

# Ayjoomixw

Teeskwat / Powell River





**“ In the west we all live next to an Indian reserve...and often our neighbour is not doing well. The issues faced are severe and urgent. Aboriginal communities are poor, disenfranchised from regional economies, operate in a system prescribed by federal legislation which is often unworkable, live in substandard housing, drink substandard water and struggle with harsh social challenges and educational deficits, which are the results of abuse perpetrated by European settlers and made possible by racism.**

**The problems of our aboriginal neighbours are daunting and complex. Our role in their creation and the benefit derived, direct or indirect, makes even talking about it with honesty near impossible. We feel guilt. We are insecure. We want to be politically and culturally correct but are not familiar enough to act with confidence. We overcomplicate by trying to figure out the legal landscape or oversimplify by seeing our aboriginal neighbours as a sad statistic. We encounter racism amongst personal friends and within our electorate and find our leadership challenged.**

**We look for the business case in order to sell the idea of investing into the relationship with our aboriginal neighbours. That is a good starting point.**

**Because the fact is that the well-being of aboriginal communities is inextricably linked to ours. ”**

— Powell River Mayor Stewart Alsgard  
Federation of Canadian Municipalities Convention,  
Victoria, February 10, 2010



Treaties will bring First Nations self government and forever change their relationships with other governments.

There will be major changes to current land ownership, management and governance authorities and to the economies of communities and regions in British Columbia.

How aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities communicate and conduct business with each other; how they coordinate land use and development; how they provide and share services will change as First Nations implement treaties.



Today, many First Nations and neighbouring local and regional governments recognize the need to develop better relationships and work together more closely on community and land use planning issues of mutual interest. There is more interest in improved intergovernmental relations and joint planning.

The City of Powell River and Sliammon First Nation (Tla'amin) through a community accord and a protocol agreement on culture, heritage and economic development are leading the way in sustaining an intergovernmental relationship.

The Treaty Commission believes the Powell River-Sliammon experience over the past eight years is instructive for First Nations, local and regional governments that want to improve relationships within their regions.

# New Relationship

## Results from Conflict

A dispute arose between Sliammon First Nation and the City of Powell River over the city's plans to construct a sea walk in 2002. Early in the construction phase, significant cultural sites including petroglyphs and shell middens were unwittingly disturbed, destroyed or buried.

The city had not shared its plans with Sliammon and was unaware of the Tla'amin cultural sites. Instead of engaging in long negotiations to address Sliammon's concerns, city leaders handed over to the First Nation the \$1.6 million contract to build the sea walk. This ensured for the First Nation protection of cultural heritage sites, participation in the regional economy and infrastructure spending and employment for Sliammon members.





The city prepaid the entire contract contrary to the legal advice it received. Sliammon completed the sea walk on time and on budget using its own workers as well as Powell River workers.

The initial sea walk blunder became an opportunity to start talking about a common future. Less than a year later a Community Accord set the course, offering mutual recognition, cooperation, continuity, openness and inclusion, and a means to resolve disputes.

The first principal of cooperation between Sliammon and Powell River is mutual respect and recognition. The second principal is the reciprocal consideration of common ground and common interests in all dealings between the communities.

# Making Connections

## Bringing Communities Together

The 12-kilometre distance between Powell River city hall and the Sliammon First Nation administration office is being bridged through good relations.

There are signs of the new relationship everywhere. The Sliammon flag flies alongside the flags of Powell River and British Columbia at a city landmark and in city council chambers. Government-to-government discussions are held at least six times a year on an agreed agenda.





Much of the land between the two communities is being jointly marketed by Catalyst Paper Corporation, Powell River and Sliammon, with the potential economic benefits flowing to all three. These are lands owned by Catalyst that have been declared surplus.

The Official Community Plan for Powell River recognizes the Northern Coast Salish history of the region and prospective major developers are expected to discuss their plans with Sliammon, as well as Powell River.

