



Regional Board Report

TO: Regional Board

FROM: Brian Reardon, CAO

DATE: October 14, 2021

SUBJECT: Establishment of an Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Function

Voting Entitlement: (All Directors – Weighted Corporate Vote – Simple Majority – LGA 210)

Purpose: To seek Board approval on the establishment of an Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Function embedded within the Corporate Communications Department.

Executive Summary:

On March 11, 2021, the Governance & Services Committee received a staff report in response to the Board's direction to further enhance and build strong working relationships with Okanagan indigenous communities. The Regional Board subsequently adopted the following resolution:

“THAT the Regional Board approve allocating \$50,000 from the RDCO feasibility reserve fund to undertake a feasibility study in consideration of establishing a Regional First Nations Engagement Service;

AND FURTHER THAT this expense be included in this years' 2021-2025 Financial Plan.”

On June 2, 2021, Chair Given, Director Coble and CAO Reardon met virtually, along with support staff to discuss and get a sense of what the vision, intent, and scope of a potential service or function would be. The focus was on Reconciliation, in all its various forms without limiting the possibilities. We spoke about committing ourselves to relationship-building; educating ourselves (elected officials and public servants) about residential schools, UNDRIP, treaties, human rights, etc.; engaging in meaningful consultation; celebrating our successes; and being a positive example for the rest of the Province.

The vision set at the June 2, 2021 meeting has a strong communication & educational component, therefore, staff believe there is a direct benefit in proceeding with a function versus a feasibility study at this time to achieve a timelier and more appropriate outcome. This proposed function, embedded within the RDCO Communications Department, is intended to make this vision a reality.

Should the Board approve the recommendation, staff would seek input from an Indigenous relations consultant, start scoping the function, recruit an Indigenous Relations Advisor, and start implementing the action plan in late 2021 or early 2022.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Regional Board receive the CAO report, 'Establishment of an Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Function', dated October 14, 2021;

AND THAT the Regional Board approve the Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Action Plan attached to this report as Schedule "A";

AND FURTHER THAT the Regional Board request staff to incorporate the costs of this new function in the 2022 budget process.

Respectfully Submitted:



Approved for Board's Consideration



Corie Griffiths,
Director of Corporate Services/
Acting CAO

Attachment(s):

1. Schedule "A" – Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Action Plan Schedule "B" – Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Function – Operational Analysis

Implications of Recommendation:

Strategic Plan:	The Board's Vision Statement includes "The syilx/Okanagan people are true partners, helping to interpret the past, shape the present and define a common future." One of the Board's Values states "We build relationships with our member municipalities, the syilx/Okanagan people and partners."
Organizational:	Should a new Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Function be approved, it would provide the Board and staff with the needed resources.
Financial:	Budget approval will be required.
Legal/Statutory Authority:	Part 6 – Regional Districts: Governance and Procedures provides the authority to establish this function.

Background:

At the Budget Workshop held on February 25, 2021 the Governance & Services Committee discussed ways in which the Regional District could enhance and improve indigenous relations with Okanagan indigenous communities. The Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) and Westbank First Nation (WFN) has a history of collaborating and partnering on numerous initiatives in the traditional territory of the syilx/Okanagan peoples in the Central Okanagan. These efforts have been primarily project based.

The foundation of the conversation at the workshop advanced the desire to do something more than just celebrating project successes. Members of the Committee spoke about wanting to engage in Reconciliation efforts in a more meaningful way through respectful dialogue, learning and relationship building. The Committee also expressed the need to include all syilx/Okanagan Communities within the Central Okanagan region. These would include Westbank First Nation, Okanagan Indian Band and the Okanagan Nation Alliance.

Further to and following the Board direction from March 11, 2021, Chair Given, Director Coble and CAO Reardon met virtually on June 2, 2021, along with support staff, to discuss and get a sense of what the vision, intent, and scope of a potential service or function would be. The focus of the June 2 meeting was around the 10 principles of reconciliation, the 94 calls to action and the 46 articles of UNDRIP. At the meeting, discussion included looking at possibilities with an aspirational approach, not limiting the possibilities, and resourcing a dedicated employee to make these things happen. This virtual meeting concluded with these possibilities to be further discussed and developed at future meetings, potentially with the assistance of an Indigenous consultant(s) and a dedicated RDCO employee.

The vision set at the June 2 meeting has a strong communication & educational component. A function embedded within the Communications department, with a dedicated Indigenous Advisor position, is intended to make that vision a reality. Additional thoughts and considerations for this position include:

- coordinating RDCO's Reconciliation education program;
- advising our Indigenous relationship building and engagement activities;
- reviewing and recommending changes to RDCO current policies and bylaws that rely on concepts of European sovereignty;
- advising how and where to apply UNDRIP to RDCO policies, land considerations, relationship building, consultation, informed consent and communication protocols;
- advising and updating elected officials and RDCO staff on indigenous residential schools, treaties, anti-racism, intercultural competencies, and human rights.

