



governance toolkit

best practices

Principle: Inter-Governmental Relations

Government: Squamish and Lil'wat First Nations

OPPORTUNITY

The Squamish First Nation and the Lil'wat First Nation are both located in south western B.C. and have an area of overlapping traditional territory that extends into the lands around the resort community of Whistler. Although they are two distinct First Nations with different culture and social relationships, they have a history of respectful co-existence as neighbours. Mindful of the historic precedence of shared lands and the overlapping interests in land stewardship, the Lil'wat Nation met with the Squamish Nation in 1999 to discuss land use and planning in areas of traditional territory overlap. This signalled a move away from competition between neighbouring First Nations for recognition and scarce resources and toward a relationship that could leverage the power of working together on mutual objectives.

In 2001, the nations signed a historic *Protocol Agreement* formalizing their commitment to continue inter-governmental cooperation in matters of cultural and economic development, and co-management of shared territory. The only one of its kind in Canada, this agreement affirms the nations' shared heritage and

NCFNG

is a national, independent, First Nations-controlled organization dedicated to supporting First Nations as they work to implement their inherent right to self-governance. The development of a set of shared principles that clearly articulate our approach to effective governance is one way in which we support that work. This NCFNG Effective Governance Case Study profiles a best practice in the principle "Inter-Government Relations".

To learn more about this case study, contact:
Squamish Lil'wat Society
www.slcc.ca/about-us/slcc-society

To learn more about the NCFNG:
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profound desire to continue to live and work together harmoniously.

PRINCIPLE IN ACTION

The *Protocol Agreement* established a process that allows the Squamish peoples and Lil'wat peoples to:

- Identify issues of mutual concern within the shared overlap portion of their traditional territories
- Take better advantage of economic opportunities
- Make decisions jointly and implement those decisions together
- Allow both nations to express our mutual respect for one another's historic presence in the region and to obtain a better understanding of our respective communities
- Establish a basis of mutual support for the preservation and protection of both nations' aboriginal rights, and examine the possibilities of shared jurisdiction and co-management

Building on the foundation established by the *Protocol Agreement*, in November 2002, the Squamish First Nation, the Lil'wat First Nation, the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Bid Corporation, and the Province of British Columbia signed the historically significant *Shared Legacies Agreement*. This agreement outlines a package of benefits and legacies related to the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games that recognizes the important contribution being made by the nations to promote harmony, sharing, education, fairness, and partnership.

The *Shared Legacy Agreement* represents an unprecedented partnership between a provincial government, a private corporation, and two First Nations. It ensures that Squamish Nation and the Lil'wat Nation will benefit from the Vancouver 2010 Winter Games being held on their traditional territories and greatly contributes to the future economic well-being of both nations.

Under this agreement, B.C. agreed to give 300 acres of land in Whistler to the nations to pursue economic development opportunities, contribute \$2.3 million for a skills training project, and contribute \$3 million toward the construction of the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre in Whistler.

Additionally, the province, in partnership with the nations, initiated a Naming and Recognition Project to dual name places in the shared territory so traditional place names will be given wider recognition. From this strategic success, the Squamish and Lil'wat have continued to recognize their collective strength and the opportunities that flow from developing positive inter-governmental relationships.

Based on this approach and recognizing that the 2010 Games will occur within the traditional territories of four nations – not only the Lil'wat and Squamish, but also the Musqueam and the Tsleil-Waututh First Nations – a further inter-governmental framework was negotiated. In 2004, the *Four Host Nations Protocol Agreement* was created to pursue a common approach to maximizing the involvement of their communities in the Games and create an environment of respect, cooperation, and mutual recognition amongst the parties.

"The 2010 Games presents us with a significant opportunity to build new or enhance existing relationships, establish partnerships and showcase our diverse and extraordinary culture to the world," said Musqueam Chief Ernest Campbell.

SUCCESS FACTORS

The initial *Protocol Agreement* between the Squamish Nation and Lil'wat Nation provided a framework for decision-making between the two nations which permitted them to react nimbly and effectively to the development pressures within the Whistler area – including the 2010 Olympic Games.

This *Protocol Agreement* has resulted in a strong political alliance which is realizing real material benefits for their respective citizens.

Only through building positive relationships can we all learn from one another and all walk away being much richer for the effort.

— Chief Gibby Jacob of the Squamish Nation

Their success is predicated on:

- Practicing open and effective communication which aims to identify mutual objectives and minimize potential conflicts
- Leaders from each nation having courage, commitment, and foresight to see that a cooperative relationship between different First Nations deflects the divide and conquer strategies of business and government
- Recognizing each other and acknowledging differences
- Investing time and patience to make the agreement work

CHALLENGES

The Squamish – Lil'wat *Protocol Agreement* sets out a complex inter-governmental relationship that takes time, effort and patience to nurture – just like any relationship. Communication is vital. Squamish and Lil'wat face immense outside development pressures which could threaten to undermine the unity of the two First Nations. It takes incredible strength, patience and leadership to not succumb to those kinds of pressures.

NCFNG GOVERNANCE LESSONS LEARNED

Effective *Inter-Governmental Relations* maximize the opportunities for communication and effective decision-making while minimizing the opportunities for conflict. Effective inter-governmental relations result in productive and satisfying working relationships where the goal is a “win-win”; the collaborative advancement of the interests of all governments whenever possible. The agreements entered into by the Squamish Nation and the Lil'wat Nation achieve both objectives.

LINKS AND MORE INFORMATION

The Protocol Agreement

www.slcc.ca/about-us/tale-of-two-nations/protocol-agreement

The Shared Legacies Agreement

www.slcc.ca/about-us/tale-of-two-nations/shared-legacies-agreement

Squamish Nation

www.squamish.net

Lil'wat Nation

www.lilwat.ca

Four Host First Nations Society

www.fourhostfirstnations.com