

# SHUSWAP FIRST NATION - THE DISTRICT OF INVERMERE

## STARTING THE DISCUSSION



### PATHWAY OVERVIEW

Located in BC's Southern Interior, the Shuswap First Nation and District of Invermere have historically had a hands-off relationship. However, recently both councils decided to start work on a joint-economic development initiative through the First Nation - Municipal Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI) program. Since starting the program, these two councils have been building partnership agreements and working group terms of reference, spending time learning about each other's community and government, and developing a shared vision to pursue mutually beneficial joint community economic development initiatives.

### PATHWAY ACTIVITIES

The collaborative pathway activities undertaken by Shuswap First Nation and the District of Invermere include the following.



**Protocol and  
Communications Agreements**



**Relationship-Building and  
Leadership Forums**



**Joint Economic  
Development Initiatives**

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

In 2009 both communities began work on preparing their Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). Approximately 20 hectares of overlapping lands identified by both communities led to a partnership agreement where \$100,000 worth of fuel management work in those areas was conducted, allowing for job opportunities for the Nation – recently impacted by job losses due to a local mill closing. Besides this, both communities have historically had a hands-off relationship, with delayed communications and occasional but infrequent meetings.

Then, in 2016, a note was sent to Shuswap Nation staff from the District of Invermere, asking if they would like to submit a joint letter of intent to apply to the CEDI program.

In this program, governing councils and key staff are brought together over three years to establish resilient relationships that support and provide tools to work towards joint land use and economic development plans and initiatives.

The application to the program was approved in 2017, followed by an election for both communities' councils. After both newly elected councils officially supported the formal participation in the CEDI program, the work began in fall of 2018. Currently, the partnership is working through the multi-stage Stronger Together process of developing and strengthening their partnership in order to work towards mutually beneficial joint community economic development.

## OUTCOMES

Throughout the four key stages of the CEDI Stronger Together process, both communities' councils and senior staff engage in facilitated workshops and working group meetings focused on building capacity, communication, and establishing grounds for mutually beneficial economic development. Monthly working group meetings between elected officials and core staff have helped to ensure regular communications between the communities while also coordinating and planning for larger bi-annual council-to-council workshops. So far, these workshops have resulted in:

- Developing an understanding of assumptions and mis-information of each community through a historical timeline exercise, created to learn more about each other, the history of the community-to-community relationship and to identify areas for continued learning.
- Learning about each council's governance models, jurisdiction, operations, services and land-use planning processes, and skills which will help in the identification of potential areas for collaboration.
- Significantly improved communication due to the knowledge that has been shared.
- Excitement from both communities for the future of the partnership and momentum around next steps.



**PHOTO:** Council members stand with Mayor Al Miller and Chief Barb Cote in celebration of passing Council resolutions, respectively, to participate in the CEDI program until March 2021. (source: Columbia Valley Pioneer).

“I am confident that our common goals for local economic development will foster benefits that extend to many other aspects of community building, and CEDI is giving us the framework to work together to achieve strong local results”

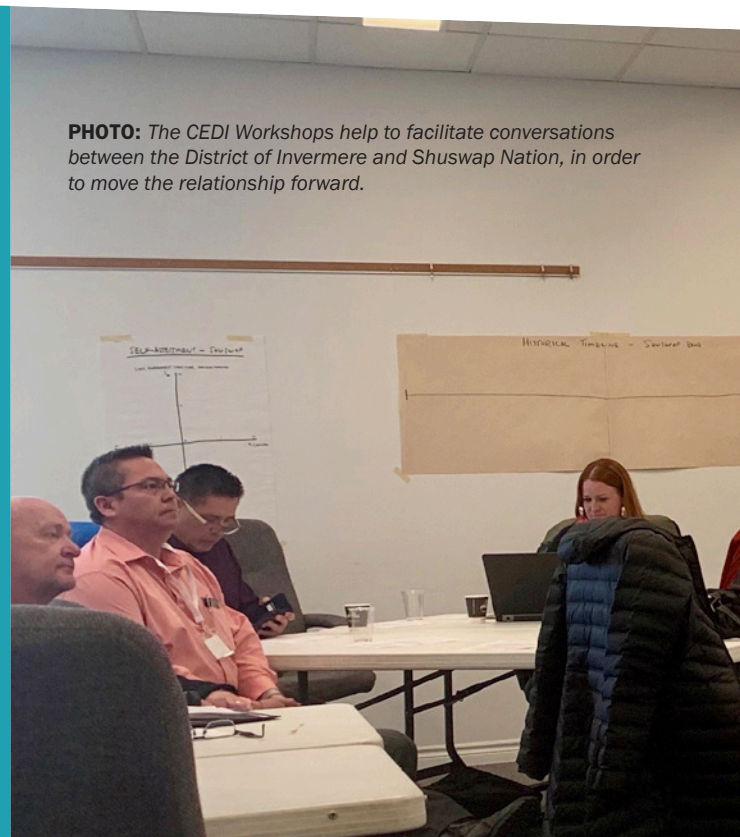
*Mayor Al Miller, District of Invermere*