A water line may someday link the two communities. The city has made such a link possible with an upgrade to its own water system in 2011.

BC Transit buses that once stopped four kilometres short of the Sliammon village centre as of April 2011 now travel all the way.

The Tla'amin people are the first people you encounter upon entering the Powell River Historical Museum and Archives.

The official Upper Sunshine Coast Recreation Map & Activity Guide identifies traditional Tla'amin place names, as well as English place names throughout the region.





### **Protocol Agreement on Culture, Heritage and Economic Development**

The protocol agreement signed in June 2004 commits Sliammon and Powell River to protect and promote the culture and heritage of the region and to explore joint economic ventures.

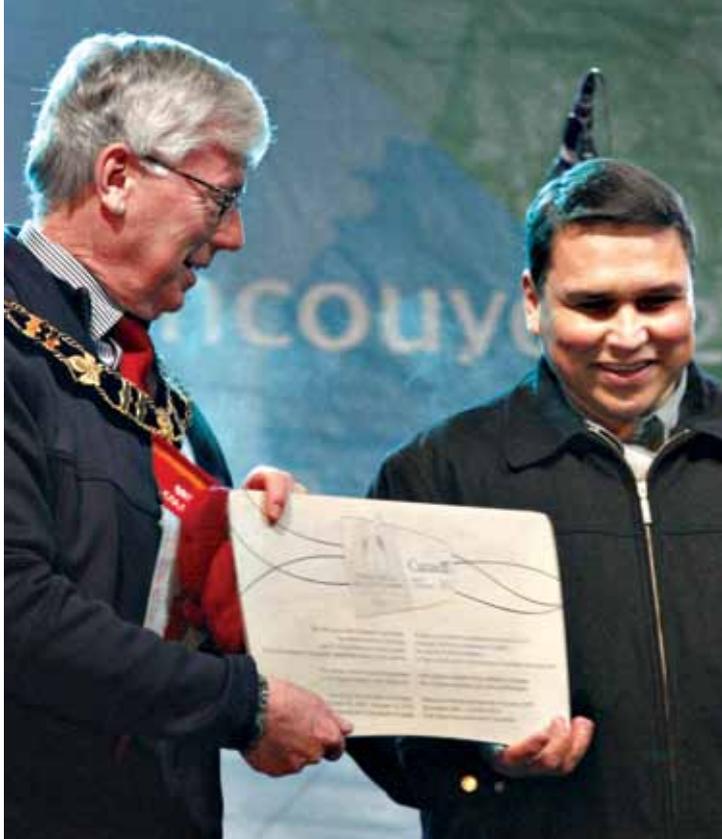
Sliammon participates in major reviews of the municipality's official community plan and the city participates in any review of land use and land use planning for Sliammon lands that are within municipal boundaries.

## **A Sustainability Charter for the Powell River Region**

The Sustainability Charter is the product of citizens, community leaders, and local agencies, including Sliammon First Nation, the City of Powell River, the Powell River Regional District, Vancouver Island University, School District 47 and Catalyst Paper.

It sets out a clear statement of the region's intention to become more sustainable over time and to work closely together to achieve that vision. The first principle of the charter is to recognize and respect Tla'amin aboriginal rights, title and cultural history, and existing agreements among governments.





Over the past eight years, the two communities have demonstrated their solidarity and willingness to work together on issues facing them whether it is sustainability, economic development, service delivery or treaty issues.

**“ “ We are terribly disappointed and frankly perplexed at the unnecessary delay in proceeding with this treaty. The Sliammon people are our friends, our neighbours and partners. We have worked hard to nurture this relationship, which is so critical to the economic development and future prosperity of our region. ” ”**

— Mayor Stewart Alsgard  
March 2011



### **City Supports Sliammon Treaty**

Powell River and Sliammon are allies in a united quest to bring home a treaty and improve the regional economy. The mayor and the chief travelled to Ottawa in spring 2011 to put pressure on the federal government to complete the final agreement.

