 94 Calls to Action (Appendix II)**
- » **The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (Appendix III)**

Both of these documents have already been instrumental in shaping the Indigenous Relations Program at the FVRD by guiding work plans and policy development. These documents will continue

¹ There are many more reports and guides that exist, but for the purposes of simplification, staff are only referencing these two documents

to inform any future endeavours as the FVRD moves along the path towards reconciliation, as specified in the reconciliation statement in the strategic plan.

Progress towards the priorities in the strategic plan are as follows:

- » **Priority I - Educate FVRD Directors and Staff on Reconciliation**
 - › Secured funding to provide cultural awareness training to staff and elected officials through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Community Emergency Preparedness Fund. This training is scheduled to take place in September and October 2024 and is being delivered by Indigenous Community for Leadership and Development.

- » **Priority II - Nurture Strong Relationships Based on Reconciliation and Shared Goals**
 - › Secured funding through UBCM to co-host a C2C forum with Sts'ailes and explore the possibility of updating the current Memorandum of Understanding and Protocol Agreement that was signed in 2015. The C2C forum will also facilitate conversation about opportunities for other joint advocacy projects, economic activities, and other projects.

 - › Staff are currently exploring how the Indigenous Relations Framework should be developed. Part of this process is examining how other local governments have approached similar work. To move towards reconciliation, the FVRD needs a guiding document – a playbook – that explains how the organization will build cultural understanding and integrate reconciliation principles into FVRD decision-making. The envisioned Indigenous Relations Framework will be a guidebook that includes clear objectives and actionable steps to be implemented over the next two years, helping the FVRD build relationships and create an inclusive region for everyone. A draft will be brought forward to the Board by the end of the year.

COST

There are no immediate costs associated with this information as this work falls within the purview of the Integrated Planning & Engagement Department's work plan.

CONCLUSION

The path towards reconciliation is a whole-of-country and whole-of-government effort. Every organization will take different steps as they move along this path. The FVRD 2023-2026 Strategic Plan **outlines the organization's planned contributions to this cause. Staff are working to fulfill the commitments made to education, building relationships, and working towards shared goals.** Given the evolving landscape, any guiding document will be developed to be flexible and adaptive, while remaining anchored by globally recognized rights that are reflected in federal and provincial legislation.

COMMENTS BY:

David Urban, Deputy Director of Regional Services: Reviewed and supported.

Stacey Barker, Director of Regional Services/Deputy CAO: Reviewed and supported.

Kelly Lownsborough, Director of Corporate Services/CFO: Reviewed and supported.

Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer: Reviewed and supported.

Appendix I

FVRD Indigenous Relations initiatives

Date	Action
May, 1993	First Regional District of the Fraser Cheam Committee on Aboriginal Issues Meeting
October, 1995	Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee established
June, 2005	FVRD signed a Memorandum of Understanding and Protocol Agreement with In-SHUCK-ch Nation who represented Xátsa7 (Douglas) First Nation, Samahquam Nation, and Skatin First Nations
January, 2006	FVRD signed a Memorandum of Understanding and Protocol Agreement with Yale First Nation
October, 2011	Launching of the First Nations Resource Guide for the FVRD
June, 2012	FVRD founded the Fraser Valley Aboriginal Relations Committee (previously Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee)
October, 2013	Community-to-Community Forum held with Sts'ailes
February, 2015	Community-to-Community Forum held with Th'ewá:li, Cultus Lake Park Board, and the FVRD
March, 2015	FVRD signed a Memorandum of Understanding and Protocol Agreement with Sts'ailes
May, 2015	Update to the FVRD First Nations Resource Guide
September, 2015	First Nations Policy Analyst position created at the FVRD
November, 2016	Staff directed to develop a Regional Reconciliation work plan in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action
September, 2017	Launching of the web-based resource guide, called the Community, Education, Data and Resources (CEDAR) Network
October, 2017	Community-to-Community Forum was held with Semá:th, the City of Abbotsford, and the FVRD
March, 2018	Community-to-Community Forum was held with Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Treaty Association and the FVRD
April, 2018	Fraser Valley Aboriginal Relations Committee is changed to Regional Indigenous Relations Committee
March, 2021	FVRD Board adopts the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan which prioritizes <i>Enhanced collaboration with Indigenous Communities</i> under Good Governance & Advocacy
April, 2021	Regional Indigenous Relations Committee's profile is raised by reassigning the work that falls under its mandate to the Regional and Corporate Services and Board of Directors
August, 2022	Leq'á:mel First Nation, City of Mission, Fraser Valley Regional District Area F and Area G, and the Dewdney Area Improvement District co-write a letter asking the Province to lead discussions on how to manage the Hatzic Watershed
January, 2023	FVRD begins opening meetings with a Land Acknowledgement
May, 2023	FVRD receives \$500,000 to offer support and leadership at the Hatzic Lake flood-

	mitigation planning table
November, 2023	FVRD Board adopts a strategic plan that prioritizes reconciliation
November, 2023	Secured funding from the UBCM Community Emergency Preparedness Fund for the Indigenous Cultural Safety and Cultural Humility Training
December, 2023	Secured funding for the UBCM Community-to-Community Program to host a Community-to-Community event with Sts'ailes
June, 2024	Hosted first Community-to-Community event with Sts'ailes

Appendix II

Connecting the TRC's 94 Calls to Action to the FVRD

Five Calls to Action speak directly to local governments (highlighted), and five more are directed to all levels of government. Many reports urge governments to consider the spirit of the Call to Action rather than the specific details, which then opens up more ways to do this work. Below are the Calls to Action that staff considers applicable to local government, with some examples of how they could and have been answered by other local governments.