### **CEDI - A National Joint Community Economic Development Initiative**

*The First Nations – Municipal Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI) aims to improve the economic prosperity of participating First Nations and adjacent municipalities through joint community economic development planning and initiatives. CEDI is a joint initiative of Cando (Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers) and Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM).*

*Through the CEDI program, Cando and FCM work with partner communities, consisting of First Nations and adjacent municipalities and often, other regional partners. As well, CEDI works to share lessons learned and stories of success as part of a community of practice with those who are interested in joint First Nation – municipal community economic development.*



**PHOTO:** The CEDI Workshops help to facilitate conversations between the District of Invermere and Shuswap Nation, in order to move the relationship forward.

The next stages in the CEDI process will centre on further identification and clarification of potential joint community economic development opportunities, developing joint strategic plans and work plans for the working group, and as these initiatives move forward, implementation. As with many partnerships, starting the conversation was the first step. Conversation occurring up until this point resulted in little to no collaboration and no meaningful relationship. Now these two governments are starting something together; sharing knowledge with one another to build and support their communities in the best way.

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### **Meeting to Build and Maintain Partnerships**

*For the District of Invermere and Shuswap Nation, the CEDI process has utilized two types of meetings to move the process and partnership forward:*

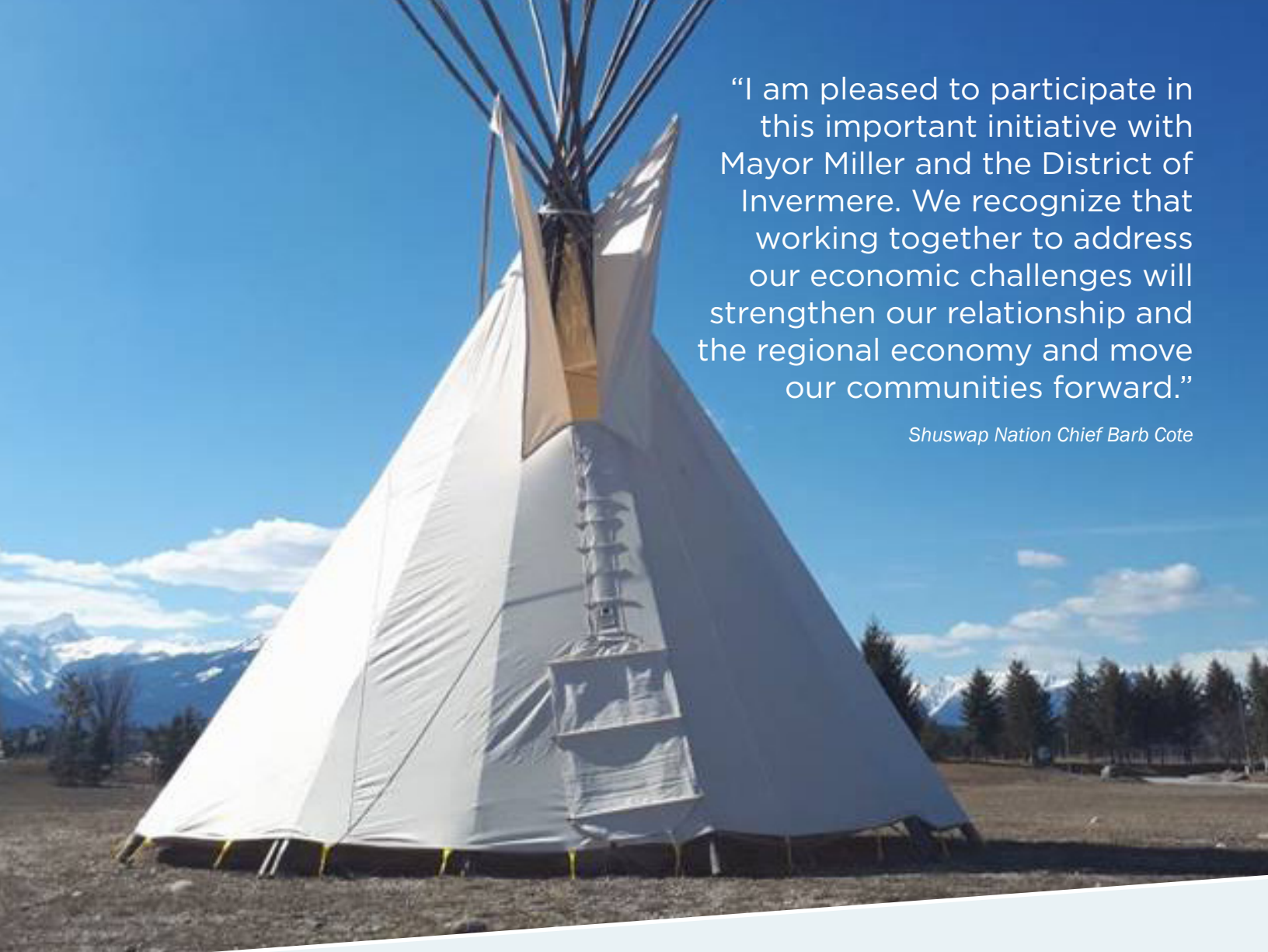
- **Working Group Meetings** between select 'CEDI Champions' including elected officials and senior staff occur monthly. These standing meetings provide an opportunity for the communities to come together to share information on current community issues and opportunities, design upcoming joint workshops and joint documents.
- **Council to Council Collaboration Workshops** include council members and senior staff from both communities and are facilitated by CEDI. These workshops occur twice each year, and focus on ongoing relationship building and joint community economic development information sharing and planning.

