

INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS



Certified Economic
Development
Professional of
British Columbia

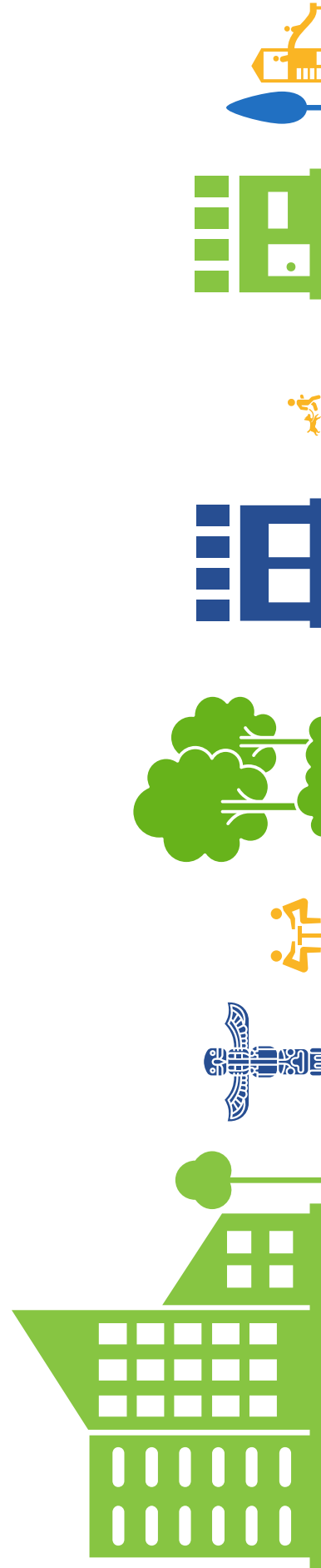


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Introduction

The BC Economic Development Association (BCEDA), in partnership with the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (CANDO) and Indigenous Services Canada, surveyed BCEDA members to collect insights and experiences in fostering collaboration and reconciliation between Indigenous Communities and Local Governments. The survey collected information to explore best practices and opportunities in economic development partnerships. This report provides examples and case studies of successful partnerships to identify key factors and best practices facilitating collaboration and reconciliation. By providing these examples, BCEDA hopes to distill valuable insights that can inform future initiatives and contribute to developing more effective and sustainable models for community engagement.

About BCEDA

The British Columbia Economic Development Association (BCEDA) is the premier professional association for economic development practitioners in the Province of British Columbia. With a membership exceeding 500 individuals from communities throughout the province, BCEDA offers a comprehensive range of services to foster the growth and expansion of businesses, attract new investments, and drive strategic infrastructure investment, land use planning, and community enhancement.

BCEDA provides an array of services to its members, including an annual summit and networking event, educational and professional development opportunities, public relations support, advisory services, and valuable resources. Moreover, BCEDA collaborates with communities and the Province of British Columbia to effectively market the region as an ideal destination for business investments.

About CANDO

Cando is a federally registered, non-profit society that is Indigenous-controlled, community-based, and membership-driven. Cando is directed by a national regionally represented volunteer board of elected EDOs representing every region of Canada.

Cando has facilitated partnerships with EDOs, academics, Indigenous leaders and senior corporate and government representatives. Cando is unique because it is the only national organization focusing on education and professional development for EDOs working in Indigenous communities or organizations.

About Indigenous Services Canada

Indigenous Services Canada works collaboratively with partners to improve access to high-quality services for First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Our vision is to support and empower Indigenous peoples to independently deliver services and address the socio-economic conditions in their communities.

Partnerships for Sustainable Economic Development

Partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities play a pivotal role in economic development by fostering inclusivity, diversity, and sustainable growth. Indigenous communities often possess unique cultural knowledge, expertise and sustainable practices that, combined with the resources and knowledge of non-Indigenous counterparts, can lead to innovative and socially responsible economic initiatives. Collaborative ventures enable sharing skills, technologies, and market access, empowering Indigenous communities to participate more fully in economic activities. Moreover, these partnerships contribute to preserving cultural heritage, as economic development projects often integrate traditional practices, ensuring that the benefits extend beyond financial gains to include the cultural well-being of Indigenous populations. By acknowledging the importance of Indigenous knowledge and respecting the autonomy of these communities, partnerships become a vehicle for equitable economic development that respects cultural diversity and promotes long-term sustainability.