Should the Board approve, staff will seek input from an Indigenous relations consultant, start scoping the function, recruit an Indigenous Relations Advisor, and start implementing the action plan in late 2021 or early 2021..

Financial Considerations:

Based on comparable functions in other Regional Districts in BC staff have identified the following program elements:

Staffing Costs:	One new employee with a strong communications and stakeholder relations background with a suggested title of Indigenous Relations Advisor	
Start-up Costs:	Consultant(s) to scope/define the program; office space, furniture & equipment, and	
Program Costs:	2 or 3 initiatives/events per year plus ongoing education	
Year 1 Costs:	\$185,000	(Baseline Program plus \$20K for start-up consulting costs)
Year 2 Costs:	\$165,000	(Baseline Program plus inflation)

Future years would need to be adjusted for inflation and include any additional program elements requested by the Board.

These costs would need to be added to our current Communications Department budget and will be presented, considered, and approved by the Regional Board on an annual basis.

Organizational Issues:

Aligns with the Board commitment to its Vision asserting “The syilx/Okanagan people are true partners, helping to interpret the past, shape the present and define a common future” by providing resources and capacity to successfully build relationships with the syilx/Okanagan communities in a respectful and appropriate way.

Alternative Recommendation:

THAT the Regional Board direct staff to allocate \$50,000 from the RDCO feasibility reserve fund and proceed with a feasibility study in consideration of establishing a Regional First Nations Engagement Service.

SCHEDULE “A”

Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Action Plan

1. Present the “Request for Direction – Establishment of an Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Function” report on October 14th, 2021;
2. Receive Board approval of the staff recommendations in the report;
3. Initiate the recruitment process for the Indigenous Advisor position in Q4, 2021;
4. Onboard the successful applicant in November/December 2021;
5. In collaboration with Okanagan indigenous community representatives develop a five year strategic plan and annual implementation plans;
6. Bring forward short term activities/work plan during the 2022 budget deliberations process;
7. Prioritize work plans in the following categories:
 - a. Internal Initiatives – corporate education for elected officials and RDCO employees, communication protocols, review current policies and bylaws with an UNDRIP lens, consultation, informed consent and relationship building;
 - b. External Initiatives – outreach with syilx/Okanagan communities and member municipalities to advocate for education and learning opportunities about Indigenous history and current issues;
 - c. Public Initiatives – explore public education opportunities through historical and cultural information boards, wayfinding signs, dedicated website space, publicizing special events and celebrations.
8. Provide ongoing updates to the Board on a semi-annual basis.
9. Bring forward yearly work plans and budget requests through the annual budget deliberation process for Board consideration and approval.

SCHEDULE “B”

Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Function Operational Analysis

Purpose:

To establish a regional function to engage in Reconciliation efforts in a more meaningful way through respectful dialogue, learning and relationship building.

Participating Areas:

The participating areas in the Regional Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Function include the:

- City of Kelowna
- City of West Kelowna
- District of Peachland
- District of Lake Country
- Electoral Area East
- Electoral Area West

Scope of the Function:

The scope of the function is broadly described as:

- a. Internal Initiatives – corporate education for elected officials and RDCO employees, communication protocols, review current policies and bylaws with an UNDRIP lens, consultation, informed consent and relationship building;
- b. External Initiatives – outreach with syilx/Okanagan communities and member municipalities to advocate for education and learning opportunities about Indigenous history and current issues;
- c. Public Initiatives – explore public education opportunities through historical and cultural information boards, wayfinding signs, dedicated website space, publicizing special events and celebrations.

Method of Cost Apportionment:

The Regional Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Function will be housed in the Corporate Communications Department and fall within the General Administration suite of responsibilities that the Regional District of Central Okanagan provides. As such, these costs will be apportioned based on the Regional Board’s General Administration Cost Allocation Policy of the day.

SCHEDULE “B” (Cont’d)

Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Function Operational Analysis

Governance Framework:

As part of the Corporate Communications Department, governance relating to the Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Function will be provided by the Central Okanagan Regional District Board of Directors.

Delivery Model:

The programming and activities provided by the Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Function will be delivered directly by Regional District of Central Okanagan employees through the Corporate Communications Department with a dedicated employee using subject matter experts and consultants on an as needed basis.

Review Process:

The Indigenous Reconciliation & Engagement Function will submit yearly work plans and budget requests on an annual basis and provide semi-annual updates to the Board on program accomplishments and highlights. This function will also be included in the 5-year review cycle for all RDCO informal service reviews.

Support Amongst Elected Officials:

There has been unanimous support from the Board of Directors from the Regional District of Central Okanagan on every resolution dealing with matters associated with this initiative thus far and some have expressed a desire to do something meaningful in this regard, sooner rather than later.