

2024 Province-wide Community to Community Forum

The Province-wide Community to Community Forum, co-hosted by UBCM and First Nations Leadership Council, included speakers Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs; Kimberly Murray, Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools; and keynote speaker, the Honourable Jody Wilson-Raybould.

Panel discussions included implementing and legislating UNDRIP, collaborative land use planning, and inclusive regional governance. Musqueam Elder Larry Grant opened. Agenda: https://www.ubcm.ca/sites/default/files/2024-09/PC2C%20Final%20Agenda%20Sept%2016%202024_0.pdf

PANEL 1: TRUTH BEFORE RECONCILIATION

This panel focused on the missing and disappeared children and unmarked burials, reviewed the facts and findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the impacts of residential schools that still exist today. One panelist noted, "Reconciliation is not about forgiving and forgetting, it's about remembering and committing to doing differently moving forward."

Recommendations for local governments made by the panel included:

- Open your records management systems to see what information they contain
- Open your historical and current maps
- Develop protocols with Indigenous Nations around land use
- Share your mapping data so Indigenous communities can overlay it with theirs
- Use your power to implement concrete, sustainable actions within your own communities

Sacred Responsibility: Searching for the Missing Children and Unmarked Graves report is available https://osi-bis.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/InterimReport_Summary_web.pdf

PANEL 2: CITY OF VANCOUVER UNDRIP ACTION PLAN

<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/undrip-action-plan-2024-2028.pdf>

In October 2022, Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and the City of Vancouver became the first intergovernmental partners to collectively approve a strategy to implement UNDRIP at the local government level in Canada. More recently, the City approved an UNDRIP Action Plan. This work, led by the City's UNDRIP Task Force, is an important example of reconciliation in progress.

The panel discussed how development of the action plan built on inter-governmental relationships that have been developing since 2013. Unlike federal and provincial UNDRIP action plans, the city's comes with a five-year timeline. The action plan was developed with the leadership of an inter-governmental table with elected officials from City of Vancouver, Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh and contains 88 deliverables across 5 themes:

- A. Relationship Foundations
- B. Redress Housing and Land
- C. Cultural Presence
- D. Stewardship and Addressing Environmental Racism
- E. Communication and Accountability

Importantly, the plan also lays out progress reporting requirements for transparency and accountability.

Khelsilem from Squamish Nation noted, "At no point was this a negotiation, with lawyers going back and forth, it was a true collaboration, working together as equals."

PANEL 3: IMPLEMENTING/LEGISLATING UNDRIP WITHIN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs and First Nations Summit have passed resolutions calling on provincial and federal governments to legislate requirements for local governments to implement UNDRIP. First Nations Leadership Council will share their perspective on the topic. What would this look like? What are the implications for local governments? What are the opportunities and challenges?

Speakers: Councillor Trish Mandewo, President (UBCM), Jessica Wood, Deputy Minister (Declaration Act Secretariat), Cheryl Casimer, Political Executive (First Nations Summit), Grand Chief Stewart Phillip (Union of BC Indian Chiefs).

Panelists noted that we're still waiting for guideline and resources from the province, but that work has begun between Ministry of Municipal Affairs and UBCM to develop a toolkit with resources to help local governments.

Stories of success were shared by attendees about the best moments had in work with a neighbouring FN/local government.

Some commonalities in success stories included when:

- Local governments were listening
- First Nations were sharing cultural knowledge and it was being respected
- Children were involved
- There was an invitation to connect

PANEL 4: CITY OF PORT ALBERNI AND TSESHAHT AND HUPAČASATH

The City of Port Alberni formed a Reconciliation Committee in 2017 that made recommendations to foster and advance reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the Alberni Valley. More recently the City, Tseshaht and Hupačasath have undertaken collaborative land use planning and development along the City's waterfront. This panel explored projects that the communities are working on together including the planning and development of the Somass Lands and Clutesi Haven Marina and how this aligns with UNDRIP.

Tseshaht Chief Ken Watts shared the slow road toward better relations with the City and advised local governments to focus on the relationships, take the time to learn as much as you can, and be part of everything that you can be.

PANEL 5: INCLUSIVE REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

The panel presented the work that Westbank First Nation (WFN) – a self-governing nation – and Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) are undertaking to develop a functioning inclusive governance model that will ensure meaningful WFN representation on the RDCO Board. This initiative was undertaken in the spirit of fostering mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation between WFN and the RDCO. The model also moves forward implementation of DRIPA/UNDRIP, Article 5 recognizing that, “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.” Panelists shared what has been accomplished to date, and what issues/challenges they are working through along the way.

The government to government relationship took decades to build, and resulted in a local services agreement in which RDCO delivers 14 services to residents living on WFN lands. WFN is a non-voting member of RDCO Board, and has a co-management agreement and MOU with Parks Canada for Black Mountain regional park. Jordan Coble (Counsellor WFN) stated “if you want to be equals, there has to be money put behind it, there has to be administrative staff to be behind the work.”

Lisa Pastro, Director of Operations for WFN noted its not just local governments that need to resource reconciliation, "It starts from the top - regional district boards and Councils need to make reconciliation a priority, need to fund that work and have someone actually doing the work (from the Nation)."

PANEL 6: KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE JODY WILSON-RAYBOULD: GOVERNING & POLITICS IN UNCERTAIN TIMES: ADVANCING RECONCILIATION/UNDRIP AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

JWR Discussion paper with 5 potential models of Inclusive Regional Governance:
<https://pub-rdco.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=12351>

Highlights/themes of the keynote address included:

- The need to stick your neck out as a leader
- Why are we fearful and confused when the basic human rights enshrined by the UN and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms are applied to Indigenous people?
- DRIPA is only sticking the neck out a little, because the Act is modest in its requirements and its deliverables incremental. Little had changed since DRIPA's adoption
- Change is slow because provincial and federal governments remain designed so that anything to do with Indigenous rights and title is virtually impossible to accomplish and DRIPA does not change that
- DRIPA does not address the dynamics of limited understanding and intransigence in communities: this is where local governments' work comes in
- Local governments can be at the leading edge of the sphere in which you operate. Make your actions not only performative, but tangible and impactful
- Push back against patterns of "performative reconciliation" that have taken hold
- Be careful with what you say because you can't take words back
- The real work of reconciliation can be hidden by the symbols and performance. When symbols are taken for the reality, especially when Indigenous people are desperately anticipating and needing reconciliatory action, and come to realize that its not been real after all.
- Need to be “in-betweeners”: walk between and translate between the silos

- Honouring different ways of being are important, the opposite of fear and differences is knowledge, inclusion and equity.
- Pursue a more accurate telling of the story of Canada