Indigenous and local governments operate differently – but with the same vision to improve the community.



Partnership Goals

The goals of partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities can vary. Some are strategically crafted to foster enduring and resilient relationships, with sustainability as a cornerstone. The emphasis on sustainable relationships ensures that collaborations withstand challenges over time, promoting mutual trust and understanding. Furthermore, these partnerships aim to expand economic development outcomes by leveraging the strengths of each community, creating synergies that result in shared prosperity. This includes initiatives prioritizing environmentally sustainable practices and promoting economic growth while preserving cultural integrity.

A critical goal for partnerships is emphasizing the equitable distribution of benefits from collaborative efforts. Success stories are celebrated collectively, reinforcing the shared vision of prosperity. These partnerships aspire to increase the capacity of each community, focusing on skill development, knowledge transfer, and empowerment to enhance self-sufficiency. By prioritizing these multifaceted goals, Indigenous and non-Indigenous collaborations seek to create a foundation for inclusive, sustainable, and mutually beneficial economic development.



Benefits of Partnerships

Partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities yield many benefits, establishing a foundation for collective progress and prosperity. First and foremost, these collaborations generate a strong, united voice, amplifying the impact of all communities when advocating for shared interests and addressing common challenges. Access to funding becomes more attainable as joint efforts enhance credibility, attracting investment and support for sustainable initiatives that benefit all parties. Additionally, cost savings emerge through shared resources, knowledge, and infrastructure, optimizing efficiency and promoting financial sustainability.

Local business development and job creation can be substantial outcomes, as collaborative ventures foster economic growth that directly impacts the communities involved. By leveraging unique financial, human, and physical resources, partnerships enable a diversified and resilient approach to economic development. Indigenous communities can bring traditional knowledge and sustainable practices to the table, while non-Indigenous partners contribute technical expertise and broader market access.

Furthermore, coordinated planning emerges as a key advantage, allowing both communities to align their goals and strategies. This ensures that initiatives are complementary, avoiding duplication of efforts and optimizing the use of resources. In essence, these partnerships create a synergy that transcends individual capabilities, fostering a holistic and sustainable approach to economic development that benefits all stakeholders involved.

Partnership Challenges

Navigating partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities poses a set of challenges rooted in historical, cultural, and systemic complexities. One significant hurdle lies in the historical legacy of colonization, which has left a profound impact on Indigenous communities, often resulting in mistrust and power imbalances. Cultural differences and misunderstandings can also create barriers to effective communication and collaboration. Additionally, the differing governance structures and approaches to decision-making between Indigenous and non-Indigenous entities may lead to challenges in finding common ground. Economic disparities, unequal access to resources, and competing interests further complicate the collaborative process. Striking a balance between acknowledging and respecting diverse cultural perspectives while fostering effective cooperation requires a nuanced and inclusive approach.

Capacity

Capacity poses a significant challenge for Indigenous and non-Indigenous community partnerships, encompassing various aspects such as human, financial, and organizational or community resources. Indigenous communities, often facing historical marginalization and limited access to resources, may encounter difficulties in building the necessary capacity for effective collaboration. Non-Indigenous partners, on the other hand, may lack a nuanced understanding of the unique cultural contexts and historical experiences of their Indigenous counterparts. This can hinder the development and implementation of joint initiatives, impacting the sustainability and success of partnerships. Building capacity requires investment in education, skill development, and fostering mutual understanding to ensure that all communities can actively contribute and benefit from collaborative efforts. Addressing these capacity challenges is integral to cultivating resilient and mutually beneficial partnerships that honour the strengths and perspectives of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

Absence of an Economic Development Plan

The absence of a well-defined economic development plan or strategy can pose a significant obstacle to successful partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Clear and coordinated economic development initiatives guide collaborative efforts toward shared goals. Without a comprehensive plan, there is a risk of directionless endeavours, conflicting priorities, and missed opportunities for mutual growth. Effective economic development strategies are instrumental in addressing historical disparities, fostering inclusive practices, and ensuring sustainable outcomes. Establishing a shared vision through strategic planning helps align the interests of both communities, promoting coherence and synergy in their collaborative initiatives. A lack of a structured economic framework may impede progress, making it imperative for Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners to prioritize and co-create well-defined strategies for economic development that reflect their shared values and aspirations.

