

British Columbia

# Capital region's standing committees will now include First Nations' elected officials

B.C.'s Capital Regional District includes the territories of 20 Indigenous communities

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The Capital Regional District is comprised of 13 municipalities and three electoral areas and co-ordinates issues in the Greater Victoria region. (Jonathan Hayward/Canadian Press)

For the first time, B.C.'s Capital Regional District's standing committees will include representation from elected members of First Nations on a rotating basis.

The Capital Regional District, which was created in 1966, consists of 13 municipalities — including Victoria — and three electoral areas and co-ordinates issues in the Greater Victoria region. It also includes the territories of 20 Indigenous communities.

Those nations have not had much of a say in regional governance till now. Joni Olsen, a councillor for the Tsartlip First Nation, says the new change is significant.

"It's been about 20 years, actually, since local First Nations governments have been seeking out something like this from the CRD and vocalized that to them," Olsen said to host Kathryn Marlow on CBC's *All Points West*.

The bylaw change allows inclusion of First Nations elected representatives on CRD standing committees, but Olsen notes that these are not decision-making seats.

"The committees make recommendations to the CRD board and the board actually gets to make the decision," she said.

"What it does do is it helps Indigenous or First Nations perspectives be shared. It's information sharing, it's relationship building ... There is significance there."

Olsen would like to see more agency for the First Nations, but there are statutory obstacles preventing those changes happening right away.

"The *Local Government Act* [a provincial statute] prohibits inclusion any further than what the CRD has created ... We do have work to do at the provincial government table," she said.

A statement from the CRD says the move is a step towards reconciliation.

"This effort to facilitate increased participation of First Nations in CRD governance is an important and measurable step towards the Board priority of First Nations Reconciliation and in working toward strong relationships with First Nations based on trust and mutual respect, partnerships and working together on shared goals," it read.

## Listen to the interview with Joni Olsen on CBC's *All Points West*:



**All Points West** 8:40

CRD standing committees will now include elected representatives from First Nations

The Capital Regional District includes the territories of about 20 Indigenous communities. Those nations have not had much of a say in regional governance. But the CRD has taken a step towards fixing that. CRD standing committees are now going to include representation from elected members of First Nations on a rotating basis. To talk more about this, Kathryn Marlow spoke with Joni Olsen. She is a councillor with the Tsartlip First Nation. 8:40

*With files from All Points West*

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