# Ayjoomixw

## The History of Place

Powell River's traditional place name is Ajjoomixw, meaning 'good, clear ground.' Tla'amin people have inhabited the region since time immemorial. Archaeological evidence proves village sites did exist more than 4,000 years ago and perhaps as long as 10,000 years ago. About 300 years ago, up to 20,000 people inhabited more than 10 permanent villages and many more seasonal sites throughout the territory.





The Tla'amin followed a regular annual cycle focused on managing, harvesting and processing vital resources. The availability of plants, wildlife and fish varied considerably throughout the territory. The Tla'amin people had to be in the right place at the right time, as berries ripened or fish swam upstream, or go hungry.

The people lived together in winter village sites during the cold, wet months and moved to summer villages and harvesting areas during the warmer months.

In the 1860s a smallpox epidemic killed many of the Northern Coast Salish people. Influenza and other illnesses also took many lives.





In 1876 the federal government created the *Indian Act* to set up a system of Indian bands and reserves that would establish a wide range of authority and control over First Nations people. Following a visit by the Joint Indian Reserve Commissioner in 1879, Tla'amin territory was reduced to six small reserves. Sliammon's request to save Teeskwat, the First Nation's capital at the mouth of the Powell River, was denied.

The Tla'amin village site was prized for its potential to produce power from the Powell River and its proximity to vast forests. In 1892 a permit was subsequently approved to allow log driving and rafting at the site. Then in 1909 the Powell River Paper Company was incorporated, a community grew up around the mill, and the Tla'amin community was no more.

The territory, once thought to be about 3,347 square kilometres, was reduced to 1,907 hectares with reserves at Sliammon (current village site), Harwood Island, Cortes Island, Grace Harbour, Theodosia Inlet and Okeover Inlet. Sliammon has 1,000 people; the Powell River region 14,000.

# 9 Steps to a New Relationship

## **1. A relationship built on mutual respect and trust**

The parties have to be genuinely interested in and dedicated to building a meaningful relationship and have the willingness to move forward with the courage and commitment to do things differently. Leaders have to lead by example and devote the time and patience required to build the relationship and negotiate agreements.

## **2. Establish and maintain regular meetings**

Government-to-government discussions, meetings between chief and mayor, between leaders and staff and cross cultural workshops all provide opportunities to develop plans together and learn about each other. First Nations and local governments each have legal duties and limits. Take the time to explain and explore the responsibilities and limits of each party.

## **3. Involve and inform others**

Community members and organizations, other levels of government, business and the media have to be informed and involved. These people are potential supporters, funders and key players in intergovernmental processes, relationships and projects.

## **4. Establish protocols, agreements or guiding principles**

Develop safe and respectful processes where the First Nation and the other governments can get together to resolve issues, gain mutual understanding and move forward.

## **5. Establish and participate in joint committees**

Each party can have input into numerous planning processes through a variety of committees and boards. Participation may be informal and advisory or formal with equal voting powers. It is important that each party is invited to participate early and in a meaningful way in planning processes and initiatives of mutual interest.

## **6. Be creative in seeking innovative approaches**

Examples of creative approaches may include: joint decision-making or joint permitting processes; coordinated land use and infrastructure planning; agreements to consult with each other in key areas; governance arrangements; and joint projects such as community forest licences.

## **7. Negotiate fair service agreements**

Negotiating service delivery and payment has a high potential for conflict. First Nations will need access to existing service infrastructure while municipal and regional governments must look for ways to cover the cost of providing the services.

## **8. Support each other**

Provide each other with letters of support for various initiatives. Support may tip the balance in favour of approval for funding and projects.

## **9. Share and celebrate success**

Community events and celebrations of success are opportunities to get to know each other and share visions for the future. Events are also informal occasions to share information and opinions, and enjoy each other's company.





700-1111 MELVILLE ST VANCOUVER BC CANADA V6E 3V6  
WWW.BCTREATY.CA