Financial Resources

The challenge of inadequate funding, combined with a lack of awareness about available funding sources can significantly impede the success of Indigenous and non-Indigenous community partnerships. Securing financial resources is crucial for implementing collaborative initiatives and sustaining long-term projects. Often, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities may face challenges in navigating complex funding processes, leading to missed opportunities for financial support. Additionally, a lack of

awareness about available funding options may hinder the development of joint ventures and community-driven projects. Overcoming this challenge requires proactive efforts to enhance awareness, build capacity for grant applications, and establish networks that connect communities with appropriate funding streams. By addressing these funding constraints, Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships can unlock the potential for impactful and sustainable collaborative initiatives that benefit communities.

Identification of Opportunities

Identifying the right opportunity presents a distinct challenge for Indigenous and non-Indigenous community partnerships, requiring understanding shared goals and needs. The lack of a well-defined and mutually beneficial opportunity can hinder initiating collaborative projects, leaving potential benefits untapped. All communities must navigate through cultural differences, historical contexts, and varying priorities to identify opportunities that align with their collective aspirations. This challenge underscores the importance of open communication, community engagement, and a shared vision to uncover opportunities that respect the unique strengths of each community. Addressing this hurdle involves fostering a collaborative approach that encourages dialogue, cultural exchange, and the co-creation of initiatives, ultimately paving the way for identifying and pursuing opportunities that foster meaningful and sustainable partnerships.

Trust and Relationships

Building and maintaining trust within Indigenous and non-Indigenous community partnerships can be a formidable challenge rooted in historical imbalances and cultural differences. The historical legacy of colonization has left Indigenous communities understandably wary of external influences, contributing to a hesitancy to engage in partnerships. Cultural disparities and a lack of understanding of each other's views may hinder effective communication and collaboration. Establishing trust requires time, cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to reciprocity. The process involves cultivating genuine relationships through shared experiences, respectful dialogue, and recognizing each community's unique strengths. Overcoming the trust-building challenge is integral to fostering authentic partnerships that honour the autonomy and perspectives of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, laying the groundwork for sustained collaboration and mutual growth.

Leadership

Leadership can present another challenge for Indigenous and non-Indigenous community partnerships. Differences in governance structures, decision-making processes, and political priorities may create hurdles in achieving cohesive collaboration. Indigenous communities often have distinct governance systems rooted in their cultural heritage, while non-Indigenous entities operate within conventional political frameworks. Navigating these differences requires effective communication, mutual respect, and a commitment to inclusivity in decision-making. Political leaders play a pivotal role in setting the tone for partnership initiatives, and challenges may arise when there is a lack of alignment in political goals or when power dynamics are not addressed transparently. Successfully addressing these challenges involves fostering a spirit of cooperation, ensuring representation from both communities in decision-making processes, and recognizing the importance of equitable political engagement in building strong and sustainable partnerships.

Best Practices

Identifying and implementing best practices is essential for the success of Indigenous and non-Indigenous community partnerships. These practices encompass a range of approaches that foster inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and sustainable development. Effective communication, built on mutual respect and understanding, stands as a cornerstone, ensuring that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices are heard and valued. Transparent and inclusive decision-making processes contribute to the equitable distribution of power, addressing historical imbalances. Best practices also involve acknowledging and respecting the autonomy of Indigenous communities, incorporating traditional knowledge into collaborative initiatives, and prioritizing shared values. By embracing these best practices, partnerships can cultivate environments that not only bridge cultural gaps but also pave the way for enduring, mutually beneficial collaborations. The survey identified the following as best practices for successful partnerships.