Summary of each Call to Action	Examples of how other local governments have implemented the Call to Action
17 – reduce barriers to name reclamation	» Waiving fees for name changes on forms and licenses
23 – enable access to culturally appropriate healthcare	Despite healthcare being provincial jurisdiction, some municipalities have been able to advance this in creative ways – generally through land use because Indigenous systems of wellness are often more holistic and land-based. Examples include: » Designating park space for traditional medicine gardens and traditional healing ceremonies » Providing adequate training to parks staff to maintain and care for native and medicinal plants, which would include a component of cultural competency training » Supporting Guardian programs and integrating traditional knowledge into park management » Providing land for healing centre, or resources, » Approving/fast-tracking zoning for fee simple land for FN developments centred around health
40 - support culturally appropriate services for Indigenous survivors of violence	» Working with not-for-profits on grant applications could be a way to advance programs that do this work
43 – full adoption of UNDRIP	» Updating their place naming policies and processes to support Indigenous place names » Using their authority over zoning, Local governments can respect UNDRIP in land-use decisions through thorough consultation and shared-decision making agreements
47 – repudiate theories to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous Peoples and change the laws, policies, and litigation strategies that still rely on these concepts	» Acknowledging that this doctrine has had and continues to have devastating consequences for Indigenous Peoples » In full partnership with First Nations, examining how Canadian history, laws, practices and policies have relied on the doctrine of discovery » Educating staff and elected officials on the purpose of the Doctrine of Discovery
57 – educate public servants on Indigenous history, law, and rights	» Creating onboarding materials to ensure all new staff have a baseline understanding » Creating self-directed learning material » Hiring cultural knowledge holders to do workshops with staff » Lunch and learns
75 – establish and implement measures to identify, maintain, commemorate, and protect burial sites and cemeteries	» Land back » Providing spaces for commemorative events, and supporting these events with local government staff/resources

of residential schools	» Advocating to senior levels of government to expedite Indigenous-led searches and to share records and information
77 – provide records to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation	» Examining historical records for mentions of Indigenous Peoples and anything else relating to the history and legacy of the residential school system, and providing relevant records to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation
87- celebrate Indigenous achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Collaborating with First Nation communities to recognize Indigenous athletes or co-host culturally significant sporting events » Participating in ceremonies hosted by Nations to celebrate and honour their elite athletes » Commissioning murals and public art that celebrates Indigenous achievements in arts, culture, and sports » Renaming community centres to honour Indigenous athletes and artists
88 – support Indigenous Athlete development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Offering in-kind support in the form of facilities and staff time for local Nations to host the North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) » Planning facilities close to reserve lands » Providing Indigenous-specific recreation-centre programming

Appendix III

What is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

UNDRIP is the product of 25 years of work (1982-2007). It is an international human rights statement that describes both individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples around the world. In total, UNDRIP contains [46 articles](#) that outline these rights. UNDRIP also offers guidance on how to establish cooperative relationships with Indigenous Peoples based on the principles of equality, partnership, good faith, and mutual respect. UNDRIP does not create new rights but elaborates on the pre-existing rights of Indigenous Peoples. The 46 articles can be categorized into four key rights:

The right to self-determination

- » Indigenous Peoples have the right to decide for themselves what is best for their communities and to carry out those decisions in ways that are meaningful to their people.

The right to be recognized as distinct Peoples

- » Not all Indigenous rights are uniform or the same among or between all Indigenous Peoples. This means that in order to have appropriate and respectful dealings with different communities, the specific context of each community needs to be considered; the distinct and different rights, laws, legal systems, and systems of governance of each need to be recognized and respected.
- » Indigenous Peoples have the right to:
 - › Promote, develop, and maintain their distinct institutional structures, customs, spirituality, and traditions.
 - › 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.
 - › Maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters, coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

The right to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC)

- » This right is about making decisions in a way that allows Indigenous rights and interests to be incorporated or addressed effectively as part of the decision-making process. FPIC is about working together in partnership. It is not about having a veto over government decision-making.
- » To embody FPIC, means that consent is sought sufficiently before the commencement of any project activities. It means that the information provided is sufficient, accurate, and objective, and that consent is voluntarily given without coercion, intimidation, or manipulation.

The right to be free from discrimination

- » Indigenous Peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination.
- » Laws, policies, and programs should not be discriminatory and public authorities do not apply/enforce these laws, policies, and programs in a discriminatory or arbitrary manner.

How can local governments implement principles of UNDRIP?

There are many ways that local governments can weave the broad principles that UNDRIP represents into our everyday work within the parameters of the *Local Government Act*; several local governments have already demonstrated how. Incorporating UNDRIP principles into local government work can play a role in addressing systemic racism and discrimination experienced by Indigenous Peoples.