## **LESSONS LEARNED AND KEYS TO SUCCESS**

A key takeaway from this partnership so far, is to be open to learning from, and with one another. Once assumptions had been checked and the history and political workings of each partner had been unpacked, the relationship began to unfold and develop into a relationship based in honesty and trust. Lessons and keys to success include:

- ✓ **Have political willingness to start the discussion.** Partnerships progress when elected leadership is willing to start the discussion, which could begin with a simple phone call or in-person meeting over coffee.
- ✓ **Check assumptions.** In order to build a partnership based in trust, it is important for staff and leaders to question their assumption of the relationship, the other community, and the culture within it.
- ✓ **Have facilitators hold a 'neutral space'.** Third-party neutral facilitation helps to guide and move community-to-community conversations forward, This neutral space allows council and staff members to participate fully in the conversation, therefore increasing trust and open communication.
- ✓ **Learn how each community governs.** Leaving assumptions at the door, take the time to listen and understand the inner workings of your partner community. This information will help elected leadership and staff to better navigate future communications, shared initiatives and opportunities.
- ✓ **Face-to-face conversations.** Make the effort to be in the same room when you are meeting. This makes all the difference when you are growing a new partnership.





“I am pleased to participate in this important initiative with Mayor Miller and the District of Invermere. We recognize that working together to address our economic challenges will strengthen our relationship and the regional economy and move our communities forward.”

*Shuswap Nation Chief Barb Cote*

## PATHWAYS TO COLLABORATION

Pathways to Collaboration is a joint initiative of the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), the Province of British Columbia, and the First Nations Summit with funding from the Indigenous Business & Investment Council (IBIC). The project aims to showcase the growing number of successful economic development collaborations and partnerships between First Nations and local governments, while highlighting lessons learned and key steps to success.

The pathways to collaboration communities take are unique, reflecting the context of the communities involved, and involve different activities. Common pathway activities include protocol and communications agreements; servicing agreements and shared infrastructure projects; collaborative land use planning and development projects; joint economic development initiatives; and shared tourism projects. Like signposts along a pathway, these pathway activities are identified in the case study series.

For more information on the project, please contact the communities profiled, or visit [www.ubcm.ca](http://www.ubcm.ca).



**Indigenous Business and Investment Council**

*Sharing Success*