Building Trust

Acknowledging and addressing past trust issues and mistrust is a fundamental best practice in Indigenous and non-Indigenous community partnerships. Recognizing the historical legacy of colonization and the resultant power imbalances is essential in fostering an environment of openness and understanding. By acknowledging past grievances, both parties can engage in honest dialogue, leading to the identification of root causes and shared commitment to healing. This proactive approach establishes a foundation built on transparency, empathy, and cultural sensitivity, which are vital elements in rebuilding trust. Through this acknowledgment, partners can collectively work towards dismantling historical barriers, fostering mutual respect, and creating a space where trust can be rebuilt and sustained for the success of collaborative initiatives.

Ask Questions

Asking hard questions is identified as a best practice in Indigenous and non-Indigenous community partnerships, fostering a culture of transparency and accountability. This practice encourages partners to confront difficult issues head-on, addressing historical disparities, power imbalances, and cultural differences. By posing challenging questions, both communities can openly discuss their expectations, concerns, and aspirations, leading to a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives. This proactive approach facilitates the identification of potential pitfalls and allows for developing strategies to mitigate challenges. Asking hard questions not only strengthens communication but also signals a commitment to resolving issues collaboratively, promoting a more resilient and inclusive foundation for partnership success.

Varying Perspectives

Ensuring that everyone speaks from their perspectives was identified as a crucial best practice. This approach emphasizes the importance of diverse voices, recognizing that each community possesses unique perspectives shaped by its cultural heritage, history, and experiences. By ensuring an environment where individuals feel empowered to share their viewpoints openly, partners can tap into a wealth of insights, enriching the collaborative process. This practice promotes inclusivity, giving due consideration to the values and priorities of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. A more comprehensive understanding of the diverse perspectives at the table is achieved through

respectful dialogue and active listening, paving the way for joint decision-making that reflects the collective aspirations of all involved.

Participation

Understanding why everyone is at the table serves as a foundational best practice. This practice involves exploring the motivations, goals, and expectations that each community brings to the partnership. By gaining clarity on the purpose and intentions of all stakeholders, partners can align their efforts more effectively, ensuring that the shared vision is at the forefront of their initiatives. This practice fosters transparency and trust and encourages open communication about individual and collective objectives. Understanding the diverse reasons for participation allows for creating a collaborative framework that respects the autonomy of each community, ultimately enhancing the authenticity and sustainability of the partnership.

Common Ground

Finding mutual common ground is a critical best practice and connects diverse perspectives. This practice involves identifying shared values, goals, and aspirations that all communities can support. By identifying areas of commonality, partners can establish a solid foundation for collaboration, fostering understanding and unity. This best practice encourages the recognition of shared interests while respecting the unique cultural identities of each community. By focusing on mutual common ground, collaboration becomes more meaningful, promoting a sense of shared purpose that transcends cultural differences and historical challenges. This approach not only strengthens the bond between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities but also lays the groundwork for collaborative initiatives that resonate with the collective vision of both parties.

Understanding Community Differences

Spending time in each other's communities emerges as a valuable best practice in Indigenous and non-Indigenous community partnerships, facilitating a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural contexts. This practice encourages direct engagement, allowing members from all communities to build personal connections, share experiences, and witness firsthand the unique aspects of each other's way of life. Immersing oneself in the daily rhythms of the partner community fosters empathy and cultural sensitivity, breaking down stereotypes and fostering genuine relationships. By investing time in reciprocal visits, partners can develop a better understanding of shared values, challenges, and aspirations, thereby strengthening the foundation for collaborative efforts. This immersive approach promotes a sense of inclusivity and respect, contributing to the establishment of trust and the cultivation of a more authentic and enduring partnership.

Shared Decision Making

The importance of co-creation and shared decision-making is identified as a significant best practice emphasizing the importance of co-creation and shared decision-making. This approach recognizes the need for collaborative partners to engage in a process of dialogue and consultation before finalizing any project proposals. By avoiding preconceived notions and allowing for input from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, the partnership becomes more adaptive and responsive to the unique needs and aspirations of all involved. This practice values the wisdom embedded in traditional knowledge and contemporary expertise, ensuring that the resulting initiatives are more inclusive,

culturally sensitive, and reflective of the collective vision of the partnering communities. It encourages a spirit of collaboration from the outset, promoting a more equitable and sustainable foundation for joint endeavors.

While the above best practices contribute to the success of Indigenous and non-Indigenous community partnerships, the overarching importance of prioritizing trust-building cannot be overstated. Initiatives such as asking hard questions, understanding diverse perspectives, finding mutual common ground, and avoiding finished proposals are all essential elements that enrich collaborative efforts. However, trust-building is the key to infusing authenticity, resilience, and inclusivity into the partnership. By recognizing historical mistrust, actively engaging in transparent dialogue, and fostering relationships based on mutual respect, communities can establish a foundation that enables effective communication, shared decision-making, and, ultimately, the success of collaborative initiatives.

Trust-building ensures that the partnership is not only built on solid ground but also resilient enough to withstand challenges, promoting a culture of openness and authenticity that is indispensable for the longevity and positive impact of Indigenous and non-Indigenous community collaborations.

Best Practices for Successful Partnerships

- Acknowledge past trust issues and mistrust
 - Ask hard questions
 - Have everyone speak from their perspectives
 - Understand why everyone is at the table
 - Find mutual common ground
 - Spend time in the community(s) – get out of the boardroom
 - Don't come with a finished proposal
 - Trust building needs to be the priority
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Partnership Initiatives

In the pursuit of fostering inclusive and sustainable communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships have worked together on various projects and initiatives to make their communities better. These initiatives can be complex, take years to achieve, or be much more simplistic and have relatively quick outcomes. For example, appointing Indigenous community members to non-Indigenous economic development committees or boards and visa versa. These cross-cultural appointments promote immediate diversity and representation, fostering understanding and inclusivity within decision-making structures.

Partnerships and collaborations can include tourism development, labour enhancements, and disaster response programs. Through these collaborative efforts, diverse initiatives unfold, exemplifying the transformative potential of partnerships in fostering resilient, interconnected, and economically vibrant communities. While some initiatives require long-term commitment and coordination, others offer swift and tangible results, showcasing the versatility of collaborative efforts in achieving comprehensive and timely outcomes.

Small Changes Can Make a Difference

qathet: a name gifted to the Regional District by Tla'amin Nation Elders

qathet Regional District (qRD) is a local government authority. It includes five electoral areas and one municipality (City of Powell River) in the traditional territory of the Tla'amin, shíshálh, Klahoose, Nanoose, and K'ómoks First Nation governments. In June of 2017, Elders from the Tla'amin Nation gifted the word 'qathet' to the Regional District. The word qathet, which is pronounced "KAW-thet", means working together. qathet is intentionally lowercase as Tla'amin Nation traditional orthography does not include capital letters. Public engagement took place throughout the community, concluding in October 2017. Following the engagement, the Regional Board formally requested the Province of BC that the name of the Powell River Regional District be changed to the qathet Regional District. On July 5, 2018, the Province of British Columbia issued their official approval for the requested name change. Since then, there have been over 30 name changes in the region, most recently, the school district changed its name to qathet in the fall of 2023.



Tinwis: calm waters

In November 2023, the Tofino council unanimously backed the idea of changing the name of Mackenzie Beach to Tinwis – its Indigenous name. Tinwis means calm waters in the language of the local Tla-o-qui-aht Nation, which combines "tin," meaning "calm," and "wis," meaning "beach." The name change reflects the area's cultural history and heritage values. Application to the province's Geographical Names Office has been made, and comments from the municipality, regional district and First Nations are being collected. The comments are expected to take nine months to a year to collect. The Tla-o-qui-aht Nation has other name changes in mind for area sites, including changing Kennedy Lake to its Indigenous name, Haa'uukmin, which means "feast bowl."



Sts'ailes Flag

Harrison Hot Springs is on the ancient village site of Qwó:íls, part of the traditional territory of the Sts'ailes people. In 2019, Sts'ailes and Harrison Hot Springs honoured the First Nation's traditional territory in the village with a flag-raising ceremony. The Sts'ailes flag now flies proudly above Harrison Hot Springs' civic plaza every day of the year. The flag serves as constant recognition of the traditional Sts'ailes lands as well as helps educate visitors on the history of the area, which included the ancient village of Qwó:íls, which was where Harrison is now. Then, in 2020, Sts'ailes raised their community flag alongside the Canadian flag outside of the Kwikwèxwelhp Healing Village in Harrison Mills. The flag raising reflects the ongoing partnership between Correctional Service Canada (CSC) and Sts'ailes. CSC and Sts'ailes work together to operate Kwikwèxwelhp Healing Village to improve public safety for Indigenous people. The Sts'ailes' flag is an everyday reminder of the connectedness to the community and the deeper meaning of the name (Kwikwèxwelhp), which translates into "a place to gather medicines."



Survey Findings

Conducting a survey on Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships is a crucial and insightful undertaking for several reasons. First and foremost, it provides a platform for diverse voices within these communities to share their perspectives, experiences, and challenges in collaborative initiatives. The survey serves as a valuable tool to identify successful models and best practices that have fostered positive relationships, reconciliation, and sustainable development. Additionally, by understanding the perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders, the survey contributes to creating more informed and inclusive policies and initiatives.

The data gathered helped to highlight areas that require attention, address potential disparities and strengthen the foundations of future partnerships. Ultimately, a survey on Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships is instrumental in shaping a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of collaborative efforts, paving the way for more effective, respectful, and mutually beneficial engagements.

The infographic to the right provides some of the data collected from the survey. Appendix A has more detailed survey information.



Nlaka'pamux First Nations - Cook's Ferry Alliance

Who are we?

We are a community of approximately 384 Band members, roughly 15% residing on reserve and 85% residing off reserve. Our mission is to understand individual roles and responsibilities and respect others' roles and responsibilities.

Where are we?

The Cook's Ferry Indian Band is a Nlaka'pamux First Nations government located in the Central Interior region of the Canadian province of British Columbia.

Our Project

The effects were catastrophic when storms known as atmospheric rivers poured over southern BC in November 2021. Rivers spilled over dikes onto farmland in Abbotsford, and fatal mudslides swept vehicles off Highway 99. The BC government was able to repair the Coquihalla Highway, a major artery connecting Metro Vancouver with the rest of Canada, well ahead of schedule. Highway 8, a scenic roadway that snakes its way along the Nicola River between Spences Bridge and Merritte, proved to be much more difficult.

The wildfire that burned down most of the Village of Lytton in the summer also affected the communities along Highway 8, and when the heavy rains came in November, tree roots that might have helped soak up the water were gone. The ground became saturated, and kilometres of highway collapsed into the river. The Cook's Ferry Indian Band is dispersed across various small reserves and in the village, extending east into Nicola Valley, located at the northwest end of Highway 8 in Spencers Bridge. According to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, seven kilometres of Highway 8 were lost to the November atmospheric river, with 15 sites where both road lanes were swept away.

Almost one year after the November 2021 torrent of rain caused devastating damage along the corridor, Highway 8 is once again open to the public. Now the highway is open, the community has improved access to healthcare, shopping and other resources.

The highway rebuilding was a partnership that depended on the Nation's traditional knowledge to ensure river habitat rehabilitation and looked for strategies around armouring embankments and where areas of vulnerability are based on literally centuries of living along that corridor. Indigenous people made up to 30 percent of the 200-person workforce.

Partners

Ram Consulting, Quattro Constructors Ltd., Northern Interior Aggregates/IDL Projects, Province of BC – Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure project.

Ktunaxa Nation – Ktunaxa Homelands

Who we are

Ktunaxa people have occupied the lands adjacent to the Kootenay and Columbia Rivers and the Arrow Lakes of British Columbia for more than 10,000 years. The Traditional Territory of the Ktunaxa Nation s comprised of Nation members from six Bands located throughout historic traditional Ktunaxa territory. Five Bands are located in British Columbia and two are in the United States

Where are we?

The Traditional Territory of the Ktunaxa Nation covers approximately 70,000 square kilometres (27,000 square miles) within the Kootenay region of south-eastern British Columbia and historically included parts of Alberta, Montana, Washington and Idaho.

Our Project

The Ktunaxa Homelands campaign was launched in the spring of 2022. The campaign depicts the Ktunaxa Creation Story through a three-part video series, which was a collaboration between the Ktunaxa Nation, Cranbrook Tourism, Tourism Fernie and Tourism Kimberley.

Since time beyond the reach of memory, the Rockies, Hoodoos and Waterways of the **#KtunaxaHomelands** have been a place of connection, rejuvenation and sustenance. From the beginning of time, Ktunaxa people have occupied the lands adjacent to the Kootenay and Columbia Rivers, the Arrow Lakes of British Columbia and on into Alberta, Montana, Washington and Idaho. Today, outdoor sport and adventure have spurred a new appreciation for the area, encompassing the BC Kootenay region, including the towns of Kimberley, Cranbrook and Fernie.

The Ktunaxa Homelands campaign aims to help locals and visitors understand how the Rockies and Kootenay waterways were formed while appreciating the significance of the Hoodoos, all through a Ktunaxa perspective.

The Ktunaxa Nation Council Economic Investment Sector and the partners knew the area was not well known, yet it was a part of SuperNational BC and Beautiful BC campaigns. Visitors to the area are looking for answers to questions like ‘Is there a tribe here?’ and ‘What did they use this land for?’ They want to know about places they visit, the places they paddle, hike to and bike through. They want to know right from where they stand—what does that place mean to Ktunaxa? The project spanned across the Ktunaxa Homelands, including the communities of Cranbrook, Kimberley, and Fernie, and was supported with funding from the communities as well as the Columbia Basin Trust and Destination British Columbia.

Partners

Cranbrook Tourism, Tourism Fernie, Tourism Kimberley, Columbia Basin Trust, Destination BC

Heritage Fernie – Fernie Heritage Strategy

Who we are

Heritage Fernie is a program delivered by the Fernie & District Historical Society, with the support of Heritage B C, and funding from the Columbia Basin Trust and the City of Fernie.

Where are we?

Fernie is a city in the Elk Valley area of the East Kootenay region of southeastern BC, located on Highway 3, one of the three major east-west routes between BC and Alberta.

Our Project

Heritage is of critical importance to the Fernie community and the city's future. In consultations for the Official Community Plan (OCP), the people of Fernie said they value Fernie's heritage and want to retain it. Fernie's OCP incorporates statements and goals regarding the importance of heritage conservation in Fernie, including developing a heritage register and a heritage planning toolkit. The Fernie Heritage Strategy provides a best-practice platform for making this happen. A Fernie Heritage Strategy Task Force, comprised of Fernie residents, city council and staff liaisons and representatives of the Ktunaxa, was formed to lead, guide and oversee the creation of the document and to ensure a balance of professional, municipal and community input and advice in the process of its development.

The completion of the strategy represents an 18-month journey and includes a remarkable collaboration of voices and stewards of the Elk Valley, who have created an unprecedented, co-authored document, collaboratively written between consultants, Ktunaxa knowledge holders, the community and the City of Fernie Planning. One of the first steps was a workshop on Ktunaxa cultural awareness. For those attending, learning the simplest words in the Ktunaxa language, firsthand Ktunaxa stories and knowledge of this place, and the Ktunaxa perspective and experience of the relatively recent settlement of Fernie set the tone for a fresh mindset. This enabled both discomfort and courage in the discussion about Fernie's heritage values, which led to an openness for a more inclusive, values-based approach, to future community planning.

After completing the first research phase, Janice Alpine and Elder Violet Birdstone joined the project task force. This provided Ktunaxa's perception and perspective and guided the development of the document as Fernie was explored and relearned. Together, an attempt was made to re-articulate Fernie's story, using an approach and language that acknowledges the deep and ongoing Ktunaxa connection to the Fernie district. The project process involved learning and reaffirming that heritage values, districts, buildings and resources are key to revitalization and community renewal and are a source for new ideas.

This project represents a model of values-based, implementable heritage planning in British Columbia, which explores heritage conservation's role in all planning initiatives and is significant for being truly co-written with the community and the Ktunaxa, whose homelands Fernie sits within.

Partners

Ktunaxa First Nations and Consulting Team of Ance Building Services, Denise Cook Design and John Atkin History + Research